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Evolution and Progress of Public Distribution System in India

Ancy John

Food is considered one of the significant fundamental human demands; therefore, food security for all is a primary objective for any welfare society. Food security is said to exist when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. As a democratic state, the Government of India's primary objective is to ensure adequate access to quality food for its citizens. The Public Distribution System was initiated in the 1940s to manage food scarcity and evolved into a system for distributing food grains at affordable prices. Today, it is an integral part of the government's policy for food management. This paper tries to elaborate on the evolution of the public distribution system in India, corresponding to the criticisms and the major implications of these policies chronologically.

Introduction

The Public Distribution System (PDS) has played a vital role in managing food availability in India since the 1940s when it began as a rationing system during World War - II. However, now, the system has grown into the world's most extensive food security programme in terms of the number of its beneficiaries. Over the years, PDS has evolved as a system to manage the country's supply and distribution of food grains. PDS is complementary and is not intended to meet a household's or a section of society's entire need for any of the commodities distributed through it.

In India, PDS compiles all channels and agencies involved in procuring food grains to the final delivery. It is under the control of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) that the procurement, storage, transportation, and distribution of these food grains take place.

The agencies involved in PDS provision at the state level are the Department of Civil Supplies or Corporations and Fair Price Shops (FPS). The final link, which acts as the ultimate end of the chain that reaches out to the beneficiaries, is FPSs, which are owned by private parties or other social agencies or groups authorized by the state government. Therefore, government control and involvement along the system chain distinguishes the PDS. Under this context, Dholakia and Khurana define PDS as "a retailing system supervised and guided by the state." The Progress Evaluation Organisation (Government of India, 1985) described the system as a setup run by the central and State governments, which procure and distribute commodities of everyday use through a network of Fair Price shops in rural and urban areas. As for PDS's defined structural performance, the State and central governments have to act alongside it. While the Central Government controls the procurement, storage, price fixing, and transportation from the surplus state storage facilities to deficit state storage facilities, the operational authorities of state governments are the identification of eligible beneficiaries, intra-state allocation and transportation, issuance of ration cards monitoring, and supervising the programme. The primary essential commodities allocated in India through this manner are wheat, rice, ragi, sugar, and kerosene.

Objectives and Methodology

The study aims to have a descriptive understanding of the evolution of the Public Distribution System in India as a chronological food security programme. The study is primarily descriptive in nature and engaged in an extensive literature survey for the same.

Structure and Functioning of Public Distribution System in India

The Public Distribution System is a well-managed structure functioning under the joint responsibility of the State and Central Governments of India. PDS is controlled and monitored at the national level by the Department of Food and Public Distribution under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution with the assistance of the Food Corporation of India (FCI). FCI is involved in procuring and building stock, transportation from procuring sites to storage sites, and distribution to various state warehouses according to the established central allocation. At the state level, under Departments of Civil Supplies or Corporations, the State Government takes over the responsibility of transportation from state warehouses to district-level storage facilities and the Fair Price Shops (FPS). The state governments are also vested with the power to identify the eligible beneficiaries, issue ration cards, grievance redressal, etc.

Fig. 1 Structure of PDS in India
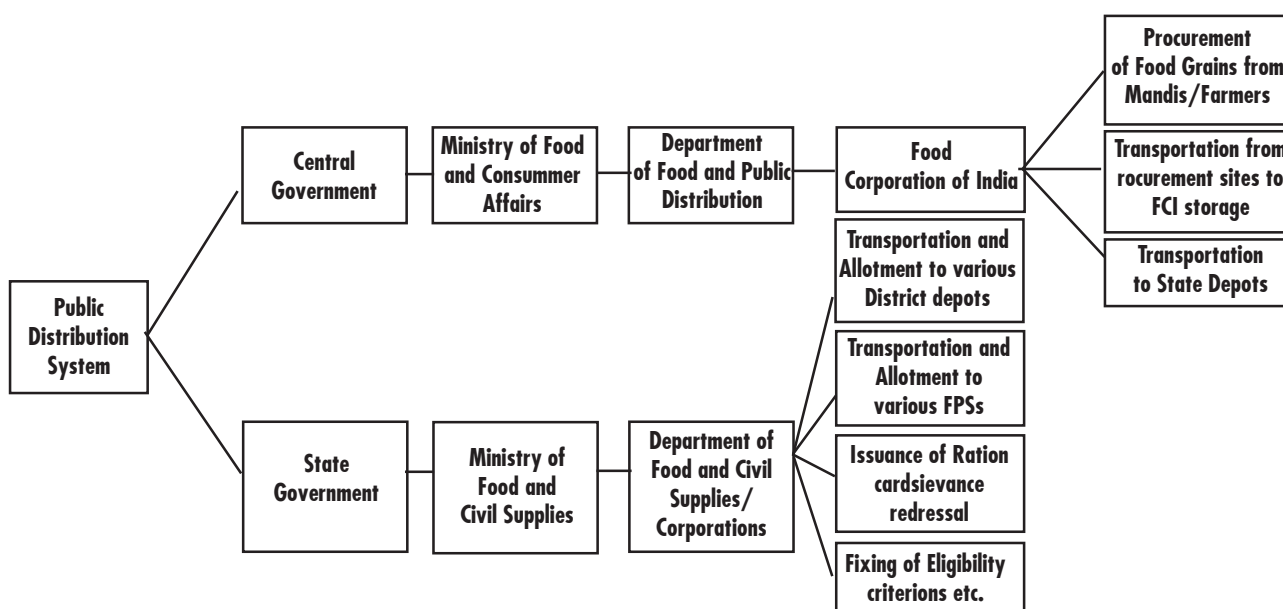
(Source: compiled by the author)

Goal of Public Distribution System in India Historically

The primary goals of the Public Distribution System in India have been,

- Sustaining price stability

- Providing subsidised foodgrains to low-income households

- Increasing welfare facilities for the poor (by providing vulnerable populations with access to basic foods at reasonable prices)

- Rationing during times of scarcity

- Limiting private trade in food grains.

Some of these goals are clearly less important today than they were in the past. The first two objectives remain critical. In fact, maintaining price stability is critical in the post-liberalization period, when private traders have more freedom and international price fluctuations can have a more significant impact on domestic

prices. Access to quality food is also a major concern in the context of prevailing malnutrition and rising prices.

Evolution of PDS in India

In India, the PDS has evolved over time. Famines and droughts causing acute scarcity conditions and government measures to assist victims have been the typical way the food security system began to take shape. Thus, the efforts have been like the fire-fighting operation "concerned only with putting out the flames and providing a modest measure of temporary relief to the affected population" (Bhatya, B. M, 1967). In India, PDS began as such an effort during World War II in the 1940s under the British regime. The then government distributed free food grains to the poor in war-affected areas of the country with severe food scarcity situations. However, the government was forced to continue and expand the programme in 1943 following the Great Bengal Famine, which resulted from the large-scale export of food grains from India to the war sites. Thus, these disruptions and economic stress paved the way for a new and more permanent structure of food security programmes.

Until the mid-1960s, when the PDS was in its initial phase in India, it was viewed as a mere system for fair price or rationing of scarce commodities. Rice and wheat accounted for a sizeable portion of the food grain distribution. The government recognized the need to expand the PDS to rural areas, but it still needs to be implemented now. PDS operations were irregular and reliant on PL-480 food grain imports, with little internal procurement. In practice, imports comprised a large portion of PDS supplies during this period (Bapna, B.M, 1998). By the mid-1960s, the decision had been made to look much further than managing scarce supplies in critical situations. The government was forced to procure grains internally due to the suspension of PL-480 imports. As a result, the country took a vital move forward in framing an institutional structure and framework for a new food security programme.

In 1965, the Agricultural Price Commission (APC), Currently Known as the Bureau of Agricultural Costs and Prices (BACP) and Food Corporation of India (FCI), was established to mark the second phase evolution of PDS. The food grains to be distributed through the PDS were purchased at the FCI-recommended BACP prices. A portion of the purchased quantity is kept as "buffer stocks" for a sudden crisis. The institutionalized arrangements and procedures for food grain procurement, storage, and distribution were critical components of this system. It is more important to understand that the structural changes in PDS are the result of technological and structural advancement in the production techniques used in the cultivation and storage of staple food crops such as paddy and wheat. The advancement in these spheres of agriculture, as well as marketing and introduction of a government-controlled price mechanism, also provided practical market support and price to farmers. It also accelerated a wide range of measures to generate employment and income for the rural poor in order to improve their standard of living, including improved physical and economic access to food grains.

National agricultural production gained new momentum after the period of the Green Revolution. The accumulation of buffer stocks was far too rapid. As a result, the initial focus on buffer stock preservation and price stability has shifted to an increase in PDS supplies(Tyagi, D.S., 1990). According to the fourth plan (1969-74) report, the fundamental goal of food grains is to provide an effective PDS. The quantities obtained exceeded the PDS requirements, and the country kept no minimum reserve. During the fifth five-year plan, programmes like Food for Work were launched to ameliorate poverty and reduce overstocking in FCI godowns. During this time, imports gradually decreased, and there was a net export of food grains, albeit in small quantities, and imports of food grains were maintained in smaller quantities to safeguard the buffer stock position.

During this phase of PDS, government gave importance to strengthening it as a "stable and permanent feature of our strategy to control prices, reduce fluctuations in them, and achieve an equitable distribution of essential consumer goods" (Government of India, Fifth Plan). However, until the 1970s, the prior targeting

of services under PDS was primarily the urban population rather than the rural poor(Swaminathan, 2000). In the late 1970s and early 1980s, some state governments like Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Andra Pradesh expanded PDS coverage to rural areas and implemented the target grouping approach.

Expansion of the beneficiary net became a target when it was found vital for a completely hunger-free country. It was possible due to the increased grain production. The net availability of staple food grains in the country increased from 74 million tons in the late 1960s to 99 million in 1977 and increased to 160 million tons in 1990 (GOI, 1994). Thus, while the PDS was initially started to meet the crisis, by the Sixth Five Year Plan, the PDS was viewed "as an instrument for efficient management of essential consumer goods necessary for maintaining stable price considerations." According to V. M. Rao (1995), from a situation where policies were preoccupied with managing scarce supplies, the economy now appears to have reached a stage where the food grain sector could provide a powerful stimulus to overall growth and development (Rao, V.M.,1995). The third phase of PDS (from 1978 to 1992) is defined by the large-scale expansion of the PDS supported by domestic procurement and stocks. Until 1992, PDS was a general entitlement scheme for all consumers with no specific target. The government implemented the Revamped Public Distribution System in June 1992. The programme was introduced by initiating in 1775 blocks in the country, and it lasted till 1997, marking the fourth phase of PDS, which also focused on improving PDS infrastructure (Government of India, Sixth plan).

Food grains (rice and wheat) are allocated to states and union territories at lower prices under the RPDS scheme. State governments must ensure that retail prices for these commodities in these blocks do not exceed CIPs by more than 25 paise per kg. Sugar is also sold at a lower cost. The Central Government sets the Central Issue Prices for both PDS and RPDS. State governments set the retail end prices for PDS and RPDS, taking into account transportation costs and the dealer's commission (Economic Survey, 1996)

The fifth phase of PDS in India began in June 1997 with implementing the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS). The TPDS focuses on the "poor in all areas," and it entails the distribution of 10 kg of food grains per family per month to people living below the poverty line (BPL) at specially subsidised prices. The TPDS requires states to develop and implement infallible plans for identifying poor people, delivering food grains to Fair Price Shops (FPSs), and distributing food grains accountable and transparently at the FPS level. The word "targeted" indicates that the emphasis is on the poor and vulnerable segments of society. It was renamed the Targeted Public Distribution System after it was transformed from a general and universal scheme to one that targeted food subsidies (in proportion to state poverty levels estimated by the Planning Commission) to BPL households (TPDS). Following the World Bank's advice, the Government of India implemented the TPDS in 1997 to reduce food subsidies. The policy began by targeting households based on an income criterion, i.e., using the income poverty line to distinguish between 'poor' and 'non-poor' households. The TPDS had a two-tiered pricing structure for households below and above the poverty line.

In addition, in December 2000, the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) scheme was introduced as a sub-scheme to benefit the poorest of the poor. The entitlements and issue prices for BPL and AAY households are fixed (cereals per household per month). Despite periodic revisions, the subsidy transfer per household has increased over time. APL allocation and prices are more frequently changed and are determined by the availability of grain stocks and the economic cost. The two critical problems with the TPDS are delivery and targeting errors. Beneficiaries are divided into three groups: general households, Antyodaya households, and priority households. Though the identification criteria for these three groups are not specified, the following segments of the population will be included in the Priority category: landless labourers, small and marginal farmers (with land up to two hectares), workers in the urban informal sector, and households of construction workers, while the Antyodaya category will include Vulnerable Tribal Groups, households headed by terminally ill persons, widows or single women, physically challenged person households headed by a person aged 60 years or more with no means of subsistence, persons freed from bonded labour and

those who are entitled to the Mukhyamantri Khadyanna Sahayata Yojana. The general households are regarded as a default category.

After the passage of the National Food Security Act, India entered the sixth phase of PDS (September 2013). The TPDS is currently being transformed into a legal entitlement-based system of household and individual food security. The coverage and entitlements of foodgrains under the NFSA, 2013, have changed from those under the existing TPDS referred to above. The TPDS, the NFSA, 2013, for example, covers upto 75 percentage of total rural population and 50 percentage of total urban population of the country. Priority households are entitled to food grains at the issue prices of Rs.3.00 and Rs.2.00 per person per month under the NFSA, 2013. The Antyodaya households, however, remain unchanged, with the fact that they continue to receive 35 kg of food grains per month free of cost.

Salient Features of the National Food Security Act

National Food Security Act can be claimed as a milestone change in the history of India's food security policies because of the new adaptations in its approach to food security concerns. Unlike the past food security programmes under PDS, NFSA is more comprehensive in nature. The significance of NFSA on the food security statistics of the country lies in these newly embedded features, and some of these features are discussed here.

i.   Extensive Coverage and Reforms of Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)

TPDS under NFSA covers two population categories: Priority Households (PHH) and Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY), ranging up to 75 percent of the rural and 50 percent of the urban population, with a monthly entitlement of 5 kg per person and 35 kg per households respectively. The Act also mentions several reforms, including doorstep delivery of food grains at TPDS outlets, that is, Fair Price Shops (FPS), application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for end-to-end computerization of PDS, bio-metric authentication of beneficiaries, printed receipt and diversification of commodities. The Act requires the Central and State Governments to work together to implement such necessary reforms per the role envisioned.

Following the Act's arrangements, state governments are encouraged to embark on a federated planning process to procure, store, and distribute food grain at local levels ranging from district to panchayat, to reduce transportation costs and losses and provide state governments with the necessary facilities and incentives. To establish fair price shops, the Act intends to provide preference to community institutions such as Self-Help Groups and Cooperatives, as well as public bodies such as Gram Panchayats, nongovernmental organisations, and women collectives.

ii.   The transformation from a welfare-based approach to a right-based approach

The Act aims to provide a legal entitlement of 5 kilograms of food grain at the subsidized rate of Rs. 1/2/3 to every person under the PHH category and 35 kilograms free of cost to every household under the AAY category through TPDS. This constitutional assurance makes the State legally obligated to ensure the availability and access of the prescribed quantity of food grains to the eligible population category. Thus the Act defines a paradigm shift in the approach to food security from welfare to the right based by assuring it as a constitutional right (2013, NFSA).

iii.   Food Security Allowances

In case of failure to allocate the entitled food grains to the eligible beneficiaries for any reason, the State Government is obliged by the Act to ensure a food security allowance determined by the Central Government. The Central Government is also vested with the power to determine the timing and manner of such an allowance (2013, NFSA).

iv.   Life Cycle Approach

The Act approaches food security as a legal entitlement throughout the life cycle of an entitled citizen

by addressing the food requirement at different stages of a person's life. It assimilated various schemes like the Integrated Child Development Scheme, Nutritional support to pregnant women and lactating mothers, the Mid-Day-Meal Scheme, and TPDS to cover every phase of human life.

v. Women Empowerment

Through reforming PDS, the National Food Security Act insists on authorising the eldest women of or above the age of eighteen as head of the household to issue ration cards. Only those eligible households without a woman or women members of age eighteen or above can consider the eldest male member as the household head, and female members attaining the age of eighteen shall become the head of the household (NFSA, 2013).

vi. Grievance Redressal Mechanism

The Act also insists that every state government should form an internal grievance redressal mechanism, compounding a designated nodal officer as head, toll-free helpline and call centers, online portal, and any other method for the purpose. The District Grievance Redressal Officer is vested with the power to handle and address public grievances in each district. It also mandates the formation of a State Food Commission to review and monitor the implementation of the Act.

vii. Social Audit

NFSA 2013 suggests conducting social audit to ensure proper functioning and transparency by local governing bodies or any other agencies, as may be authorised by the State Government. It also emphasises the importance of publishing reports on these periodic audit in the public domain to maintain the accountability of the system.

Present Status of TPDS under NFSA in India

The National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA) is being implemented in all States/U.T.s across India. Currently, around 80.60 crore people are covered under NFSA for receiving highly subsidised food grains out of a total coverage of 81.35 crores. The identification of beneficiaries by states/U.T.s is a constant process that demands periodical resurvey of the beneficiary list for exclusion of ineligible beneficiaries as well as exclusion due to death, migration, etc., and also the inclusion of eligible households wrongly left out and inclusion of members in case of migration, birth, etc.

Table 1. Percentage of Coverage Under NFSA

Sl.No.	Name of the state / UT	Percentage coverage		
		Rural	Urban	National Average
1	Manipur	88.56	85.75	87.155
2	Bihar	85.12	74.53	79.825
3	Jharkhand	86.48	60.2	73.34
4	Assam	84.17	60.35	72.26
5	Chhattisgarh	84.25	59.98	72.115
6	Uttar Pradesh	79.56	64.43	71.995
7	Madhya Pradesh	80.1	62.61	71.355
8	Nagaland	79.83	61.98	70.905
9	Odisha	82.17	55.77	68.97
10	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	84.19	51.54	67.865

11	Mizoram	81.88	48.6	65.24
12	Meghalaya	77.79	50.87	64.33
13	Karnataka	76.04	49.36	62.7
14	Tripura	74.75	49.54	62.145
15	Gujarat	74.64	48.25	61.445
16	Rajasthan	69.09	53	61.045
17	West Bengal	74.47	47.55	61.01
18	Maharashtra	76.32	45.34	60.83
19	Arunachal Pradesh	66.31	51.55	58.93
20	Uttarakhand	65.26	52.05	58.655
21	Sikkim	75.74	40.36	58.05
22	Jammu & Kashmir	63.55	47.1	55.325
23	Puducherry	59.68	46.94	53.31
24	Andhra Pradesh	60.96	41.14	51.05
25	Telangana	60.96	41.14	51.05
26	Tamil Nadu	62.55	37.79	50.17
27	Punjab	54.79	44.83	49.81
28	Haryana	54.61	41.05	47.83
29	Kerala	52.63	39.5	46.065
30	Himachal Pradesh	56.23	30.99	43.61
31	Chandigarh	38.54	47.26	42.9
32	Daman & Diu	26.66	56.47	41.565
33	Delhi	37.69	43.59	40.64
34	Goa	42.24	33.02	37.63
35	Lakshadweep	35.3	33.56	34.43
36	A & N Islands	24.94	1.7	13.32
	All India	75.00	50.00	62.5

(Source: https://dfpd.gov.in/)

The Planning Commission determines the range of coverage under NFSA in different states in accordance with NSS Household Consumption Survey data. However, after the decommissioning of the Planning Commission, the power is vested with NITI Aayog. States/U.T.s are responsible for identifying eligible households within the TPDS coverage determined for each State. It is the responsibility of state governments/U.T.s to develop criteria for identifying priority households and actually identifying them. Section 10 of the Act states that the State Government shall identify the households under AAY as per the guidelines applicable to the said scheme and the remaining households as priority households to be covered under TPDS, by such guidelines as the State Government may specify.

Conclusion

India's Public Distribution System is the world's largest food distribution network. It is a critical resource for assuring quality food for people in need. The government faces a significant challenge in increasing food availability to the poor. Although the Public Distribution System has played an essential role in serving the poor, many people have died as a result of malnutrition. The truth is that it only provides temporary relief. The structural changes implemented by enacting NFSA are a paradigm shift in the evolution of PDS.

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Globalization and Worker Precarity: A Study of Tea Plantations in Peermade Taluk

Arun C. Appukuttan
& Shaji Varkey

The crisis faced by plantations in the aftermath of globalization have multiple dimensions. Instead of cushioning its adverse effects somewhere higher in the echelon, it is directly passed down to the final recipient, the worker. The present study empirically examines crisis in the tea sector and how it deepened the already existing contradictions and created new ones.

Introduction

The plantation workers are woefully caught in a spiraling crisis in the lower end of the tea value chain. The gains made by the plantation workers during the first four decades after independence, is sought to be undone by a series of measures initiated by the plantation management and the commercial lobbies in the higher value chain. The capitalist restructuring of the plantations was being implemented surreptitiously from the early 1990s through a series of measures like freeze or reduction of wages, suspension of allowances, stoppage of welfare provisions, compartmentalization of workforce, abandonment of plantations, use of plantation lands for more lucrative non-plantation purposes etc. The interrelationship and contradictions among stakeholders like workers, trade unions and management became starker during this period. The unity and bargaining ability of trade unions have come down considerably. Though the sector employs a large labour force constituting mainly of the dalits and backward sections and earns precious foreign exchange, a plethora of issues brought in the wake of globalization, threaten its existence.

Tea plantations, with over 150 years of history, continue to be the most insular social space in Kerala. The plantations intentionally or otherwise valorize and inter-generationally reproduce coloniality with its attitudes, values, and power structures. By exempting from land reforms, the state was stealthily recognizing the 'new landlord', an anachronism in a democratic society. The postcolonial plantation system, though legally free and open, nevertheless is a mix of both old and the modern like hierarchy, labour precarity and social discrimination. The modern idea of right bearing citizen does not find resonance in the plantations. The high quality of life index found among the general population in the state is missing in the plantations. The tea plantation management is a mix of both continuity and change. The management practice in plantations is archaic and coercive in nature. While other labour sectors witnessed an infusion of democratic principles, tea sector remained an exception as majority of the labour force was constituted by backward caste Tamils. Since the beginning of the plantation system, the age-old capitalist practice of privatization of profits and socialization of loss has been done uninterruptedly. While the fruits of profit go to the company shareholders, the loss is made good by compulsory austerity for workers.

Theoretical Foundation

The current epoch of capitalist globalization that started roughly three decades ago and eventually engulfed the entire world has left behind a trail of relentless and disruptive changes. Along with the barrage of forces coming from above, globalization entails a churning from below that resulted in untold hardships and miseries to people. Globalization, according to this view, has created a shattering impact domestically. The secure space of a nation has disappeared and global capital in alliance with its local counterparts, has

managed to penetrate every nook and cranny of the system (Held and McGrew, 2023; Lechner and Boli, 2002).

The liberal democratic state structure with commitment to welfare has slipped into a chaotic state of competition, fiscal discipline, privatization of public enterprises and deregulation of labour market. Workers' demand for maintenance of labour standards and higher wages, receive least priority (Smith, S). Flexible production arrangement has become a norm. Part-time work, casual employment, agency work, self-employment are replacing tenure jobs with decent salary. Global competition has encouraged the outsourcing of work. Relocating business from one country to another has become much easy now. Removing tariffs and other restrictions led to free movement of goods and services. As a result of all such neoliberal policies and practices, workers get increasingly disempowered. Trade unionism with an organised workforce has weakened.

The impact of neoliberal globalization on labor acts on three important vertices, a framework that fits with the tea plantation workers of Peermade.

Casualization of Labour

Casualization as a form of labour practice is the process whereby employment shifts from a preponderance of full-time and permanent positions to higher levels of casual positions in an irregular or intermittent nature (Bernstein, 1986; Okafor 2007, Fapohunda, 2012). Sheen (2012) defines a casual job as a job without paid leave entitlements, but the essence of a casual job is that the worker is entirely expendable on an hour-to-hour, week-to-week, year-to-year basis. Casualization captures the phenomenal growth of non-standard employment globally. Okafor (2012) is also of this opinion when he asserts that in recent decades there has been a dramatic increase in nonstandard jobs due to massive unemployment, globalization, shift from the manufacturing sector to the service sector and the spread of information technology. The downsides of casualization can be viewed from a tripartite perspective: effects on the employee, the employer and the economy. The employees are the direct victims of casualization, but beyond that, the effects they suffer transcend through a flow-on process to the other actors. For the employees, casualization exerts downward pressure on the wages and working conditions of those viewed as permanent workers. This is partly because pay systems and employment conditions are continuously operated in a process that engenders comparison among the entire workforce. Again, casualization threatens the direct or indirect replacement of permanent workers by casual workers. In both cases, the negative consequences for individual employees readily extend to adverse effects on families and society. Again, since casual workers do not get benefits, employers do not contribute to their pension and gratuity funds. Hence, workers and their dependents are left destitute in an accident or death because they cannot claim for injury on duty or workplace-acquired diseases.

Casualization has increased the ratio of unpaid to paid labour and work intensity. It has increased the number of unprotected workers; most casually employed workers can no longer be members of unions.

Precarization

The term precarity (précarité) first appeared in French sociology and economics during the 1970s, described a social condition linked to poverty. Later, it came to refer to 'new' employment forms of precarious work outside of the classic Fordist version of full-time permanent contracts. The idea of precarisation emerged in the context of neoliberal globalization in the early 2000s onwards is understood as a societal process of increasingly insecure employment and generalised uncertainty. The term was increasingly being used to explain social exclusion, marginality and the informal sector (Munck, 2013; Bauman, 2013; Mole, 2010). Precarity (also precariousness) is a precarious existence lacking predictability, job security, and material or psychological welfare. The social class defined by this condition has been termed the precariat. Precarization, defined as the detachment of dependent labour working conditions from the means of integrative social participation, hereby describes a specific concentration of a nevertheless broader structural uncertainty that is inherent to both the mode of European integration and the regime of European production (Hürtgen, 2021; Lazar and

Sanchez, 2019). The precarization of labour has several implications for workers and society as a whole: increased income inequality between those with stable jobs and those in precarious employment; job insecurity; lack of social protections; reduced collective bargaining power; reduced consumer spending and economic instability and social tensions and disruptions.

Informalization

Informalization of the labour market represents a situation in which the ratio of the informal labour force to the formal labour force or the share of the informal labour force in the total labour force increases over time. The original concept of informal economy was developed within the International Labour Organisation (ILO) at the beginning of the 1970s (Bangasser, 2000), and was associated exclusively with analyses of economic and social processes in Third World countries (Portes, 1994).

The global research policy network Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), in association with ILO has coined a new definition for informal economy. It comprised of all forms of 'informal employment'-that is, employment without labour or social protection-both inside and outside informal enterprises, including both self-employment in small unregistered enterprises and wage employment in unprotected jobs (Chen 2007, Chen 2012). Two notions of informalization are proposed: informalization from above and informalization from below. Informalization from above includes corporate strategies of downsizing, outsourcing and subcontracting, as well as the coping strategies of the welfare state, both of which contain dynamic forces of informalization in economies and labour markets. Informalization from below is constituted by a range of marginalized actors (low-income earners, small-business owners active in work-intensive and highly competitive markets, immigrants and irregular migrants), who share a common condition manifested in the lack of legal status and protection, extreme vulnerability and a dependence on informal engagements that generate their own idiosyncratic 'political economy' (Slavnic, 2010). During the1990s, globalization of the economy contributed to the informalization of the workforce in many industries and countries (Standing, 1999). The informal workforce in India is an estimated 370 million workers, nearly 93% of the total workforce. The informal workforce is comprised of three main segments: informal employment in agriculture (including small farmers and agricultural labour), informal employment in informal enterprises (including employers, own account workers and employees), and informal employment outside informal enterprises (including industrial home workers sub-contracted by formal firms and domestic workers engaged by households).

Plan of Work

An extensive study was undertaken in the tea belt in Peermade Taluk, Idukki District. The Taluk includes 10 villages: Elappara, Kokkayar, Kumily, Manjumala, Mlappara, Peermade, Periyar, Peruvanthanam, and Vagamon. The five panchayats that come under the Taluk are: Upputhara, Elappara, Peermade, Kumily and Vandiperiyar. The taluk has a population of 1,75,622 of which is 87391 are male and 88231 female. The Taluk is bilingual with 65% people speak Malayalam and the rest Tamil. The Tamil speaking population is mostly associated with the tea plantations, descendants of those indentured labourers who arrived in this area from the nearby Tamil Nadu in the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century till 1980s.

The researcher has chosen 10 tea plantations for the study. This includes: Malankara Tea, Churakkulam Tea, Haileyburia Tea Company, MMJ Plantations, Periyar Connemara, Peermade Tea Company (TR&T), Poabs Tea, Bethel Plantations, HML Plantations, and AVT Tea. The first two are the small plantations, while the next three come in the medium scale. The last five are large plantations. Peermade Tea Company, Bethel, Poabs, HML and MMJ are poorly managed and the rest are better managed. Few samples were collected from Peermade Tea Company, an abandoned plantation for the last two decades.

The research used a mixed method. It combined elements of quantitative and qualitative research to answer the research questions. Using a structured questionnaire schedule, data was collected from 168 estate workers spread over 4 Panchayats in Peermade Taluk. Snowball sampling technique was used to identify

respondents. Interviews were conducted with key informants, local leaders, Panchayat authorities, politicians, management representatives, bureaucrats and scholars.

Tea: Opportunity and Crisis

Tea in Kerala was commercially introduced in 1875 with the active support of the British. This transformed the agricultural history of Kerala and opened an arena of commercial plantations besides cardamom and coffee. The rapid expansion of plantations along the slopes of Western Ghats during the colonial period was due to a variety of reasons: ideal climate, British entrepreneurship and capital, global demand for tea and technological developments in production and transport. The formal abolition of slavery in Travancore did not have any impact in plantations. Legislations like the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act of 1859 had reinforced the slavery. Continuous absconding of labourers from the tea plantations due to merciless punishments, hostile living conditions, starvation and rigorous labour without proper rest or food were common in tea plantations. The hierarchical, four-tier system in the plantations (with owner, manager, *kangani* and worker) reproduced the exploitative system.

The dalit/adivasi plantation workers were at the core of tea capitalism, whose lives were under constant subjection. Jayaseelan Raj has identified the situation of plantation workers as 'categorical oppression'. It "refers to how different categories of identity of the workers, including caste, class, ethnicity, language and place of origin, are stigmatised, inferiorised and lived through by the workforce in the context of the crisis. It is through categorical oppression that the workers are reproduced both as a source of cheap labour and as one of the most stigmatised groups within the larger social hierarchies they produced commodities mainly for the international market" (Raj, 2022). Plantations are best described as a state within a state (Baak, 1997) where the dictates of plantation management always prevail.

The importance of tea in Independent India comes in two ways: as a commodity that earns foreign exchange and an employer for millions. The Central Tea Board Act of 1949 provided for the development of the tea industry under Central control. The labour repression regime unleashed by the plantation management had undergone changes when legally constituted trade unions entered the scene after independence. The plantation enclosures were partially opened to let in TUs. The Plantation Labour Act (1951) (PLA) is a landmark legislation for workers' empowerment. The Act applies to any land used for growing tea, coffee, rubber, cinchona and cardamom which covers 5 hectares or more and in which fifteen or more persons are employed. The PLA requires the employer to provide the workers with medical facilities, housing, sickness and maternity benefits and other social security measures. The Act provides for the setting up of canteens, crèches, recreational facilities, suitable accommodation and educational facilities for the benefit of plantation workers and their families in and around the workplaces in the plantation estate. It made restrictions on working hours, rest and leisure. Besides this, Employees' Compensation Act, (1923), Payment of Gratuity Act, (1972), Employees' Provident Fund & Miscellaneous Provision Act, (1952), Payment of Bonus Act, (1965), Maternity Benefit Act, (1961), Payment of Wages Act, (1936), Equal Remuneration Act, (1976), Factories Act and Industrial Employment (Standing Order) Act and (1946), Industrial Disputes Act, (1947) helped workers to improve their lot.

The formation of the state of Kerala in 1956 and the coming into power of the first communist government in 1957 were watershed events for the worker unity in the state. Though Land Reform legislations did not impact tea plantations, its moral message was loud and clear. The system of tripartite dispute settlement mechanism comprising of the representatives of trade unions, employers and government was an innovative step in the labour history of India. Except occasional agitations, trade unionism during 1950-1990 was mostly peaceful. Managements' authoritarian attitude was mellowed due to government and TU stand. Due to general economic buoyancy in the tea sector during 1950-90, the workers received a trickle of the profit by way of prompt payment of wages, allowances and retirement benefits.

Globalization and political realignments in the West brought in unexpected crisis to tea sector. Though

the impact was felt along the entire value chain, it proved devastating for those at the lower end. Once and for all, the state support and protection enjoyed by the industry were gone, leaving behind companies to global competition. The new import-export policies, tariff concessions, commodity quotas etc. had resulted in sudden price dips which the small and medium range companies could hardly accommodate. Changes in the auction system, new competitors at the national and international levels and futures trade had eroded the profit margins of companies. Tea producing companies with experience in blending, packaging and retailing had a better chance of survival than the traditional black tea producers. The crisis in the tea plantation sector has forced few owners to sell the estates under their control to new owners having little experience and interest in tea business. Absence of care to bushes eventually led to sub-optimal production of green leaves. Scientific techniques adopted for productivity increase were not adopted by managements, compounding loss.

Globalization has augmented labour precarity. The livelihood security of plantation workers has been seriously threatened when the labour welfare was sought to be decoupled from bare minimum wages, a retreat to the colonial times. Though not stated explicitly, the state and the trade union leadership implicitly admit that worker welfare would have to be trimmed down if the industry were to exist. The management had succeeded in having different classes of workers, like permanent, temporary and casual. The following section provides a ringside view of the labour process in the Peermade plantations.

Workers' Life in the Plantations

The lower end of the tea value chain is an ideal locale to explore the structures of exploitation developed over a century and half back whose continuity is sought to be perpetuated against a weakening welfare state and activist trade unions. In this section, the results of the empirical study are discussed in detail.

Category of Workforce

The plantations now have three categories of workers. The descendants of the backward Tamils brought to the plantations from late 19th century till the 1970s. This category is called "permanent workers" who technically are entitled for wages and allowances. The crisis and the wage stagnation in the tea sector has compelled several families to return to their native places as they foresaw any further prospects in the plantations. The young generation who got service sector jobs quit the plantation jobs. The second category is the retired yet continuing as temporary workers. After retirement at 60, a permanent worker can continue in the estate as long as they are willing to work. However, such employees could only be considered as temporary workers. The only additional benefit such employees receive is their continued right of occupation in the estate lines. Several workers continue in the estate after retirement due to the fact that either they have no children or heir to work in the estate or their children refusing to take up jobs in the estate for reasons of low wages.

The casual labour system is the worst form labour exploitation in plantations developed in recent times. The labourers are brought by contractors from India's East and North East. Presently nearly 45-60% of the labour force requirement is met by the guest workers. The management is not bound to pay any bonus or allowances. The workers like cattle, are herded into estate lines, mostly unfit for occupation. The managements keep the workers for 11 months at a stretch and on completion of the period; their service is 'terminated'. The non-'unionized guest workers are a dispensable lot for both management as well as trade union leadership(interview with Senthil kumar, Secretary, CPI(M) Local Committee, Chengara on 13/12/ 2022).

Estate Lines: A Legacy from the Past

An interesting phenomenon visible in the plantations is that the management is abdicating its responsibility of providing the infrastructure and welfare assistance to the workers. The phenomenal growth of state welfare in recent decades has replaced the companies' dwindling assistance. As plantations cover

extensive geographical area, several vital services lie outside of it, rendering access difficult. The study found that majority of the (83.3%) respondents stay in the estate lines. The primitive two-room less than 500 sq ft housing blocs were built several decades ago. For want of repair, these buildings are in dilapidated condition. Family strength shows that single member and double member households constitute 15.5% and the 21.4% respectively. In 39.3% households, the family strength is 3-4 while in 23.8% households, the strength is 5 or above. This makes life miserable.

About 75% of the estate lines have a life of over 100 years. Dwelling units are built in a row with two rooms. Materials used for the construction of walls are rock and mud. For roof, tiles were used. The wooden planks used to support the roof often give way due to moth attack and leakage. Each estate line quarters consisted of a small enclosed veranda, a room and a kitchen. The main room, though small, is internally partitioned by occupants for their convenience. The floors are coarsely cemented with number of pot holes. The walls are lime-coated. There is little space for keeping firewood dry. There is no attached toilet. Adult family members hardly have any privacy within the house.

The location of estate housing is not based on the convenience of workers, but on the basis of its easy access to plantation location. Managements scuttle all plans for state-supported housing for fear of losing the property. Senior estate workers encounter the problem of finding an appropriate place of stay after retirement. Those who could able to buy a plot of land outside the plantation could avail housing under certain government schemes. The plantations, despite have illegal possession; have turned a deaf ear to the workers' demand for housing plots for rehabilitation after retirement.

Healthcare Woes

Except drinking for water and anganwadi, the plantations lack several essential services near to workers' residence. Though Plantation Labour Act mandates the establishment of estate hospitals, as many as 12 estate hospitals were closed after the tea crisis. The remaining hospitals have downgraded their services. Several hospitals provide the service of visiting doctors for few hours. For 56% respondents, PHCs are located more than 3 kms away. For 87% respondents, advanced health care is beyond the easily accessible limit. According to Pradip Kumar, a trade union leader, about 10-12 plantation hospitals were closed since the onset of the crisis. For serious diseases, the workers would have to travel several kilometers to reach Kottayam, Madurai or Mundakkayam. The study found that 59.5% of the respondents reported inordinate delay in medical reimbursement. Most of the workers are not in a position to bear out-of-pocket health expenditures. The study further found that instances of cancer are on the increase in plantations, in all probability due to the indiscriminate use of pesticides or unscientific handling of pesticides and herbicides.

Education

The study found that the workers did not make much headway in education. About 44 % of the respondents have primary education and 33% have secondary education. Those who went to high school constitute only 16.7%. Surprisingly, none has college education. Illiterates constitute 6% of the sample. The issue of dropout from school was a common phenomenon during earlier times. Data on schools show that few have the luck to have schools closer to home. For majority, it is more than three km away. A distance of more than three km makes much difference in plantations as most of the schools do not have own vehicles. The public transport system in plantations is not as good as in the plains of Kerala. The incentive for education among students is low.

The single most important welfare measure that helped prevent plantation workers to fall into the spiraling poverty was the state-supported rationing system. The workers have always been living on the edge of poverty and deprivation due to the suboptimal income for the family. The study found that ration shops are established in all strategic points in the plantations. The distance to be covered by the worker to get the rations is small.

Employment

Tea sector employment is labour intensive. Plucking of tea leaves takes place round the year. Except extreme days of monsoon and summer fresh leaves could be extracted. Production of green leaves takes place in a cycle of two weeks. Naturally field duties (plucking of Green Leaves, pruning, weeding, manuring and spraying of pesticides) require more workers. The study shows that 72.6% of the workers are deployed for field duties whereas factory work requires 16.7% employees. About 11% does both the duties.

Field work consists of plucking leaves from the field. Women are mostly employed for this. For every 30-women tea leaf collector, a field supervisor is appointed. Field workers should report for duty at 8 am when muster is taken. After that they are sent to the respective place for work. The scheduled time of work begins at 9 am till 4.30 pm. In between the management permits two tea breaks (half an hour each) and a lunch break (one hour). A worker has to pluck 27 Kg of tea leaves a day and is paid for every extra kilo of leaves plucked. The worker is paid 80 paisa/kilo for the first 14 kg. For the next 14 kg, Rs. 1.10 is paid. The next 14 kg fetches Rs. 1.50/kg. A worker is allowed to leave the site only after 4.30 pm regardless of whether she/he completes his/her task early. After 4.30 pm, their collection is weighed and entered in the worker cards. Technically, the workers could leave their place of work only by 5 pm (interview with Dilep, Supervisor, Wallardie Estate on 10/01/2023).

The condition of women workers is very miserable. They get up early in the morning to complete the household chores. They have to pack their lunch and leave the estate lines sufficiently early to reach the muster house on time. The condition of work is extremely difficult during monsoon time. A female worker's labour does not end at 5 pm. While returning home, they have to gather firewood, fetch water, wash clothes, clean house and cook food for dinner (interview with Sadanandan, AITUC, Elappara on 04/11/2022).

When asked about the regularity of employment in the estates, 72.6% said that they get 4-6 days of work every week while 27.4% replied that they get only three or lesser number of jobs per week. Estate works extend for all six days of the week. Those who claim they work for less than three days are mostly temporary workers. All retired staff, if wish to continue, can do so as temporary workers. Management reserves the right to permit a worker to work. Sometimes certain number of workers is prevented from taking up jobs in the plantation, apparently with the objective of teaching the workers a lesson (interview with Sadanandan, AITUC, Elappara on 04/11/2022).

The study found that all respondents have debt, mainly from private moneylenders. While exploring the reason for the debt, majority (85%) replied that it is for social functions at home like marriage, childbirth, rituals associated with death etc. This is followed by hospital expenses (64%). Respondents' sources of loan are from two sources: collection by way of informal chit among friends. The second is from private money lenders. They are Tamil people living outside the estate. Such borrowings are due to poor repaying capacity of workers.

Condition in Closed Plantations

Tea plantation has the highest labour intensity with average 2.28 persons employed per day per hectare. This is contrasted with rubber plantation having 0.52 persons per day per hectare, 0.30 persons per day per for coffee and 0.50 for cardamom. This shows that a relatively larger percent of workforce depends on a unit of tea plantation than any other cash crop. Any shut down of the plantation entails severe socio-economic disruption for them. It has already been revealed that the closing or abandonment of plantations was not only the result of a global crisis in the sector but equally the result of poor and inefficient management. The immediate result of closure was the stoppage of the sole source of income by way of wages. Workers almost immediately were thrown into the vortex of penury. Seeking job outside the plantations is not easy for two reasons: most of the estate lines are located deep inside the plantations and the worker would have to commute several hours to reach a new job site. Secondly, the tea plantation workers were not accustomed to take up works other than what they have been doing for long (Interview with Kingsley, worker, Peermade Tea Company on 13/09/2022).

Upon closure of plantations, leaders of all trade unions met to form a committee. This was a rare show of collective strength. They divided the plantation area among trade unions, based on their relative strength. A certain number of tea plants were allotted to each worker family. The division of plantations is not only on the basis of the number of worker families, but also on the basis of trade union control. Workers are allowed to pluck leaves from the allotted plants. Leaves are weighed and sent to processing centres by trade unions through agents. Each union has a designated leader to look after the process of tea leaf extraction, measurement and transport. Trade unions extract a commission in the whole process. At two stages, green leaves are weighed: at collection point and at the factory site. There is possibility of malpractice during weighing. Factories usually give low price for 'brought leaf'. The reason for this is that brought leaves are of inferior quality than the one they get from their own plantations. Workers would have to wait for weeks before they get paid for their labour. According to several workers from abandoned plantations, the current practice of individual ownership is only theoretically good. The practice shows numerous issues. Primarily, abandoned plantations had low production and productivity (that is one of the reasons for abandonment of plantations). When workers were allotted the land, activities like weeding, pruning, manuring, spraying etc. became individual responsibility. The remuneration workers receive by way of selling green leaves, is not enough to cover their daily expenses and the upkeep activities in plantations. This would result in lax upkeep of their allotted land.

Abandoned plantations mean a complete stoppage of all payments (including arrear) due for workers. Basic facilities like periodic repair of estate lines, provision for electricity, water, sanitation, health care, transport etc. became the responsibility of workers. Already in precarity, the worker could not have taken up any further responsibilities, no matter how dear it would be for them. The only income for them is by way of selling the green leaves. Very few in the family were lucky enough to get outside employment. Several workers attested that they merely survived on the ration from the PDS and other welfare measures made available by state government to workers.

Kingsly, a leader of INTUC and worker from Peermade Tea Company said that all trade unions were united in illegally selling the movable properties belonging to the estate. They further colluded for illegally selling estate property to outside people. TUs got money for illegally renting estate lines to outsiders. Ayyappan, a worker from the same estate, had the same opinion.

Wage Issues

Workers are currently paid Rs. 400 plus Rs. 30 as DA a day. The hike was made in 2015. The Plantation Labour Committee meeting held in June 2023 had made a nominal increase of Rs. 41, which the workers consider as inadequate. When asked about whether they are satisfied with the current wages, an overwhelming majority (97.6%) replied that they were not satisfied at all. Valli, a worker from MMJ Plantations said that the payment of salary was defaulted for two months. She was borrowing money for daily expenses. Managements have a justification for the delay in payment. Wages are not paid in full by the management. Instead, the practice of *kaikasu* (part payment) is resorted to. *Kaikasu* system is common in all studied plantations. Workers are paid Rs. 1800 a week. This includes DA as well. Workers and TU demand month-end settlement. Citing delay in payment from auction centres, such settlements get further delayed. Mariselvam, a worker from Bethel plantations said the month-end clearance of balance wages is delayed for two months. By resorting to such illegal and unethical practices, the managements are able to use workers' wages, running into crores for other purposes. When it comes to bonus, 77.4% replied that bonus is not paid on time. According to the Bonus Act 1965, workers are eligible to get bonus anywhere between 8.33 to 20%. In the aftermath of the *PombulaiOrumai* agitation held in September 2015, an agreement between the state, management and TU was made by which the management is mandated to give 8.33% bonus and 11.67% ex-gratia. This however, remained a dead letter till date. As far as Retirement benefits are concerned, 63.1% said that companies default on payment. It was found that all estates taken for study have defaulted on the payment of gratuity. Several workers have approached court for the payment of gratuity. As legal fights involve

huge expenditure, workers seldom resort to this. Mani, INTUC leader from Vandiperiyar said that the companies do not regularly remit their share of the gratuity. Similarly, the management does not remit the LIC contribution deducted from the salary of the workers. The workers come to know about such irregularities at the time of retirement.

Changing Role of TUs

The impact of neoliberal globalization on the plantation sector was acutely felt in India. The removal of governmental controls and regulations in export and import has resulted in the plummeting of price of cash crops including tea. Citing this opportunity, the plantation owners started implementing a series of anti-labour policies to which the trade unions could raise only feeble resistance.The managements threatened the state and TUs with closure of plantations if pressed further.

There has been much criticism against trade unions in Kerala for corruption and overbearing attitude. TUs' organic link with workers has lost as the former tend to become careerists. Only 13% of the respondents enthusiastically support the TUs for their role in the enhancement of worker wages. About 81% said that the TU activities on wages are "satisfactory". About 6% replied that their role is rather "poor". Workers normally don't speak against TUs for fear of retribution. That is the reason why majority replied as 'satisfactory'. Workers do not expect TUs would bring in radical changes in the sector and an improvement of their living conditions. What they expect instead, is marginal changes. And TUs are still capable of facilitating such demands from workers.

There are mainly three trade unions in the tea plantation sector in Peermade: CITU, INTUC and AITUC. Peermade ThottamThozhilali Union (PTT) is affiliated to CITU. High Range Estate Laborers Association (HELA) is an affiliate of AITUC. High Range Plantation Employees Union (HRPE) and Kerala Pradesh Workers' Union (KPWU) are affiliated to INTUC. In terms of membership, CITU comes first (45.2%), followed by INTUC (42.9%) and AITUC (10.7%). Only 1.2% of respondents have no TU affiliation. Plantations have near total trade union membership. Enrolling the workers into trade unions is not a voluntary act. Under the dominant power of trade unions, workers are compelled to enroll into TUs. Workers lack a sense of choice on account of their poor education and lack of political exposure. When asked, majority of the workers said the renewal of membership was done on compulsion. How often the worker would participate in TU-called meetings assumes importance. Only 56% replied that they would 'always' participate in TU meetings. Those who said 'sometimes', work out to be 10.7%. One third of the respondents said that they never participated in TU meetings. Though TUs would not admit that their relative power in the plantations has declined, workers know it better. Only 6% admit that TUs play an 'excellent' role in resolving issues at work sites. A large majority (86.9%) however, would like to rate them as 'satisfactory', a grudging approval by the workers. When it comes to major issues affecting tea sector, like decline in price of produce, economic loss for small and medium plantations, labour unrest due to stagnation in wages, default in payment of wages and allowances and closure of plantations, TUs' protests yielded limited results. The pessimism is apparent among workers as well. The survey revealed that nearly 40% of the workers did not at all believe that TU activism can change the present condition of labour.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion shows that the current crisis gripping the tea plantation sector has multiple dimensions and tends to persist unless systemic changes are made. The management's policy of 'race to the bottom' has severely undermined basic rights of workers for a decent life. The denial/delay in payment of salary, allowances and retirement benefits amounts to violation of the provisions of several welfare acts. The owners were never held responsible for the mismanagement of plantations and the cost always invariably is passed onto workers. With large swathes of land under their control, the managements have long term plans of converting plantations for other purposes. The crisis in tea sector has resulted in weakening of trade unions' bargaining power and the ability to organize workers on political lince. Torn between the traditional path of agitation on the one side and compromises for industry survival on the other, TUs have lost credibility.

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The Peaceful 'One World' Manifesto*

B. Vivekanandan

The peaceful One World Manifesto for building up a peaceful and prosperous one world has been prepared for the universal welfare of all people in the world. For building up a peaceful, prosperous, and contented One World, it is imperative to effectively remove the dichotomy between the objectives of the international peace organisations, like the United Nations, and the objectives of the nation states. The way of doing it is to establish complementary peace structures, at national and international levels, with a unity of purpose. This manifesto contains a national level peace structure, a Welfare State System, in all countries, complemented by a Common Security System, encompassing all countries at the regional and global levels, in a larger frame of 'One World', for the well-being of all people in the world.

Key words : One World Manifesto, Universal Welfare State System, Common Security System, Vasudhaiva Kudumbakom, Vedas, Upanishads.

The Peaceful One World Manifesto for building up a peaceful and prosperous one world has been prepared, after churning the knowledge and experience the author has gained on world politics and security during the last 65 years, for the universal welfare of all people in the world. The three main components of this *One World Manifesto* are: A Peaceful and prosperous 'One World', which is the end; and 'A Universal Welfare State System', complemented by 'A Common Security System', which are the means.

The One World Concept

'One World' is a concept, derived from thousands of years old Indian thought, like the *Advaita* and the *Vasudhaiva Kudumbakom,* embedded in *Vedas* and *Upanishads.* They proclaimed the indivisibility of the humanity, and featured the Earth, and its inhabitants, as a grand family. These gems remained submerged until Sri Sankaracharya dived into *Vedas* and *Upanishads* and lifted them up, and presented them to the world of knowledge, in the 8th Century A.D. In modern times, Swami Vivekananda elaborated their content, and meaning, to the wider world, a Century-and-a-half ago. The quintessence of his elaboration was that, all humans are equals, and are brothers and sisters of the same family.

A Divided World

But, today, we are living in a divided world, composed of nation states, with daggers drawn against one another, in the name of national security, and under the influence of negative doctrines like the deterrence doctrine, and wasting a lot of precious world resources, which, otherwise, could have been used for the welfare of all people, everywhere in the world.

A Shrinking World

But, the gleam in it is that, today we are living in a shrinking world. The communication technology has drastically reduced distances between places, countries and Continents. Yesterday's distant places are today's neighbourhoods.

In addition, the inter-dependence between countries and Continents has also grown phenomenally.

There is an increasing realisation of the destructive consequences of managing countries' affairs, in a confrontationist mode, and the advantages of managing their affairs in a co-operative, solidarity-based mode. All these factors underline the value of countries functioning in a solidarity-based edifice of "One World". Indeed, the establishment of a solidarity-based 'One World' is a historical necessity.

Welfare State System - The Best One

Another component of this *One World Manifesto*, is the institutionalisation of the Welfare State System, as a humanising domestic peace structure, in all countries of the world. No doubt, of all social systems constructed in the World, the Welfare State System is the best one. This is so because, it operates, universally, on the basis of equality without discrimination. It also makes the State, and the Government, the most credible guardian of all inhabitants of the country, without discrimination,

A Social Democratic Construct

At the outset, the modern Welfare State System is a Social democratic construct, which has the potential to create a new culture, and a new civilisation, in the world. It is my conviction that the Welfare State System, which protects every person at all stages of his/her life, is the best peace-begetting structure, for all peace-loving countries to embrace. It is a benign-state-led, movement for peace, equality and justice in society.

Scandinavian countries, like Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland, have successfully institutionalised the Welfare State System, during the last nine decades, with salutary results, that they are rated as the most peaceful, and contented, societies in the world. A recent survey rated Finland as the happiest country in the world.

This author had the opportunity to repeatedly go and stay in these countries to study their Welfare State Systems and their impact on the psyche of their peoples and societies, and on their international relations.

From the Cradle-to-the-Grave

The Scandinavians call their system as "From the Cradle-to-the -Grave Welfare State System". They call it so, because the Welfare State's protection to a person begins, as soon as a child is born. At the time of a child's birth, the mother is presented with a box, bearing a government seal on it, containing baby clothes and other baby care items needed for a new born. From then onwards, the State's responsibility for the child's wellbeing continues all through its life. Every child gets a child allowance, free education, and free medical care. After education, the state is responsible for the provision of a gainful employment for the person, failing which, it has to provide unemployment allowance for him/her. The full employment policy of these welfare states ensures it. When a person retires, he/she gets adequate pension to maintain the quality of life, he/she enjoyed prior to the retirement, in addition to free medical care. And, finally, when a person dies, his/her funeral/burial expenditure is also met by the State. That is how the Cradle-to-the-Grave Welfare State System works in a country like Sweden. The System guarantees an acceptable living standard for every one universally. Thus, Social Security for everyone has been assured.

The Impact

In Scandinavia, the Welfare State System has functioned as an incentive to goodness. It has promoted a peace psyche in all its people. Cumulatively, the Welfare State System functions as a peace structure at the national level. It has promoted a co-operative, solidarity-based, pacifist, tendency at people's level, which has a direct impact on State's behaviour as well.

Taking all aspects into consideration, it may be seen that, no other system in the world protects its citizens universally, in a similar way, as the Welfare State System does. It engenders a new ethos, conducive for building up a peaceful, co-operative, and solidarity-based, relationship among peoples, cultures and Continents. The System humanises societies, and promotes pacifist tendencies in people's interactions. Therefore, establishment of the Welfare State System in all countries of the world is imperative for the establishment of a peaceful and prosperous 'One World', which this manifesto envisages.

Common Security System

The third component of this peaceful *One World Manifesto* is the Common Security System, which would not only radically cut down the defence expenditure of all countries of the world, but also would enable countries to establish a more transparent, peaceful, and co-operative international relationship.

Deterrence Doctrine and Arms Race

It may be noted that national security of most countries of the world today is steered by the deterrence doctrine. The deterrence doctrine trumpets that, a nation can deter or prevent its potential enemy from attacking it, by a constant display of superior fire power. It means that in order to prevent an attack on it, a nation has to constantly upgrade its fire-power, for a continuous show of stick, to the potential adversary. Most of the countries, big and small, were driven to swallow this tenderhook, and adopt it as the doctrine of their national security, without realising its debilitating consequence of a constant drain of precious national resources. In due course, the deterrence doctrine stimulated a perpetual arms race in the world, and caused the wastage of vast world resources, which otherwise, could have been fruitfully used for improving the quality of life of people everywhere in the world.

Waste of Resources

Certainly, maintenance of a credible deterrence is a costly affair, even for Super Powers. In a world of high military technology, weapons are made obsolete in short spans of time, by the arms producers, to stimulate fresh demands for new arms, which, in effect, is a recurring wastage of national resources. Caught by the tenderhook of the deterrence doctrine, every year, nations are spending about 2 trillion dollars, for piling up an ever bulging arms garbage. The merchants of 75 per cent of these arms are five countries - United States, Russia, Germany, France and China. Therefore, for the welfare of the humanity everywhere, it is imperative to effectively stop this perpetual wastage of world resoures, through the liberation of national security from the trap of the deterrence doctrine.

Olof Palme's Common Security

A Swedish Social Democratic statesman, and a former prime minister, Olof Palme, paid attention to this important question, and came up with the Common Security System as the alternative to the deterrence doctrine, to ensure national security at the lowest possible cost. Olof Palme's Common Security, is a solidarity approach in international security relations. The centre-piece of it is to achieve national and global security, through co-operation and solidarity, by enveloping national security polices of all countries, with a global peace structure. It demands an end to arms race and military competition, through multi-lateral negotiations, and collective responsibility, for national security. It urges countries that, instead of joining the arms race, they should pursue co-operative policies, and organise their security policies in co-operation with one another.

The Methodology

The methology to establish Common Security is a phased one: first, by curbing the arms race; and, then, by effecting a balanced and negotiated reduction of arms - nuclear and Conventional. It demands, a downward spiral of armaments by countries, on the basis of agreements, arrived at multi-lateral negotiations, and reduce their offensive capabilities to the minimum, and rely more upon their defensive structures. In the right perspective, Common Security is not a military doctrine, but a political doctrine, since security of countries is ensured, through joint, multi-lateral, political decisions, at regional and global levels, and, by promoting positive inter-dependence and international solidarity. It is a policy, rooted in international co-operation. Common prosperity is the maxim.

Common Security wants to dispense with all atomic weapons, and also wants, a steep reduction of conventional arms, and, of the number of military personnel.

Taken together, Common Security would make, a major resource input for the economic and social

development in the world, and unfold a new form of international co-operation, based on peace, freedom, equality and solidarity, between peoples and countries.

Why League of Nations and the UNO Failed

During the course of my studies and research on peace and security, I have examined the question of why international peace super structures, like the League of Nations and the United Nations, have failed to deliver their declared objective of the prevention of wars in the world. The main reason of their failure was, the built-in dichotomy in the *de facto* objectives of those international peace structures, and of their national components. It has been found that while keeping the League of Nations and the United Nations largely as talking shops of international peace, the system did not stop their national components from building up war machines, to fight wars with neighbouring countries, to fulfil their unfair national ambitions to conquer and expand. As a result, under the nose of the League of Nations, Germany, under Adolf Hitler, had pursued its policy of aggression, by use of force, which ignited the Second World War. In the current epoch, under the nose of the United Nations, People's Republic of China is pursuing an expansionist policy by use of force, which, unless effectively punctured, has the potential to ignite a Third World War. What Russia is doing in Ukraine now is another example.

Need of Complementary Peace Structures

For building up a peaceful, prosperous, and contented One World, it is imperative to effectively remove the dichotomy between the objectives of the international peace organisations, like the United Nations, and the objectives of the nation states. The way of doing it is to establish complementary peace structures, at national and international levels, with a unity of purpose.

I have already explained, the salient features, and the dynamism, of each one of the three main components of this *One World Manifesto* the One World System, the Welfare State System, and the Common Security System - and their potential peace impact on each other, and, how their synchronised operation would establish a new, peaceful and prosperous One World, where the humanity, as a whole, would lead a happy and contented life. The manifesto contains a national level peace structure, a Welfare State System, in all countries, complemented by a Common Security System, encompassing all countries at the regional and global levels, in a larger frame of 'One World', for the well-being of all people in the world.

The Flaw in the Present System

In the preparation of this *One World Manifesto*, for building up a solidarity-based peaceful and prosperous global community, I was moved with a conviction that, there is a fundamental flaw in the way the world is organised and administered today, and that, organising and administering countries in a confrontationist mode, would deprive their people, the quality of life they deserve, and are entitled to. It is my conviction that if the Society is organised in a constructive way, based on the principles of equality, equity, freedom and democracy, the Earth has provided to all its inhabitants with more than what they all needed to live in peace, prosperity and happiness. It must be recognised that all inhabitants in the world have equal rights over the bounty of the Earth. Therefore, it is imperative that countries should be organised and administered in a co-operative/solidarity mode, on a larger One World frame. Internally, all countries should be transformed into humane, peace begetting Welfare State Systems, as peace structures. Externally, they should adopt Common Security as the system for their national defence. It is my conviction that the synchronisation of these two mutually reinforcing peace structures at national, regional and global levels, would banish wars forever. When they get applied in a "One World" frame, the result, inevitably, will be universal peace, security and prosperity. The rationale, and the nitty-gritty of why and how, to do it, is detailed in my recent book, *The Welfare State System And Common Security: A Global Vision For A Common Future*, published in London, by palgrave Macmillan. I urge all statesmen of the world, to adopt this *One World Manifesto*, and implement it, for the welfare of the humanity.

Collective Action for Quality Assurance in Indian Railways: A Case Study on 'Friends on Rails' in Kerala

Dickson David

A commuters' association serves as a powerful advocate for the collective interests and needs of travelers, influencing transportation policies and services to improve the overall commuting experience. This paper presents a case study on the roles and functions of the train commuters' association named 'Friends on Rails' (FoR) to influence quality variables of transportation - safety, reliability, speed, ease, comfort and overall travel experience. The study employs qualitative research methods, including surveys, interviews, and observations. The findings suggest that collective actions of 'Friends on Rails' have significantly reduced information asymmetry, and it continues to be a pressure group for addressing the issues regarding rail transportation.

1.0 Introduction

Consumer associations play an important role in representing the interests of consumers and advocating for better goods and services. These associations aim to ensure that the rights of the consumers are protected and that their grievances are addressed timely and effectively by the producers or the suppliers or the service providers. In the case of railway transportation, the associations engage in collective efforts to ensure quality travel - safety, reliability, on-time arrival at boarding and destination points, hygienic environment and hassle-free travel - for passengers. The collective actions of such organizations contribute to the development and growth of the railway system for the benefit of all passengers.

Indian Railways (IR) was established in 1853. Its purpose was to protect the interests of the British administration. After independence, the enterprise became the lifeline of the Indian economy; enabling geographic connectivity, resource mobility and trade activities. It is the single largest employer in India, accommodating a workforce of over 1.3 million individuals. Passenger traffic originating in IR was 809 crore during pre-Covid-19 period (2019-20) and transported originating freight of 1512 MT across the nation in 2022-23 (Economic Survey, 2023; Press Information Bureau, 2023). The railway sector in India aims to contribute about 1.5% to the country's GDP by building infrastructure to support 45% of the model freight share of the economy (Invest India, 2023).

Critically evaluating, monopoly induced inefficiencies of the IR resulted in low productivity, lack of customer orientation and poor quality of services (Mukherjee & Ruchika, 2004). Railway's new missions like 'Hungry for Cargo' reveals that the organisation focuses on attracting cargo rather than attracting passengers. Due to this, it can be argued that the Railways is lagging behind in providing quality services to the passengers. It is in such circumstances that consumer associations like Friends on Rails (FoR) become relevant to be a pressure group to get addressed the grievances of passengers and to ensure quality services within a monopolistic industry.

In the above stated background, it is significant to raise certain queries such as:

- What were the circumstances that led to the formation of FoR?
- What type of association is FoR, whether just a community network of daily commuters or a pressure group or both?

- Whether any type of interaction exists between FoR and IR? If any, what type of interaction? Whether there exists a mutual interaction or just one-way interaction?

  Based on the above raised questions, this study has the following specific objectives:

- To identify and examine the performance of FoR in the form of its functions and roles

- To assess the interaction of FoR and IR

1.1 Theoretical backgrounds

Three distinct theoretical frameworks are deemed crucial for this case study:

i. The theory of groups and organisations by Olson (1971)

This framework prescribes a theoretical perspective that explains how individuals with shared interests come together to pursue their common interest. The theory states that, from an economist's perspective, the primary function of any organisation or association is to advance the common interests of groups of individuals. Also, organizations often perish if they do nothing to further the interests of their members.

ii. The theory of customer needs by Hagen & Pauline (2013)

Hagen and Pauline (*Ibid*) offer a hierarchical structure of customer requirements that reflects the perceived quality provided by transportation providers, as expressed in their work. The structure of customer needs is presented in the figure.

Source: Hagen and Pauline (Ibid)

1. Safety and reliability form the foundation of the pyramid of customer needs. For passengers, safety is crucial, as it is a prerequisite for choosing a mode of transportation. Reliability, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which passengers receive what they expect. If a service is not available when and where customers need it, it leads to dissatisfaction. Therefore, trains must not only run on time but also provide trustworthy information and make it available when passengers need it.

2. Speed is the primary customer requirement. Most passengers prefer to travel with the shortest possible travel time between their origin and destination.

3. Easiness is another essential customer need. Passengers expect to travel conveniently and with minimal hassle. Travel information and signposting should be logical and unambiguous to help passengers.

4. Comfort is also a crucial requirement for passengers. They expect comfortable seating areas, sheltered waiting areas, food and refreshment facilities at the station, and comfortable seats on the train.

5.   Finally, passengers expect a pleasant experience during their journey. This can be influenced by visual aspects such as architecture, design, cleanliness, used materials, colour, daylight, smell, and music. Offering facilities such as shops and cafes and the presence of staff enhance a pleasant journey.

This study examines the collective actions of FoR in ensuring railway service quality in accordance with the customer needs and perceptions of quality.

iii. The theory of interaction of formal and informal institutions of Helmke-Levitsky (2003)

Helmke-Levitsky (*Ibid*) offers a framework to systematically model four distinct types of informal institutions based on their interaction with formal institutions: complementary, accommodating, competing, and substitutive.

1. Complementary: Complementary informal institutions are characterized by coexisting with effective formal institutions and sharing congruous objectives between formal and informal systems. These informal institutions serve to bridge the gaps left unaddressed by formal institutions, harmoniously collaborate with them, and contribute to their enhanced functionality.

2. Accommodating: In scenarios where formal institutions prove effective but the objectives of formal and informal actors clash, accommodating informal institutions emerge. These informal institutions serve to reconcile the interests of key players with the formal arrangements, circumventing formal rules when they are misaligned with the aims of all actors.

3. Substitutive: In situations where formal institutions fail to deliver desired outcomes, substitutive informal institutions emerge when the objectives of informal and formal systems are congruent. These informal institutions serve as alternatives to formal rules, undermining their authority.

4. Competing: In contexts where formal institutions prove ineffective, competing informal institutions arise. These informal structures pose a challenge to the formal institutional framework and emerge in response to conflicting objectives between formal actors and those operating within informal systems. The goals of the latter group differ significantly from those pursued by actors within the formal institutions.

1.2 Methodology

The study is qualitative in nature. It relies on primary data, being collected through focused interviews with officials of FoR and through a separate survey on the members of the association. For this, two separate questionnaires are used. For surveying passengers, 329 respondents have been selected on a random basis and they have been interviewed in online mode. It also relies on secondary data taken from websites of news agencies and the Facebook page of FoR.

2.0 Literature Review

One of the focuses of social sciences is uncovering the reasons behind why individuals choose to join, continue participating in, or depart from social groups, which is a fundamental inquiry in this field. Dynamics of such social groups also need to be explored.

Scholars from divergent fields of study defined 'group' in different ways, each having its own virtues and shortcomings. Simply stating, two or more people sharing a common definition form a group (Vaughan and Hogg, 1998). This shared definition creates a sense of belonging and identity among the group members. Fine and Harrington (2004) emphasize the importance of groups, stating that they serve as a level of association between individuals and society as a whole. Groups provide personal benefits such as companionship and support, which are essential for individual well-being. Laughlin & Malle (2002) perceived a group as an aggregate of individual actors rather than as a jointly acting group. All these definitions highlight the importance of shared identity and the role of groups in promoting social connections and personal benefits.

What drives individuals to form groups is a matter of debate. There is a plethora of psychological

theories regarding the drive for individuals to form groups. Instinct theory states that group impulse is an instinct and an individual is never an isolated being psychologically. It is impossible for an individual to fulfill himself except as a member of a group (Miller, 1921). Olson (*Ibid*) found this explanation unconvincing. To him, the primary driver of group formation is not 'instinct' but, 'benefits' gained by individuals. His seminal work (*Ibid*) introduced the concept of collective action.

The Social Identity Model of Collective Action identifies the variables that can explain individuals' participation in collective action, they are: perceived injustice, group efficacy, social identity and moral conviction (Nguyen, et al., 2021).

Marwell and Pamela (1989) focus on social ties within a group. The overall density of social ties in a group improves its prospects for collective action. The centralization of network ties always has a positive effect on collective action and that the negative effect of costs on collective action declines as the group's resource or interest heterogeneity increases. For Putnam, *et.al* (1993), Social capital - the norms, networks, and trust that facilitate action and cooperation among individuals for mutual benefit-is a key factor in collective action.

In this era of internet based mass communication, collective actions have transformed a lot. According to Postmes and Suzanne (2002), the Internet would appear to exert a mobilizing influence, certainly on those who are ideologically sympathetic to the causes that are widely represented online. Consumers' networks in the internet era have accentuated socialisation among them. They could develop consumption-related cognitions and behaviors (Moschis, 1985).

Studies like that of Costal, *et al* (1989) show that commuting of passengers to be a stress factor not only because of transport modes, but also by its interference with living and working conditions: namely, reduction of time available for discretionary leisure activities and increased absenteeism at workplace. Socialisation of commuters may be helpful in reducing such stresses.

Based on the review of existing literature, this study explores the significance of commuter's association in mitigating the stresses of railway passengers. One of the flaws found is that existing literature has predominantly explored the factors that lead to collective action, but has devoted less attention to the outcomes of engaging in such behavior. This study aims to bridge the gap in the literature by specifically examining the consequences of participating in collective action.

3.0 Discussion, Analysis and Findings

FoR, as a communication network via WhatsApp launched in 2016, aims to mitigate the information asymmetry and the subsequent uncertainty faced by rail passengers, particularly daily commuters. Exactly one year prior, the Railways introduced a smartphone application called 'Where is my Train' (for Android devices) to help passengers retrieve information about the arrival and departure times of trains as well as locate them precisely. Despite its introduction the app has not gained widespread popularity among passengers. Additionally, the app's train location data is not always accurate, and at times, it may take longer to update due to poor internet server functionality. As a result, the app remains an unreliable source of information for passengers even at present. FoR has now replaced the official app of the Railways as each member of the former entrusted with updating information, provides real-time reporting on both arrivals and departures with exact times. For example, a commuter named X shares updates such as "Intercity @Kollam; Time: 8.10" when the train arrives at Kollam station, followed by "Intercity left Kollam; Time: 8.13" upon departure. This real-time information sharing eliminates the challenges associated with 'Where is my Train'. Being an information agency, FoR also provides updates on delays, schedule changes, train cancellations, passing official announcements of Railways to passengers, which benefit not just the FoR members but also non-communal travelers. Non-commuters as well as non-passengers are also part of the communication network as beneficiaries. They are included in WhatsApp groups of FoR as they represent their family members who depend on trains for journeys. As a result, the association has gained significant popularity among individuals

beyond just passengers. Currently, FoR has over 6000 active members, including small business owners and high-ranking government officials who travel between Shornur and Nagercoil. A distance of approximately 390 kilometers between these two locations constitute the service jurisdiction of FoR.

3.1 Economic Significance of Information Agency

Information determines reliability in railway transportation. Trains must not only run on time but also that passengers should receive information when they need it and that it is trustworthy (Hagen & Pauline, *Ibid*). Lack of quality information is an ubiquitous problem for consumers (Rroshi & Michael, 2022). Qualitative information is a crucial component of 'reliability,' which is a significant measure of customer satisfaction. By providing railway customers with dependable information about when and where trains will arrive, FoR transforms into an unofficial representative of the Indian Railway, making the latter a trustworthy service provider. As a communication hub and conduit, this community network mitigates the information disparity between the Railways and their consumers. This enables the consumers to make well-informed transportation decisions, thereby significantly reducing opportunity costs and transaction costs. In fact, the emergence of FoR as a reliable source of railway information has led to a paradigm shift in passenger behaviour. Instead of relying on the traditional railway enquiry system, which has become outdated and inefficient, travelers now prefer to use FoR's informal communication network. This trend has had a significant impact on the railway administration. The Railways have been able to redeploy their staff to other critical areas. This is not only helpful to optimize resource utilization but also helpful in improving the overall efficiency of railway operations.

3.2 Organisational Structure

FoR is a registered association of railway commuters under the Society Registration Act, 1860. The association's leadership structure includes a president, who serves as the head of the organization and provides overall direction and guidance. The two vice presidents assist the president in carrying out their duties and can take on leadership roles in the absence of the president. The secretary is responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the association, including communication with members, organizing events, and handling administrative tasks. The two joint secretaries work alongside the secretary to support these duties. The executive members are elected to represent different areas or issues related to railway commuting and contribute to decision-making processes. The association has 45 active WhatsApp groups, each has members ranging from 200 to 600, secretary Mr. Liyons J reported.

Women's participation is prioritized to ensure that their unique perspectives and experiences are represented in the organization's leadership structure. This helps to ensure that the association's initiatives and advocacy efforts are inclusive and address the specific challenges faced by women railway commuters. Physically challenged passengers also been members of FoR.

3.3 Beyond Information Agency

In fact, the role of FoR in assisting train passengers in retrieving lost items goes beyond just being an information hub regarding train services. If any passenger lost any property at railway station or inside train, the details of the lost property including descriptions, locations, and contact information of the owners will be shared in community WhatsApp groups, thus enabling FoR to quickly locate and reunite passengers with their lost belongings. Overall, the efforts of FoR in helping train passengers retrieve lost items have earned it widespread recognition and appreciation from the railway community including the railway management.

3.4 Informal Security Agency

Deepika, a malayalam daily newspaper, reported on 01.09.2023 that a wanted criminal was apprehended by the Railway Protection Force (RPF) while he was traveling in a train. The criminal was identified and reported to the RPF by some members of FoR who noticed him during the journey. The timely intervention of FoR members and the RPF resulted in the arrest of the criminal.

In recent times, there have been several instances of stone-pelting on moving trains by miscreants reported in Kerala as per news articles published by Deccan Herald (2023), The Hindu (2023), Business Standard (2023), etc. In numerous instances where stone pelting occurred against onboard trains, FoR members who were commuting in these vehicles promptly communicated the precise location of stone-pelting to the RPF. With the help of local law enforcement agencies, these volunteers were able to apprehend the perpetrators. Additionally, concerns such as theft, verbal abuse of women on board trains have been promptly brought to the attention of the RPF by FoR members, which could aid the RPF in addressing these crimes more effectively. These voluntary services provided by FoR demonstrate their active participation in securing the safety of passengers by collaborating and complementing the efforts of security personnel involved.

3.5 Pressure Group

The Times of India (2022) reported FoR's action plan of protests in all railway stations from Shornur to Nagercoil, demanding the restoration of all passenger train services, stoppages at halt stations, and concessions that were previously in force during the pre-Covid era. This initiative by FoR aims to address the concerns regarding the reduction of services and amenities for passengers. Furthermore, FoR organizes various direct actions such as registering complaints in complaint books kept at railway stations, lodging petitions to Divisional Railway Manager, conducting signature campaigns and social media campaigns, staging dharnas, and reporting news agencies on the eve of negligence of passengers' rights in the form of unexpected train cancellations, cancellation of ordinary trains, overcrowding in trains due to reducing bogies, lack of security in ladies' compartments, cancellation of concessional fares for senior citizens, and other issues from time to time. These actions aim to bring attention to the ongoing issues faced by passengers and demand immediate action from the railway authorities. It is crucial to draw attention to the following significant initiative: FoR presents grievances to the Indian Parliament through parliamentarians.

The outcome of FoR being a pressure group, also known as an advocacy organization, is multifaceted, and some of these effects are showcased here. As a result of heightened advocacy by the association, the railways have replaced jerking bogies with new ones in Venad Express trains traveling between Shornur and Thiruvananthapuram. Additionally, they have been able to increase the number of coaches in Memu trains, transforming them into 16-car trains. Through their persistent request, they have convinced the railways to prioritize enhancing security in women reserved coaches. Due to their consistent demand, the railways have also introduced an official Android mobile ticketing app that allows passengers to book unreserved train tickets as well as season tickets. As a consequence of these collective actions, the railway authority acknowledged FoR as a distinct and autonomous entity that serves as a representative for railway consumers in addressing their complaints. As an illustration, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) has acknowledged FoR as an unofficial collaborator in safeguarding railway passengers and in light of this, the RPF has incorporated some of the FoR office bearers into their WhatsApp group designed for prompt communication in security matters. This move fosters consumer involvement in crisis management.

3.6 Ongoing Pressures

Through participant observation, it has been observed that during peak hours, specifically between 7 am and 9 am in the morning and 4 pm and 6 pm in the evening, express trains are not sufficient. In addition, in many trains, the number of general compartments has been reduced, particularly in the post-COVID-19 era. In Kerala, the higher participation of women in the organized sector has resulted in increased reliance of female commuters on trains. However, the reduction and full cancellation of "ladies only" compartments have increased the vulnerabilities of women consumers. These have led to overcrowding in existing trains, causing safety, comfort, and overall consumer experience concerns that are of serious importance.

Although some of the demands have been fulfilled, there are still a considerable number that require attention from the railway authority. One of the major problems facing railway passengers is overcrowding

in trains, which has become a widespread issue. The shortage of general compartments forces passengers to upgrade to higher class coaches, resulting in an increase in revenue for the Railways but also causing a loss from a consumer welfare perspective. In such situations, FoR can only demand or put peaceful pressure on the Railways to increase or restore the number of coaches as it was before the pandemic, but the decision and execution to solve this issue should come from the Railways itself.

In response to these pressing issues, FoR initiates campaigns and advocates for the restoration of certain amenities that were previously in place prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, FoR calls for:

1.   the reinstatement of reduced general compartments to alleviate overcrowding in existing trains,

2.   the allowance of more compartments exclusively for women to enhance safety and comfort for female commuters,

3.   the restoration of passenger trains to provide more transportation options for travelers.

4.   the reinstatement of concessional fares for senior citizens to make travel more affordable for elderly individuals,

5.   the reinstatement of cancelled stoppages at halt stations to improve accessibility and convenience for passengers travelling between nearby locations, and

6.   the scientific review of the current train schedule. Scientific scheduling of trains can ensure no delay of trains and a fair speed, as commuters consider this a crucial quality aspect.

Based on their advocacy efforts, it can be inferred that FoR is an inclusive organization that prioritizes the well-being of women and elderly citizens, as evidenced by their demands for amenities such as more compartments exclusively for women, concessional fares for senior citizens, and the restoration of cancelled stoppages at halt stations. This highlights FoR's commitment to promoting gender equality and ensuring accessibility and convenience for all passengers, regardless of age or gender.

Given the above discussion, it is appropriate to share the results of the survey carried out as part of this study regarding the popularity of FoR among train passengers. These findings are elaborated below..

3.7 Survey Results on Popularity of FoR

As it said earlier, 329 passengers were surveyed. Out of that, the males constitute 56 percent and the females constitute the rest. Their median age is 40 years. Daily commuters constitute 78 percent. Out of the surveyed passengers, 97 percent are members of FoR.

In the survey, an overwhelming 89% of passengers reported extremely high satisfaction with the responsibilities and duties of FoR, while 10% expressed satisfaction and only 1% reported an average level of satisfaction. Notably, none of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction. Regarding the various functions, all participants commended FoR for its real-time information dissemination regarding train arrivals and departures, as it allows waiting passengers to accurately locate the trains. All of them regard information dissemination in WhatsApp groups as a substitute for Railways' 'Where is my Train' application.

3.8 Assessing FoR as Agency of Quality Assurance from the Theoretical Perspective of Hagen & Pauline (2013)

Table 3.1 provides insights on how far an informal agency like FoR organises collective actions to assure qualitative railway transportation. This analysis is based on the quality variables given by Hagen & Paul (*Ibid*).

Table 3.1: Agency functions of FoR with respect to quality variables

Quality Variables	Agency Functions of FoR
Safety	Informing railway authority on safety related issues and assisting them in monitoring, control and surveillance
Reliability	Sharing of precise information via WhatsApp, times of arrival and departure of trains, cancellation, rerouting of trains and so on
Speed	Pressurising the railway to ensure proper time management and removal of technical bottlenecks so as to ensure time bounded travel, all these could influence speed of train journeys
Ease	Pressurising for arrangements such as android phone applications for easy access to train tickets and for hassle free options to change from lower to upper class compartments during travel
Comfort	Pressurising sufficient trains during peak hours and for increasing exclusive compartments for women passengers
Experience	Pressurising for basic amenities such as hygienic sanitation facilities, passenger friendly facilities, especially for women, and so on

Source: Survey Results (2024)

In terms of speed, ease, comfort, and overall travel experience, the FoR has to pressurise the railways for rectifying issues and this function persists as long as both the FoR and railways exist. Based on the functions with respect to quality assurance, it can be inferred that the FoR follows a basic needs approach as conceived by the UNCTAD (2020). The analysis of functions reveals that FoR as a pressure group dominates than any other types of functions.

3.9 Relationship Between FoR and Indian Railways from the Theoretical Perspective of Helmke-Levitsky (*Ibid*)

Based on the preceding sections, it is apparent that the relationship between a formal organization, such as railways, and an informal one, like FoR, is multifaceted. This interaction has various dimensions. The discussion can be summarized in Table 3.2, which shows the pattern of interaction between FoR and the Railways.

Table 3.2: Interaction of FoR and Indian Railways

Type of interaction	Features of FoR identified in the study	Empirical evidence	Online links
Complementary	* Coexistence and harmonious collaboration with the Railways	* Informal security agency function of FoR	https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02gP5m2nPTKPe GkrNQujXNKX3X22qXAMjzdoVhnj
	* Sharing congruous objectives	* FoR works for the welfare of the Railway consumers	WPdER\tMJP5StZ6zMNxdriPYCPl &idB=1000635095998866& mibextid=Nif5oz
	* Bridging the information gap	* Information agency function of FoR	https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/friends-on-rails-to-passengers-aid/article24308645.ece
	* Contribution to enhanced function of the Railways	* FoR functions as a pressure group contribution to enhanced function of the Railways	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fOIM Zj38j6spG5i1T7SeS4-fl6yMfwXD/view?usp=sharing

| Accommodating | * Objectives of FoR clashes with that of the Railways | * Overcrowding in trains exemplifies this feature | https://www.facebook.com/groups/363785165441435/permalink/833025301850750/?mibextid=Nif5oz |
| | * Reconcile with the interests of the Railways | * Trains get canceled, many trains get delayed, still passengers depend on railways | https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fR4ZV2Tmw72QwEgwri7eddtBOjhUrFzk/view?usp=sharing |

Source: Survey Results (2024)

FoR can be viewed as a complementary institution in certain situations and an accommodating institution in others. As an integral and peaceful entity of the Railways, FoR is neither conflicting nor substitutive.

3.10 Building Social Capital

In the context of community development strategies, cultural festivals and gatherings of FoR members are organized during the lead-up to traditional celebrations such as Onam and Christmas. Additionally, they organize various social initiatives, such as blood donation camps and a monthly monetary assistance programme to support medical needs of impoverished old age society in Kollam. In order to raise funds for the benefit of FoR, they participate in agricultural activities by cultivating crops on arable land personally owned by any member. The act of voluntarily relinquishing land without charging rent demonstrates a strong sense of camaraderie among them. These activities pave the way for interaction among group members, which contribute to enhancing group solidarity. All these serve as solid foundational bases that foster cooperation and collective action among them.

Conclusion

Based on the information provided, it is clear that Friends on Rails has emerged as a significant informal institution representing passengers in the railway sector in Kerala. The information agency service has gained widespread popularity among passengers. Its role goes beyond just being an information hub regarding train services. Members of FoR have also been assisting the Railway Protection Force in security related issues. It continues to demand actions from the Railways to address pressing issues faced by passengers. Considering the interaction of FoR with the Railways, the former can be viewed as a complementary institution in certain situations and an accommodating institution in others. FoR's social initiatives and cultural festivals serve as solid foundational bases in building social capital in society.

Informal institutions like FoR are often deeply rooted in the local rail passenger community and have their trust and support. It possesses a wide network of human resources, a wealth of knowledge and experience in collective action on the issues concerning passengers. Incorporating an informal agency such as FoR in decision making of the Railways can lead to more effective, efficient, and inclusive decision making processes that better serve the needs of train passengers and the Railways can be customer friendly.

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Understanding Gandhi and His Visions in Praxis

R.K. Suresh Kumar, P. Suresh Kumar and P. Sukumaran Nair,
*Mahatma Gandhi A Contemporary Reading: A Festschrift in Honour of
Prof. (Dr.) B. Vivekanandan***, Manak Publications, New Delhi,
2023, liv + 353 pages, Rs. 2000/-**

Saurav Kumar Rai

There are very few leaders of modern world who have left behind such a voluminous legacy of written words as Mahatma Gandhi. This can be discerned from the fact that when the Publications Division of India undertook the task of printing Gandhiji's words as he spoke and wrote, day after day, year after year, beginning with the year 1884 till his assassination on January 30, 1948, it ran into as many as 100 volumes comprising more than 50,000 pages of text. One can make sense of the availability of primary source on Mahatma Gandhi from the aforementioned fact. This naturally led to many more volumes of research monographs, articles and edited compilations on Mahatma Gandhi in the years to follow which actually runs in thousands. Still there is a large ground still to be trampled by the researchers on themes related to Mahatma Gandhi. One of the latest entries in this plethora of books on Gandhi is R.K. Suresh Kumar et. al. (eds.) *Mahatma Gandhi: A Contemporary Reading*. This book has been dedicated to the outstanding scholar and socially conscious person Prof. B. Vivekanandan as it has been deemed as a *festschrift* in honour of Prof. Vivekanandan.

This entire volume has been divided into four parts. The first part titled 'Igniting Human Spirit: The Phenomenon of Gandhi' contains articles that explore the legacy left behind by Mahatma Gandhi which is still igniting human spirit in different parts of the world. The greatness of Gandhi's teachings, claims the editors, is embodied in the statement, 'you must not lose faith humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty' (p. 6). This section contains the articles by B. Vivekanandan, Anand Gokani, T.P. Sreenivasan, Padma Ramakrishnan, P. Sukumaran Nair, S.M. Vijayanand, Madhu Dandavate and G. Jayakumar. These articles broadly delineate the relevance and appeal of Gandhian logic today.

Part II of the volume titled 'Regenerating the Spirit of Rural India' critically analyse and interpret Gandhian perspectives on political and economic organisations, sustainable development, village *swaraj* and health ethics. It contains articles by T.K. Oommen (on Gandhi's conception of Indian village), Sudarshan Iyengar (on Gandhi's economic thought), Mary George (on Gandhian notion of village swaraj), M.R. Biju and M.R.B. Anantha Padmanabha (on Gandhian perspective of democratic decentralisation, rgeneration of villages and self-government), Saurav Kumar Rai (on Gandhian health ethics) and D. Jeevan Kumar (on Gandhian alternative to sustainable development).

Part III of the book 'Gandhian Ethics on Conflict Resolution' offers new insights on the conflicting and formidable themes centred around Gandhian ideology. The articles contained in this section tackle Gandhian perspective on Religion, Means and Ends in Marxism, Savarkar's Hindu Rashtra, Ambedkarite Philosophy, and Civic Nationalism in the context of the ongoing debate on citizenship and the elusive justice arising out of the systemic failure of the legal system. These articles have been contributed by M.P. Mathai, G. Balamohan Thampi, Rajaram Tolpadi and Nithyananda B. Shetty, Nirjhar Mukherjee, Shiraz Sheikh and

K. Shaji, respectively. While reading these articles the readers can, argue the editors, experience a reassessment of Gandhi amidst the controversies he courted in different phases of his political career (p. 16).

The last part of the volume titled 'Decoding Gandhian Politics' brings together the essays delineating the characteristics of Gandhiji's brand of politics and important Gandhian programmes culled from his writings including *Hind Swaraj*. The contributors to this section are D.K. Giri, V. Ragupathy, N. Gopakumaran Nair, Malli Gandhi, N. Ramalingam, Rama Shanker Singh and P. Suresh Kumar. The articles in this section offer a fresh perspective on modern India and the efforts to pursue the unfinished Gandhian programmes.

Altogether this volume contains twenty seven well researched articles pointing out the contemporary relevance of the Gandhian vision. As the editors rightly argue a recasting and reworking of the Gandhian ideas is essential to resolve the present day contradictions of a globalised world. This volume successfully accomplishes this pursuit.

National Educational Policy 2020 : A Critique

Jagan Sebastian George

The NEP, which tries to centralise and standardise every aspect of higher education, in fact only provides a justification for commodification and greater privatisation advocated by Neoliberal principles. Whereas explicit privatisation and commodification cannot be actualised without invoking the wrath of the stakeholders, New Public Management principles are adopted by NEP 2020 to disguise the neoliberal policies within some management principles which act as a vehicle for neoliberal policies. Thus, the stakeholders are made to comply in the name of efficiency and productivity. However, there is no guarantee that even efficiency and productivity is achieved whereas there is enough proof not only of disenchantment of the student and teacher community but also of lack of social utility in adopting these principles.

I

In the realm of higher education, neoliberal tenets have manifested in the commodification of knowledge, emphasis on competition, and a paradigm shift towards privatization. Concurrently, the New Public Management (NPM) system, rooted in principles of efficiency, accountability, and performance measurement, has been increasingly adopted by governments worldwide as a means to enhance the effectiveness of public services, including education. According to a view, New Education Policy, 2020 is designed to steer the higher education sector into the traps set by the neoliberalism through new public management policy.

This article aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the impact of neoliberal ideologies, managerial paradigms, and policy interventions on the higher education domain. The article delves briefly into the character of neoliberalism, take a critical look at the principles of New Public Management, and analyse the impact of New Education Policy 2020.

Neoliberalism is essentially a political project that is justified on philosophical grounds and seeks to extend competitive market forces, consolidate a market-friendly constitution, and promote individual freedom. The specific form which neoliberalism assumes differ as to the intentions of those who promote and implement them. So does neoliberalism differ with respect to different economic, political, and social contexts (Boas & Gans Morse, 2009; Mudge, 2008). Neoliberalism is thus a polyvalent where diverse typologies exist.

Jessop (2012) identifies four main types of neoliberal regimes. (i) A Neoliberal system transformation as happened in the former Soviet Bloc; (ii) A Neoliberal regime shift, examples of which are Thatcherism and Reaganism; (iii) An Economic restructuring processes that are imposed from outside as a quid pro quo for financial and other assistance to crisis affected economies; (iv) A set of pragmatic and modest policy changes in the face of global shift in the balance of power.

Proponents of neoliberalism hailed the reforms as a panacea for India's economic woes, promising to foster efficiency, innovation, and prosperity (Sen, 2004). However, critics cautioned against the potential negative consequences of unfettered market forces, particularly on the most vulnerable segments of society (Stiglitz, 2002).

While India's economic growth accelerated under the neoliberal regime, concerns over rising inequality, social exclusion, and environmental degradation persisted (Chakravarty, 2008). The benefits of economic growth appeared to disproportionately favour the wealthy elite, exacerbating socioeconomic disparities (Dreze& Sen, 2013).

Neoliberalism in India has set the tone for all policy matters since 1991. However, education, especially higher education remained more or less insulated from this discourse till recent times.

II

In fact, National Education Policy 2020 is the culmination of the neoliberal policies and practices that are implemented in the higher education sector in theory and practice, explicitly and implicitly.

The highlight of the policy is the ambitious target of 50% of GER to be achieved by 2035. However, hardly any funds are allocated directly or indirectly for the purpose. In line with the neoliberal theme, the achievement of this target, according to NEP 2020, is contingent on the market, and other non-governmental entities, i.e. private as well as philanthropic entities. Hence even for a social goal, strengthening of market mechanism is made inevitable.

There is also an advocacy of dismantling the affiliating system in NEP 2020, which will adversely affect the marginalised class because this will eventually affect the pooling of resources and access of students from a non-affluent background to higher education in rural and remote areas of the country.

Standardization and centralization are achieved through the advocacy of a common curriculum, through the emphasis of online platforms and standardised modules for teacher training and through the creation of a single agency for entrance exams across disciplines.

Increased performativity is achieved through its focus on (a) quantifiable outcomes such as learning outcomes and metrics, which can create pressure on teachers to prioritize rote memorization and standardized test scores over critical thinking and diverse learning styles, (b) a more centralized approach to grading and assessment, which might reduce teachers' autonomy in devising their own assessments, potentially hindering their ability to judge students based on their unique understanding and perspectives.

Reduced institutional autonomy is achieved through, (a)stricter regulations for funding and accreditation, which could give the central government more leverage over universities, potentially limiting their autonomy in decision-making and academic pursuits, (b) a more centralized approach to faculty appointments, which could reduce the influence of individual departments and universities in shaping their faculty teams, potentially limiting their ability to hire individuals who align with their specific academic focus and values.

Standardisation, performativity and reduced autonomy becomes a norm under any regime which works within the confines of neoliberal architecture. This is because, the primary concern of any entity under neo-liberal system is to ensure the free flow of capital cutting across social, political, economic and national barriers (Harvey, 2005). Capital flows prepare the ground for and are sometimes also conditional on commodification as well as privatisation. This finally reaches a state of economism, wherein the norms of market economy is imported into all aspects of social life such as the polity, the family, the schools as well as colleges.

Economism in the context of higher education is the frequent use of the 'consumer metaphor' in education-the metaphor that sees the student as consumer, the teacher as producer, respectively, of the commodity education. Economism can be seen in policy making when it tries to determine how much measurable 'value added' teacher is imparting to our raw materials, the students, in the processing of them. Again, economism emerges in the (mainstream) economist's picture of the individual buying education as an accumulator of 'human', as opposed to physical, capital. (Quinn, Browne 1998). It implies that education be made a tradable good just like any other commodity bought and sold in the market.

Schwartzman (2013) mentions the prevalence of an "audit culture," a mechanical fulfilment of checklists and criteria without more fundamental reflection on how knowledge and degrees contribute to the social and intellectual enrichment of the students. There is a basic difference between education that satisfies the preference of the buyer and education that is undertaken in the interests of the people. And if education is to be undertaken in the interests of the people, to defend their interests, then it must be publicly financed (Patnaik, 2007).

Standardization is and represents a powerful neoliberal governing device in education; it is a machine for the subjectivation of teachers and a key technology for the dominance and homogenization of education practices (Angulo, 2020). Thus, tendencies of commodification, privatisation and standardisation models the educational landscape in the archetype of an industry where performativity is emphasised and autonomy of teachers becomes a hindrance.

The industrial model when applied to knowledge production creates antecedents for alienation such as (a) centralized and formalized organizational structures; (b) control processes that are strict and centralized, requiring overwork from employees; (c) simple tasks that are repetitive, monotonous, and dull; (e) strict work rules and regulations; and (e) transactional leadership styles (leaders who stress on formalized procedures). Such work environments cause employees to feel helpless, useless, and alienated from their daily work tasks. (DiPietro, Pizam 2008).

Kenneth Arrow (1963) highlight the potential for increased healthcare utilization when costs are borne by insurers. Generally, this refers to a situation where an economic actor, who is protected from the full consequences of their actions, behaves in a way that increases the risk of negative outcomes for themselves or others. This altered behaviour is motivated by the reduced personal cost of risk-taking due to the presence of insurance, guarantees, or other forms of protection. In essence, the agent externalizes the costs of their risky actions onto a third party.

The public good functions of universities need to be brought back; by diversifying the funding models so as to reduce the dependence on tuition fees, by focusing on holistic development of students so as to support critical thinking, ethical awareness and civic functions and by promoting shared governance and collaboration so as to involve students, faculty, and staff in decision making.

III

New Public Management (NPM) is a set of managerial reforms applied to the public sector, advocating for increased efficiency and effectiveness through the adoption of private sector practices (Lane, 2000). It can be seen that NPM and neoliberalism share a belief in the superiority of market forces and individual rationality. This translates into NPM's reliance on competition, choice, and privatization. NPM aligns with neoliberal goals of reducing government size and intervention. By increasing efficiency and effectiveness, NPM aims to shrink the public sector and decrease spending. In the higher education sector in India, New Education Policy of 2020 used the principles of NPM in abundance to bring the higher education sector closer to neo-liberal order.

The NPM approach tries to restore operational flexibility, while at the same time, it tries to limit the moral hazard problems. Financial autonomy given to universities and chairs and increasing hierarchical self-control, i.e., by increasing the power of deans, chancellors and other internal management positions, as well as competitive elements such as an indicator based performance-dependent source allocation, evaluations or higher dependence on third-party funds, has to be seen in this context. This leads to the NPM slogan of 'More autonomy, more hierarchy, and more competition.' (Schubert and Schmoch, 2010, 4-5).

Let us examine the impact of New Public Management on various aspects of higher education.

"Administration and management" is given the highest priority as the goal is to achieve a particular

target within a stipulated period of time, as in New Education Policy, 2020. As a result, there is a drastic change in the duties and roles of not only administrators but teachers and professors as well.

"The financial reward is linked to performance" as measured by number of graduates, study progress, academic output or successful valorisation (Boer and Jongbloed, 2012). Thus, massive amount of data is to be collected with increased frequency. "The illusory solution to fiscal crisis in higher education is to monitor, regulate, and reduce the costs of intellectual production. But to do so requires large and a coercive administrative apparatus. As a result, the faculty must spend a good part of their time to do administrative tasks and an endless number of forms to be filled out about even the silliest works they have done. This is in addition to the administrative tasks associated with research grants. The paradox is that these non-academic and mundane works are not treated as a cost (Peters, 2004).

The end goal practically is to achieve the targeted GER as stated in the NEP 2020 document by whatever means possible. "Online education" is actively encouraged. The rising cost of education which comes in the way of achieving the targeted GER is supposed to be countered with technology. In this context tools such as MOOCs is actively encouraged. But there is no guarantee that MOOCs will not create a two-class system. Those who can afford the university education will get the advantages of direct interaction, library and labs. MOOCs students will be clearly at a disadvantage. Moreover, MOOCs beneficiaries are usually the least suited for MOOCs. Being at the bottom of the ladder, they often lack the study skills and background knowledge needed to succeed. Indeed, evidence shows that a vast number of students enrolling for MOOCs drop out before the ending of the course (Mohan, Upadhyaya, 2020).

"Language learning" other than English is also affected. English has become the language of instruction and indigenous language writers are forced to adopt English as an academic language to gain acceptance. Thus, overcoming cultural differences by learning other languages is becoming difficult just as the world is becoming increasingly connected.

It is also unclear what pedagogical purposes are served with the "standardised tests". The impact of such tests on learning has been well documented; they transform education into a "teach to the test exercise (Carpenter, 2012). Overall, rather than analysing the intellectual merits of any programme, what is actually happening is the downgrading of the standards and the appeal of the course to the requirement of the market (Hyde, Clarke, Drennan 2013).

On "Research" it is not the quality of the publication that is counted. Literal counting of publications is done for promotion and other considerations. Thus, more often the only consideration before researchers is to plant a particular number of publications in the prescribed journals. In many fields, it is possible to divide particular research into smaller pieces and publish each as separate counts.

But in some areas, years of hard work is needed before anything can be published. Quantification devalues such kind of research and signals researchers not to select such hard and maybe important areas. As it is easy to count but not know what one is counting, citation counting has become an alternative approach.

Scholars across the world rely on citation data to discuss the success, impact, and visibility of research in specific contexts (Paasi, 2005). However, it must be remembered that the most widely used citation data base, the Web of Science was developed for librarians to serve as a convenient guide to purchase subscriptions of journals, thorough which they could gauge how frequently a journal was used. The data base thus has the biases associated with its purpose such as the English language bias and journals from USA. E.g., the rankings of the top 20 institutions among highly cited scientists include 18 US institutions and 2 from UK (Paasi, 2005).

There are other issues such as (a) scholars working on a large field will have a greater chance of being cited , (b) authors may be cited for considerations other than the validity and importance of their findings (Kumar 2010), (c) some high-quality papers may be rarely cited, whereas some low-quality papers

may be cited frequently (Borgman and Furner, 2002) because the person citing the article may be more concerned with how the article rhetorically bolsters their argument rather than exploring all sides of the subject.

It is conveniently forgotten in the context of NPM that in humanities and social sciences, books are the primary means of communication, whereas in science and engineering, it is the journals which holds the prime place. Thus, there is a systemic devaluing of the books and a denial of credit to scholars of humanities and social sciences.

In addition to citations and counting the articles, some administrators make use of Journal Impact factor which ranks journals to evaluate the research works, which means that an article appearing in a journal with high ranking will receive higher weightage. This has obviously increased the submission rates of the concerned journals which means that the reviewers of these journals have a heavier burden which takes time and resources away from other productive factors.

As highly prestigious journals have low acceptance rates, reviewers and editors are likely to be more orthodox in deciding what to publish. This ultimately is regressive and not conducive to new knowledge. There will also be a tendency to publish in disciplinary journals rather than in interdisciplinary journals

Similarly the "search for grants" have become competitive. For example, a corpus of fund is earmarked and institutions and individuals are asked to fetch points on various parameters. Those who get the highest points/grade get the funds. However, such competitive grants come with high transaction cost, both at the level of receiving institute as well as the donor institution. This includes complex bureaucracies to administer as well as audit the grant procedures. The indirect costs of grant such as administering the grant and to services such as water, electricity and library services can come to one-third of the grant given. The relatively low success rates of grants mean that there is a huge wastage of time and energy for unsuccessful submissions.

The pressure to excel by any means possibly result in a "greater incidence of fraud" such as plagiarism, publishing the same results in several places, deleting data that contradict the desired result, fabricating data to support a given hypothesis etc. It may also involve deliberate destruction of data collected by others to discredit their research. The incidence of fraud and the rate of retraction is misconduct higher as a result of the need to perform (Steen, 2010).

"Profit motivated publishers" are out there for making money. They do this by requiring that the authors surrender their rights to the publication and asking reviewers to comment on those papers at cost to the publishers. The publishers then sell their journal to libraries and the general public at exorbitant fees. According to RELX's 2020 Annual Report, Elsevier generated revenues of $3.4 billion USD in 2020 (RELX 2020 Annual Report).

Another fallout is the "conflict of interest in research". The quest for funds has resulted in widespread collaboration between industry and academia. This has resulted in a conflict of interest. Would a soft drink company give funds to an institution which produces research on the harmful effects of soft drinks on the body? Similarly, a pharmaceutical company may only fund research on the drugs that is of interest to that particular firm. This will naturally create a set of 'interested' scholars who advocate particular positions to advance their personal or institutional market-driven goals.

"Intellectual property Property Rights" create markets where they did not earlier exist on objects and processes which were once considered not saleable. Though a limited form of IPR is needed, what is happening is an ever greater expansion of IPRs which extends to organisms, research tools, and a variety of other domains. As a consequence, boundaries between scholarly research and private gain have shifted. Private sector values proprietary knowledge which requires erecting barriers such as copyrights, patents etc. Such processes slow down the spread of knowledge and restricts researchers from engaging in certain kind of experiments. Also, as the inventor gets a significant share of the royalty through IPR, the boundaries between knowledge as a

private good and knowledge as a public good is shifted. Particularly in sciences and engineering, the lure of producing patentable inventions is hard to elude for most faculty.

Thus, research publication sometimes become the sole criteria of merit in most universities to the exclusion of education and public engagement. Engaging and mentoring students, organising and participating in seminars and conferences and many other informal interactions with students and other faculty members are automatically downgraded as a result. Thus, the incentive to teach students even as it is a core function of the academician, or disseminate findings in the public sphere through public lectures, dialogues or partnerships with relevant civil society or statutory bodies is negligible (Lynch, 2009)

From the perspective of a neoliberalist, "Public engagement and extension activities" are unnecessary for the academician because it is another avenue bringing in private services.

Neoliberalism changes the very idea of university and what it means to be educated. Creativity, curiosity and intellectual enquiry are displaced by learning of facts and skills which will become obsolete within a decade. They may produce competent workforce who are good at a given job. But this workforce will be incapable of dealing with disruptions, technical or social. As researchers are subjected to constant audit, they tend to opt out of high risk research which may block the flow of funds. Similarly negative research are hardly published.

University faculty and administrators have been more and more encouraged by legislators and government officials to assume the role of a "growth machine" (Molotch, 1976). Univeristies are thus instrumental in reimaging the world in terms of competition among nations, corporations, and individuals. Higher educational institutions are imagined as generators of new and proprietary knowledge for economic development rather than as generators of new knowledge for public good.

Now the question is, why should a scholar who is relegated should remain loyal to the organisations over which they have hardly any control.

In the context of higher education, Neoliberalism and New Public Management has not led to greater efficiencies but to more bureaucracies. It has led to more constraints on teaching and research rather than greater freedom to do the same. It has led to weak institutions more concerned about immediate problems rather than deep and historical problems. It has not led to new ways to grapple with the crisis that face us but to treading further down the same paths that created these crises.

<div align="center">IV</div>

Conclusion

In the light of above observations and findings, it can be concluded that the convergence of neoliberalism, new education policy and new public management system has resulted in a general but systematic dumbing down in higher education as a combined result of commodification, standardisation, privatisation with the aid of new public management system.

NEP 2020, while aiming to address resource constraints and promote autonomy, inadvertently aligns with neoliberal principles of standardization and marketization. Its emphasis on a national curriculum framework echoes NPM's preference for uniformity and measurable outcomes. This confluence risks homogenizing diverse pedagogical approaches, prioritizing quantifiable metrics over holistic development, and potentially undermining institutional autonomy under increased state oversight.

Privatization, further encouraged by the neoliberal ethos, exacerbates concerns about equity and access. While it may inject resources into the system, it risks creating a tiered structure where quality education becomes a commodity accessible only to the privileged few. This further entrenches existing social inequalities and jeopardizes public universities, potentially pushing affordable education beyond the reach of marginalized communities.

The commodification of knowledge, another neoliberal hallmark, permeates NEP 2020's focus on employability-driven skills and market relevance. This transactional approach, where students are positioned as consumers and disciplines are valued based on their immediate economic utility, poses a significant threat to the intrinsic value of knowledge and broader intellectual development. It risks neglecting critical thinking, social responsibility, and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake.

We need to address these challenges. Moving forward, a critical evaluation of NEP 2020's implementation within the broader context of neoliberalism and NPM is crucial. Recognizing the potential for unintended consequences necessitates ongoing dialogue and nuanced policy adjustments. Charting a course towards an equitable and socially responsible future demands a collective effort that prioritizes inclusivity, academic freedom, and the holistic development of informed citizens capable of contributing to a just and equitable society.

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India through the Prism of Soft Power Diplomacy

Manisha Devi A

With a rich and diverse culture, India, an important regional player, has now been perceived as a model of soft power. India began to play its soft power card in a more systematic way during the 1990s. Indian political values like ahimsa (Non-Violence), Non-intervention policy, leadership in the Non-Alignment Movement and success of its democratic institutions, along with its Incredible India campaign, spiritualism and religious diplomacy including Buddhist and Ramayana circuits, popularisation of Indian movies including Bollywood and recognition of international Yoga Day by the United Nations are some soft power resources in light. In fact, the government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi started making efforts to portray a good image for India internationally, predominantly with the use of social media and through the soft power approach. The article focuses on both the effectiveness and challenges faced by the country to actualize its soft power potential in the current scenario.

Keywords: Soft Power, Foreign Policy, Buddhism, Yoga, Ayurveda

Introduction:

For the world to be a better place, peace is vital. Jawaharlal Nehru once said, "those who desire peace for the world must know once for all that there can be no equilibrium or stability for either the East or the West unless all aggression, all imperialist domination, all forced interference in other countries' affairs end completely"(MEA, 2004). The growth and prosperity of the entire global society depend heavily on world peace. It aids in the development of economies, increased globalization, and the exchange of cultures across the world. To address nearly all of the critical problems facing the globe, peace is essential. The maintenance of peace by an actor in the international platform results in fostering mutual understanding and cooperation between two or more actors.

Since its independence in 1947, India has always been a promoter of peace. With this image of a good-natured and non-aggressive country, India became successful in attaining a global reputation. India clawed onto the concept of soft power to reach this point.

The idea of the 'soft power' concept was introduced to the field of international relations around the 1990s by a Harvard Professor named Joseph S Nye, who introduced it as "the ability to achieve goals through attraction rather than coercion" (Nye, 2004). He considers soft power as "a means to success in world politics." According to him, the soft power of a country primarily depends on its cultural, political, and foreign policy values (ibid). India, a country with a plentiful and varied culture, has now been identified as an important regional player and as a perfect example of soft power.

Role of Indian Soft Power and its Resources

India started showcasing its soft power resources way before the theory of soft power was introduced in the area of international relations. India is the largest democracy in the world and is steadfastly committed to political principles that support democratic and human rights ideals, including the value of a secular government, peaceful handover of power following elections, an independent judiciary, a robust media and press, and civilian control of the armed forces. India has earned a positive reputation and prominence around the world due to its adherence to the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other participants in the international arena (Fidler, 2010).

Shortly after gaining independence,as the country lacked the necessary economic and military capabilities,India wanted to devise and select an alternate choice that guaranteed freedom and peace.As a result, India was able to exert significant worldwide soft power through the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) in the Cold War era of hard power and ideological conflict (Lehmann, 2015). This, together with the allure of Gandhian principles of non-violent resistance and its vibrant, working democracy, has long been a draw for foreigners to India.

India's Foreign Policy, the 'Panchsheel' doctrine, lists out the five principles of peaceful co-existence - "mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and cooperation for mutual benefit and peaceful co-existence" (MEA, 2004). Panchsheel later became the fundamental principle of the Non-Aligned Movement. This ideology resonates even today as these are regarded as the guiding ideals that enshrine a certain code of behaviour.

However, meticulous use of soft power was seen more often after the Cold War era officially starting with its Look East Policy. India aspired to compete with China in Southeast Asia after the Cold War. The strategy was first introduced in 1991 by the Indian government, which was headed by the late Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. The goal was to increase political, economic, and security cooperation with Southeast Asian nations.

The Incredible India campaign, a global tourism initiative run by the Indian government since 2002, aims to promote travel to India. To promote India as a top vacation destination for discerning travellers, it developed an integrated communication campaign. In India's connections with Asian countries, tourism, especially religious tourism, has the potential to be more advantageous. Buddhist tourism, which is currently very popular, has much potential to bring in more visitors from Asian markets. A testament to that is the introduction of the special, luxurious train that travels the Buddhist tourism circuit. However, more work still has to be done to meet the minimal standards of comfort, safety, and amenities that tourists have grown to anticipate while travelling abroad, as well as the value for money proposition offered in other Asian tourist destinations.

Efforts taken by the Modi Government

With Narendra Modi coming to power in 2014, the soft power usage of India saw a tremendous shift from that of previous governments. For the most part, the Modi administration has promoted Indian soft power by relying on political and cultural principles. The Modi administration has developed its foreign policy philosophy, known as Panchamrit, in opposition to the Nehruvian ideology of Panchsheel. Panchamrit's policy has five pillars - "dignity, dialogue, shared prosperity, regional and global security and cultural and civilizational links" (Telegraph India, 2015). In contrast to Panchsheel's pacifist spirit, Panchamrit has a far more forceful tone.

The Modi government launched the Act East Policy in 2014, which succeeded the Look East Policy. The main goal was to increase cooperation in all areas with Southeast Asian nations as well as with nations in the Far East like Japan and South Korea and those in the Pacific like Australia. Act East Policy concentrated on fostering not only political cooperation but also a strategic and cultural relationship between India and its surrounding countries in the Asia-Pacific region. With numerous countries in the Asia Pacific region, India has elevated relations to a strategic level. These nations are continually being engaged with on a regional, bilateral, and international level. People-to-people interactions, participation in Indian infrastructure projects, and improved cooperation on maritime security-related concerns are all receiving more attention.

The majority of Modi's diplomatic trips highlight the idea of shared prosperity, regional stability, and links across cultures and civilizations by utilising cultural and financial assistance (Lahiri, 2017). He focussed more on the ancient heritage or civilizational ties, including Buddhism, yoga, Sanskrit and Ayurveda, democracy, economic aid and Bollywood.

Since the ancient period, the spread of Buddhism from India to China and South East Asia has sparked a steady exchange of ideas and scientific knowledge with West Asia, including the exchange of mathematical and medical knowledge, which has resulted in the development of various medical schools and the use of zero in mathematics. Even today, evidence of these long-standing cultural linkages may be found in India's proposal to cooperate with China, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore to restore the once-famous Nalanda Buddhist University. (Blarel, 2012).

Buddhism lends itself well to India's soft-power diplomacy because of its emphasis on peaceful coexistence and wide-ranging pan-Asian presence, which allows India to forge strong relationships with South Asian countries. There are many Buddhists holy places in India, including Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, and Nalanda, which fosters cultural linkages with Buddhist groups in South-East Asia. Due to the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan parliament-in-residence exile's in Dharamshala after their failed uprising against China, India has also fostered a reputation of being a defender of the oppressed. To further bolster its soft power diplomacy, India needs to take steps like revitalising Nalanda University, promoting spiritual tourism around the Buddhist circuit, and starting spiritual activities with South Asian countries.

Yoga helped India gain a healthy image internationally. Using his influence at the UN General Assembly, Modi was able to establish an annual International Day of Yoga, with the inaugural one occurring on June 21, 2015. Yoga, according to Modi, is India's gift to the world since it promotes peace and body-mind balance and aids in "discovering the sense of oneness with oneself, the world, and environment" (Mohan, 2014). Yoga and Buddhism are both effective branding strategies for India.

Sushma Swaraj, the late former minister of external affairs for India, spoke as the opening keynote at the Sanskrit Conference in Bangkok in June 2015. She addressed more than 600 professionals from 60 different countries in Sanskrit, calling the language "contemporary and international" and urging the audience to spread it. Since the creation of the group in Delhi in 1972, an Indian minister of Swaraj's status had never previously travelled outside of India to attend the World Sanskrit Conference. With a $20,000 International Sanskrit Award for scholars who have made significant contributions to the language, the establishment of fellowships for foreign scholars conducting research in Sanskrit language or literature in India, and opportunities for new students to pursue courses or research in India, the Modi government is also taking steps to promote the language internationally" (The Hindu, 2015).

 To institutionalise India's ancient heritage endowment and to aid Ayurveda in achieving the same elevated status as Chinese traditional medicine through better packaging and promotion, the Modi administration established a separate ministry called AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy) (Martin, 2015). He made the deliberate choice to make Ayurveda, one of the world's oldest medical systems, available for the good of mankind. It must be emphasised that this is just the start of Ayurveda's potential to transform the world's healthcare system. With the aid of young people, ayurveda is prepared to offer the world comprehensive healthcare solutions for the body and mind. According to Prime Minister Modi's goal for global holistic health care, they are prepared to learn, train, and practise (Sonowal, 2022). India can boost its soft power and promote global health by carefully combining Ayush, healthcare, and cultural programmes. This would allow India to project its influence in healthcare and culture far beyond its borders and improve people's lives globally. Creating Ayurvedic centres and advertising Indian Ayurvedic items in key international areas can draw medical tourists looking for holistic wellness and healing experiences. India's traditional medical techniques and natural medicines are becoming well-known throughout the world for their effectiveness and safety. Attracting medical tourists to these facilities strengthens India's soft power and strengthens its economy by presenting the nation as a top choice for reliable and efficient healthcare.

One of India's most significant assets is its democracy. India joined the UN Democracy Fund in 2005, becoming its second-largest donor behind the United States, and joined the Communities of Democracies in 2000 (Sudhindra, 2015). During his diplomatic interactions, Modi has cleverly leveraged democracy as a talking point. For instance, he frequently emphasised India's democracy during his visits to Nepal, Bhutan,

the United States, Australia, Japan, South Korea and Myanmar in order to promote strategic engagement with the West and forge alliances with other Asian democracies based on shared ideals. He has frequently asserted that democracy has made India a significant international partner.

Indian movies, including Bollywood movies, the most popular and widely distributed representation of Indian culture, have attracted a growing number of viewers worldwide who are becoming more familiar with Indian society and culture (Sudhindra, 2015). The world's largest filmmaker is now receiving unprecedented scholarly interest and media attention due to not just Bollywood but regional Indian films too, which has expanded its market outside its usual South Asian regions. India's 'soft power' is highly driven by the country's movie industry, which not only promotes Indian culture, including its music, dances, values, and beliefs but also brings in enormous sums of money.Over US$2.5 billion was made in Indian movie theatres in box office sales in 2019, which is more than 50% of the country's GDP (Dastidar, 2019). Films, notably Bollywood movies, are considered a kind of art and are said to contribute to the development of soft power since they are so profoundly influenced by a nation's culture, ideology, and institutions (Thussu, 2013).One significant development that has expanded the creative possibilities for filmmaking is the emergence of O.T.T. platforms in India. The growing popularity of South Indian cinema in recent years is something that cannot be ignored. Movies like KGF, R.R.R., Bahubali 2, Kabali, Vikram, etc., have done incredibly well at the box office both nationally and worldwide.Compared to a conventional Bollywood film, regional cinema has a significantly more nuanced representation of Indian culture. The Indian government should implement measures to encourage the creation of films that showcase Indian culture and values. Encouraging the creation of these films within the nation can contribute to the dissemination of culture abroad.

The Modi government's emphasis on soft power is connected to century-old Indian values like India's position as the world's teacher or the idea of 'vasudhaiva kutumbkam', which suggests that everyone on Earth is part of one giant family.

India has become known as the 'pharmacy hub' of the world in recent years.It distributed COVID-19 vaccines to its inhabitants, neighbouring countries, and all over the world, as part of its commitment to humanitarianism and following the age-old philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. India also has offered its immediate neighbours COVID-19 health assistance, equipment, masks and medicines. Thus,India's diplomacy during the initial pandemic phase has played a crucial role in augmenting its image as a soft power more strongly on the global stage.

India started giving COVID-19 vaccines to its close neighbours on a priority basis in early 2021, motivated by its 'Neighbourhood First' policy and in line with its understanding of its duty as the 'net security provider' of the area (MEA, Vaccine Supply, 2021). India provided 19,542,000 vaccine doses to nations in the region between January and April through sales or grants, but in late April, it ceased exports as it became evident that the second wave of the pandemic would be much more severe than the first in 2020 (MEA, 2021).

Modi has clearly been stronger about the projection of soft power, even though he has not been the one to lead the use of it in foreign policy (Lahiri, 2017). Modi's social media pages have more than 71 million followers and he has skilfully used this platform to demonstrate his close friendship with many world leaders (Arnimesh, 2022). All of these initiatives are ultimately aimed at establishing closer bilateral ties, which would benefit India strategically or commercially. Along with all these broad tenets of Indian soft power, Modi's personal charisma has also played a role in achieving India's foreign policy objectives.

Challenges Ahead and Scope for Improvement

The traditional ideas of the balance of power and competitive security, the ensuing hunt for an enemy, and the foundation of operations on conflicts, etc, to an extent can be overcome with the use of soft power assets. But still, India is rife with internal disputes, including those based on religion (religious intolerance), gender inequality, poverty alleviation, ethnic crisis, unemployment and the increased number of hate crimes.

The leadership lags behind in creating a comprehensive and consistent soft power strategy due to these internal issues. These have led to the erosion of India's traditional democratic and secular values. Even the government itself is aware of the challenges involved in successfully integrating the country's soft power assets into an overall strategy. Despite having a lower perceived risk than economic or military dominance, soft power is frequently difficult to employ, simple to lose, and expensive to re-establish (Nye, 2011). As far as India is concerned, a key barrier to the projection of its soft power has been the lack of sufficient hard power, particularly the economy. A quarter of the population is compelled to live in poverty. Furthermore, domestic violence and abuses of human rights could seriously harm the nation's reputation on the international stage and perhaps lead to sanctions being imposed.

During the winter session of 2022, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs had just issued in its report titled 'India's Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy: Prospects and Limitations'(Narang, 2023). The Committee identified four barriers that impede India's use of soft power and cultural diplomacy in the face of growing challenges from China's influence in the neighbourhood and beyond. These barriers include a lack of funding, a lack of coordination between different institutions, a lack of skilled labour, and an unclear mandate for the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).The Committee also recommended a number of other measures to help India better project its soft power, including reorganising the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), creating a board to certify yoga instructors, boosting tourism and creating a mechanism to communicate with the Indian diaspora.

India is a country with considerable soft power potential; although we have to understand that comparing it to China, a country that is much more powerful in economic and military terms, is a bit delusional. Nevertheless, its potential cannot be denied, even though its weakening democracy at home could prove to be a big challenge. Religious intolerance and the increased number of hate crimes – both of which erode India's traditional democratic and secular values. They must recall India's rich legacy of democratic ideals, including decentralisation of authority, the secularism principle, and pluralism, in order to boost the country's soft power.

Major investors have been discouraged from entering the market or growing significantly due to a lack of adequate physical infrastructure, restrictive rules, bloated and ineffective bureaucratic systems, and the perception of widespread corruption.

"Soft power without hard power is a confession of weakness; hard power without soft power stirs up resentments and enmities" (Tharoor, 2009). Given our efforts to achieve and project pluralist variety and tolerant secularism on a global scale, India is a country that fits this description perfectly. India will need to employ its soft power in a more methodical and deliberate way. Due to the need for a domestic discussion on how to strike a balance between political principles and national interests, this process will certainly take some time. How India finds the ideal balance of soft and hard power in order to establish actual influence-or what Joseph Nye has dubbed as 'smart power'-will depend on how this dispute is resolved. India needs to keep enhancing its internal economic performance if it wants to maintain its appeal as a power and, more crucially, if it wants to portray a convincing growth model.

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Water Conservation Projects: A Sustainable Development Strategy of MGNREGA

Rajeev S R

Water is an important base of life on earth and indeed a free gift from nature. Potable water for drinking and water for agriculture, both sustain life on Earth. It is available in plenty but scarce for drinking. The environmentalists repeatedly emphasize that the next war is for water. The scarcity of pure water is to be addressed. Crossing this juncture requires low-cost technology and manpower. Sustainable develo pment truly happens with the primary goal of water conservation. There are many successful stories of water conservation and source restoration projects in MGNREGA. This paper aims to study water conservation projects in three different terrains.

Keywords: Spiritual Ecology, Environmental Justice Movements, Ecosystem, Ecological refugees, The Bishnoi Movement.

Introduction

"Anything else you're interested in is not going to happen if you can't breathe the air and drink the water. Don't sit this one out. Do something. You are by accident of fate alive at an absolutely critical moment in the history of our planet." - Carl Sagan

From the inception of the MGNREGA in 2006 onwards, it has given the highest priority to the conservation of nature and natural resources. Earlier programmes strictly prioritized livelihood maintenance and development in rural areas. However, the MGNREGA has simultaneously given priority to livelihood maintenance and sustainable development. That is, the employment guarantee programme is deemed to focus on the future. The thrust area of the programme is to elevate people living in villages. The projects suggested under MGNREGA aim to conserve nature and natural resources. To attain the goals of sustainability, it undertakes projects like drought-proofing, deforestation, soil erosion, and the preparation of land for cultivation. The ultimate objective is the deliberate human interference to rejuvenate natural resources and preserve the environment. The Panchayati Raj institutions are the nodal agency entrusted with the superintendence and work. The aim of MGNREGA is to create food security, provision of work to unskilled rural employees, empower village communities, especially women and create durable assets in rural areas.

Objectives:

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To ensure sustainable development through the category B works undertaken by MGNREGA.

- To study projects under the conservation of natural resource, works such as draught related, deforestation, soil erosion preparing the land for cultivation and draught related works.

- To analyse the assets created in rural areas like the preservation of water bodies and related assets.

Statement of the Problem

Many projects are selected for work under MGNREGA, and the most economical and environmentally viable projects fall under category B works, community assets or individual assets, improving productivity of lands of households specified in paragraph 5 of schedule – I through land development and by providing

suitable infrastructure for irrigation including dug wells, farm ponds and other water harvesting structures. Other projects are related to improving livelihoods through horticulture, sericulture plantation, other kinds of plantation and farm forestry; development of fallow/waste lands of households defined in Paragraph 5 of Schedule - I to bring it under cultivation; pasture development / fodder farm; perennial grasses; Bamboo, rubber and coconut Plantation, creating infrastructure for promotion of livestock such as, poultry shelter, goat shelter, piggery shelter, cattle shelter and fodder troughs for cattle; creating infrastructure for promotion of fisheries such as, fish drying yards, storage facilities, and promotion of fisheries in seasonal water bodies on public land. Among the category B works, the most effective work done by unskilled workers is in water conservation projects and the highest amount allotted is for the same as they are the ultimate beneficiaries of these projects. In hilly areas during the summer season, water is not even available for drinking. In coastal areas, the perennial problem is that of drinking water. However, in normal land areas, the conservation of water is needed for agriculture in the summer season. The conservation or preservation of water and water bodies arises from the socio-economic mindset of the people living in villages. In this context, the paper attempts to enumerate and analyze the projects taken up under the Employment Guarantee Programme.

Sources of Data

The study used secondary data for analysis and interpretation, with the data sourced from NREGA soft of the National Informatics Centre. The data are directly received from the website. The annual report of MGNREGA published by the Ministry of Rural Development is used for description.

Areas Selected for the Study

The study selected three different terrains - hilly areas, normal land, and coastal areas spread across eight districts. These different terrains are considered as a cross-section of the entire physical structure of the country. The study aims to analyse the effectiveness and importance of water conservation projects in the selected areas.

Limitations of the Study

The study has limitations in several respects. Some major projects are not yet completed due to shortage of funds, and spill-over works are still continuing. Additionally, earlier data related to Category B works are incomplete in some areas, where works have been completed.

Water Conservation Projects: General Study

There are many striving water conservation initiatives that can be uncovered under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA. The Government of India allocates projects under the Act for the preservation of nature and natural resources. For improving water availability and providing access to potable drinking water in rural India, the government has given the highest priority to water-related works. This small subset sheds light on how the country addressed the issue of acute water scarcity. The success stories highlight how it helped accelerate the livelihoods of rural families, both directly and indirectly. Indirect outcomes include increased vegetation, recharging of soil moisture, and reduced soil erosion, while the direct impact is increased income from agriculture.

In Andhra Pradesh, 210 farm ponds and 54 check dams are constructed under MGNREGA projects. The impact is that about 580 bore wells are rejuvenated. The groundwater levels have risen, and agriculture has improved due to the water conservation strategy. In every kharif season, the yield from farms has multiplied. In Assam, vegetable cultivation on 450 acres of land has benefited from the water conservation projects. In Gujarat, before the inception of water conservation projects under MGNREGA, agriculture relied solely on monsoons for water. Farm activities were initiated only during the monsoon season. Now, works are taking place on farms in off-seasons, occurring twice a year. In Jharkhand, repeated success stories are unveiled. Out of the 45 ponds, 33 are recharged with the help of water conservation projects initiated by

MGNREGA. Now, water is sufficiently available for agriculture, saving people the time of fetching water, which is about 3 km from their village. Tribal villages in Odisha have increased their vegetable production with the help of water conservation projects. The agricultural productivity of Tamil Nadu has significantly changed due to various water conservation strategies undertaken by MGNREGA projects. Rainwater harvesting projects are very common in this state, where the collected water is filtered and used for drinking. The groundwater table has risen due to the water storage projects.

Out of the total works undertaken in MGNREGA, category B works have been given the highest priority. The percentage of water conservation projects has increased in every financial year. The data from 2015-16 to 2023-24 reveal that the programme is more inclined towards preserving nature and natural resources.

Category B Works-MGNREGA

Financial Year	2015 - 16	2016 - 17	2017 - 18	2018 - 19	2019 - 20	2020 - 21	2021 - 22	2022 - 23	2023 - 24
Works in Percentage	33.8	51.41	55.58	67.55	67.71	64.97	56.13	62.04	60.59

Source:www.NREGAsoft.NIC

Water Conservation Projects from Kerala

Kerala is a water-sufficient state, with 44 rivers flowing throughout; however, during the summer, water is not sufficiently available for agriculture and even for drinking. To address the problem of water scarcity, a project for reviving water bodies was initiated. Eight water conservation projects in three different terrains are unveiled in the study to demonstrate the effectiveness of water conservation.

Category B Works of MGNREGA

Year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Percentage of works	45.07	39.49	38.68	38.28	38.48

Source: www.NREGAsoft

Hilly areas: Wayanad-Earthen Dam, Idukki- Peruvanthanam.

Coastal area: Alappuzha-Cherthala- Stream rejuvenated

Normal Land: Palakkad- Reviving the lifeline of Alanallur, Trissur-Chovoorthazham., Ernakulam-Asmannoor-Pond restoration, Thiruvanamthapuram-Nemom-Intervention to achieve water sustainability, Kottayam-Meenachil River-Restored agricultural ecosystem.

Wayanad District. Earthen dams, or natural dams, have addressed water shortages and improved the livelihoods of people in Wayanad. The Puthanchira region in Noolpuzha Panchayath is situated in the valley between two hills on the fringes of the Sulthan Bathery forest range in the eastern part of the Wayanad District. The valley comprises farmlands and houses, and the primary source of water for farming is the surface run-off water from the slopes of the hills. Climate change and deforestation have adversely affected the water supply for paddy fields, leading to many villagers migrating from this region due to water scarcity. To tackle this issue, the Gram Sabha proposed the construction of 21 earthen dams in the valley under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.

The earthen dams in Puthanchira have ensured that water is available for the irrigation of 500 hectares of land throughout the year. The increased soil moisture content has allowed an additional 300 hectares of land, owned by 150 tribal farmers, to come under cultivation. These farmers are cultivating paddy as the major crop along with banana, ginger, turmeric, and tapioca.

Category B Works of MGNREGA

Year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Percentage of works	51.18	37.53	36.65	36.84	35.34

Source: www.NREGAsoft

Idukki District. Peruvanthanam Grama Panchayat is located in the Azhutha block of Idukki District, and it has a hill topography, receiving abundant rainfall during the monsoon season. However, the rainwater drains off entirely due to the upside-down nature of the land, and the percolation of water is limited. This has resulted in a severe shortage of water during the summer, leading villagers to depend on water tankers for their drinking and household needs. Therefore, the Gram Sabha has approved the construction of three check dams at Manikkal, Paloorkavu, and Kadamangulam to address the water scarcity problem in this Grama Panchayat.

The Manikkal check dam project has met the water needs of nearly 1,200 villagers in the upstream tea plantation area. Similarly, the Paloorkavu and Kadamangulam check dams have benefited nearly 450 households, providing an adequate water supply throughout the year. With improved irrigation, the cultivable land area has increased by approximately 150-200 acres.

Category B Works of MGNREGA

Year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Percentage of works	40.75	37.67	31.18	29.25	26.18

Source: www.NREGAsoft

Alappuzha District. Karippechal is a stream that flows through Cherthala South, Kadakkarappally, and Kanjikuzhi Gram Panchayats of Kanjikuzhi block panchayath in Alappuzha District. Over the years, deposits from the shoreline and river pollution have silted the flow of the stream, causing floods during the rainy season. This has affected the lives of the coastal area, leading to unhealthy living conditions such as contamination of drinking water, improper sanitation facilities, waterborne diseases, etc., during the monsoon season. Three local self-government bodies of the district, namely, Kanjikuzhi Block Panchayat (BP), Kadakkarappally GP, and Cherthala South GP, worked together for the revival of the stream. The major work done by them is desilting.

As a result of the rejuvenation of the stream, the coastal ecological balance was regained, and the ecosystem has been re-established in the nearby area. Additionally, the cropping area has been increased by 20 hectares, and the water holding capacity of the stream has been enhanced. Approximately 50 families have benefited in terms of an increase in agricultural produce. During the rainy season, authorities had to shift 100-150 Scheduled Caste families residing on both sides of the stream. They had to camp for about 4–5 months during this season. However, no floods were reported during the previous monsoon. Consequently, the residents of the area are now happy that they can stay in their own houses during the monsoon. Many residents have installed Chinese fishing nets and are earning approximately Rs. 700 per day from fishing. The farmers are now engaged in their seasonal vegetable cultivation in the paddy fields, a practice they had given up during previous years with the onset of the monsoon.

Category B Works of MGNREGA

Year	2019-2020	2020-21	2021-22	2020-23	2023-24
Percentage of works	48.80	39.88	39.58	39.34	36.20

Source: www.NREGAsoft

Palakkad District. Alanallur Gram Panchayat is in the Mannarkkad block of Palakkad District. This district has three major rivers flowing through it and receives sufficient rainfall during the monsoon season.

However, due to the unavailability of storage structures, the area suffers from drought-like situations during the summer season. During summer, farmers depend on the Velliyar River for their water needs. Across the river, they construct small bunds using sandbags to facilitate irrigation in their paddy fields. Realizing the need for a permanent water storage structure, with the help of Ayalkoottam, the Panchayath constructed check dams across the river.

The impact of the check dam has positively affected nearly 2,000 households in overcoming the drought-like situation. Now, farmers in the area have access to ample surface irrigation, which has increased the cultivable area to 400 hectares. The check dams have revived biodiversity in the area. Farmers cultivating primary crops such as paddy (25 hectares), banana (150 hectares), rubber (100 hectares), pepper (50 hectares), and cocoa (40 hectares) have benefited from this project. The increase in the water table has caused the accumulation of silt on the banks of the river, enriching the fertility of the soil.

Category B Works of MGNREGA

Year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Percentage of works	54.73	48.68	46.76	42.20	46.93

Source: www.NREGAsoft

Thrissur District. A check dam revived the paddy fields of Chovoorthazham. Cherpu Block Panchayath, which consists of Cherpu, Avinissery, Paralam, and Valachira GPs, is located in Thrissur District. As groundwater is the main source of irrigation, water becomes scarce during the summer season. Chovoorthazham, an area formed by portions of Avinissery, Cherpu, and Paralam, serves as a boundary for the Chanam paddy field. Earlier, paddy cultivation was done with the support of temporary bunds. However, the water level began to rise in the main canals due to the lack of permanent bunds, leading to a halt in farming activity in the area. In the Gram Sabha meeting, paddy farmers proposed the construction of a check dam, which was subsequently approved by the Gram Sabha. The irrigation department identified a spot for the construction of the check dam to make water accessible to three Grama Panchayats.

After the construction of the check dam, farming activities have been revived in nearly 80 acres of fallow land belonging to 60 households, resulting in the production of 50 tonnes of paddy. The combined effort of Block Panchayat, Grama Panchayats, paddy farming groups, and other departments paved the way for the cultivation of agricultural fields that remained unused for the past 25 years. The harvested paddy is marketed at the rate of Rs. 25 per kg, generating a total income of Rs. 12.5 lakhs. This implies that from a small fund of Rs. 16,342 allocated for check dam construction, the farmers were able to generate an income of Rs. 1.2 crores as returns.

Category B Works of MGNREGA

Year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Percentage of works	50.22	47.46	44.45	40.93	39.35

Source: www.NREGAsoft

Ernakulum District. Asamannoor Gram Panchayat is located in Koovappady block of Ernakulam District, and the villagers depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. The hilly areas in the panchayat faced water scarcity. Additionally, there was a problem of land encroachment in one of the low-lying areas where water would accumulate in the rainy season and dry up in summer. To address these issues, the Gram Panchayat decided to restore the pond "Kuttikattu Chira" with the help of water from the Periyar River to meet the needs of the water-stressed areas of Asamannoor Gram Panchayat.

After the restoration of the pond, more than 250 acres of land belonging to 300 households are cultivated with crops like paddy, tapioca, banana, and other vegetables. An additional 8,000 kg of paddy is being

produced. Fish farming is also being promoted in this pond in convergence with the fisheries department. This pond is the first of its kind in the district to undertake fish farming through a fish farming club in association with 'Kudumbasree', providing an additional income of Rs. 300–500 per day. The farmers are able to provide adequate water and fodder to their cattle in all seasons. The water level in the wells of the area has also increased. The development of the pond has helped in arresting the problem of soil erosion, thereby increasing the productivity of the land.

Category B Works of MGNREGA

Year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Percentage of works	46.4	41.02	40.49	37.4	36.6

Source: www.NREGAsoft

Thiruvananthapuram District. The combined effort and strong intervention to achieve water sustainability in Nemom Block Panchayat, Thiruvananthapuram District, have been noteworthy. During the summer season, this region faces an acute shortage of water, and traditional water bodies, including drinking water sources, used to dry up mid-summer. While drinking water requirements were met by purchasing water from suppliers, there was no water for agricultural activities. The difficulties faced by the people forced the authorities to think about feasible and cost-effective water conservation and groundwater recharge methods. Water conservation activities were initiated under the programme Jala Samrudhi in seven Gram Panchayats of Nemom Block, in convergence with other line departments of the state government. A wide range of activities, including constructing boulder checks, farm ponds, land development, and rejuvenation of traditional water bodies, were carried out to ensure water security.

The impact of the works taken up has brought about a remarkable change in the groundwater level, benefiting 20,000 families within the block. More than 1,000 hectares of land are now under cultivation. Villagers are shifting to paddy cultivation after witnessing the increased water availability. At present, 750 families have access to drinking water throughout the year.

Category B Works of MGNREGA

Year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Percentage of works	50.38	43.06	40.71	39.71	36.76

Source: www.NREGAsoft

Kottayam District. The success story of the restored agricultural ecosystem of the Meenachil River is an eye-opener for all conservation projects. The Meenanthara and Kodoor tributaries of the Meenachil River flow through 30 Grama Panchayaths and four municipalities in Kottayam District. These were earlier interlinked with several natural or man-made streams. Of late, these streams got hitched due to pollution and dumping of waste, leading to their disassociation from the main river. The polluted water was causing several waterborne diseases, and thousands of acres of paddy fields turned fallow due to the clogging of these streams. The aquatic diversity was also vanishing. Therefore, the restoration and relinking of the river and its tributaries were carried out under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS in convergence with many line departments of the state government by desilting, deepening, and reinforcing of riverbanks with coir geotextiles. A local NGO also played a role in the rejuvenation of these three rivers.

The rejuvenation activity has benefited paddy cultivation in 30 Grama Panchayaths that have approximately 50,000 households. Nearly 3,500 acres of cultivable land have improved due to this work. The deepening of rivers has resulted in increased water availability and water table in the canals, streams, wells, and ponds during the summer season. In terms of quality and quantity, drinking water has improved significantly. The water biodiversity has also improved after the deepening of the streams and canals, using

coir geotextiles to strengthen the banks of the streams. The end result is a positive impact on the ecosystem of the rejuvenated water bodies.

Category B Works of MGNREGA

Year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Percentage of works	40.19	42.96	46.45	44.85	45.39

Source: www.NREGAsoft

Findings

The study concluded with the following findings:

1. The water conservation projects implemented in different terrains have yielded both direct and indirect benefits

2. The water conservation projects implemented under MGNREGA directly contribute to the improvement of livelihoods of the workers

3. The projects inducted under MGNREGA indirectly contribute to the availability of water needed for agriculture

4. MGNREGA projects have given the highest priority to category B works due to their perceived general acceptability

Conclusion

The MGNREGA has given the highest priority to water conservation and related works since 2019. Nationally, it can be understood that in 2019-20, category B works, including water conservation and related projects, were given the highest priority. The same has happened in all districts except Kottayam. In 2021-22, Kottayam district gave the highest priority to water conservation works. The water conservation strategies of the eight projects in different terrains yield similar results. These include addressing water shortage, promoting progress in agriculture, enriching livelihoods, and maintaining ecosystem health. A motivating aspect is that the robustness of the environment is maintained using unskilled labour and cost-effective technology. Achieving sustainable development in a material sense can be accomplished through water conservation projects under MGNREGA.

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The Marrakesh Treaty: An Analysis of a Landmark International Agreement in the Annals of Copyright and Disability Jurisprudence

Raju Narayana Swamy IAS

The Marrakesh Treaty symbolizes an attempt to bring in a more balanced approach between authors and users and marks a huge step forward towards inclusivity. It underlines the need for social integration and cultural participation of the 285 million visually impaired people across the globe - of whom 39 million are blind. It is to be viewed in the back drop of the reality that the shortage of accessible materials for them is due in part to gaps in international and national IP laws. Its importance lies in the fact that it is the first time human rights principles are enshrined in an international copyright treaty.

Key words : TRIPS Agreement, Digital Rights Management, Print Disabled, World Wide Web Consortium, Disabled Persons Organisations

Introduction

In 2013, the Member States of the WIPO adopted the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled. The Treaty addresses the 'book famine' - a nomenclature for the low number of books and other copyright protected material that is accessible to the visually impaired. To quote none other than the President of the World Blind Union, "The Marrakesh Treaty is much more than a Treaty about books. It is a historic human rights instrument. Access to published works means the potential for blind and partially sighted children and adults to live integrated, productive lives."

As the preamble proclaims, "The aim of the Treaty is to build a solid foundation to ensure the widespread dissemination of accessible material recognizing that many Member States have established limitations and exceptions in their national copyright laws for persons with visual impairments or with other print disabilities, yet there is a continuing shortage of available works in accessible format for such persons." To put it in simple terms, the Treaty addresses copyright as barrier to accessibility. It requires its contracting parties to adopt exceptions to their copyright laws to allow making, distributing, exporting and importing copies in accessible formats. It requires the Member States to ensure that they comply with the obligations under the Berne Convention, the TRIPS Agreement and the WCT (WIPO Copyright Treaty). This is because the copyright works that are in the centre of the 'book famine' problem are governed by these instruments.

In June 2014, India became the first country to ratify the Treaty. On September 30, 2016, the Treaty came in to force by formally gathering 20 nations that acceded to the Treaty (viz) India, El Salvador, UAE, Mali, Uruguay, Paraguay, Singapore, Argentina, Mexico, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, Australia, Brazil, Peru, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Israel, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala and Canada.

The Background

Electronic text is more accessible than printed books. For a blind person in a physical library, the only option to access the information is to have it read out loud. On the contrary in the case of a text file, it can be sent to a braille display or alternatively text - to - speech software can be used to read it out loud.

Thus compared to paper and ink, text files are wide open to the blind. In fact, today technological advances have enabled the visually impaired to access material in ways that might have been qualified as fanciful some decades ago. These include Screen Readers, Talking Newspapers (audio recordings of news articles in newspapers), Magnifiers, Optical Character Recognition (OCR), Braille Translation software and the like.

But Digital Rights Management (DRM) - which is often used to lock down content - can restrict those uses. Moreover law continued to lag behind and it was almost impossible for the blind to access a wide cornucopia of works without the permission of copyright owners.

Beginning in 2004, WIPO examined access to works for the blind. A WIPO study in 2007 estimated that only about 5% of published books are available in an accessible format. For the rest, if the book is to be read, someone must convert it in to an accessible format. A series of discussions lasting nearly a decade led to the Marrakesh Treaty. As countries change their laws to allow making accessible format copies of works, this will allow the conversion of a greater portion of works to accessible formats. The biggest change ushered in may be that as people create accessible copies, they can share them across borders. This means that the cost and effort to convert something to an accessible format is less likely to be duplicated globally.

Salient Features of the Treaty

a. Works Covered

Article 2(a) of the Treaty defines "works covered." This refers to the types of material which can be transcribed or distributed under the terms of the Treaty. Works such as literary and artistic works in the form of text, notation and/or related illustrations made publicly available in any media have been covered. This definition is rather narrow as it does not cover photographic works, cinematographic works, sound recordings, dramatic works, broadcasts, performances etc. The exclusion of audio visual works, films and data bases is an unfortunate choice.

b. Beneficiaries

Article 3 of the Treaty defines "Beneficiary Persons". The beneficiaries under the Treaty includes:

i.   Blind persons

ii.   Persons with visual impairment that prevents them from reading like a normal person and

iii.   Person who cannot hold of manipulate a book or move eyes like a normal person to read a work.

Visually Impaired Persons or dyslexic persons, it needs to be mentioned here, range from those with only light impairment to the inability to read a text without assistive technology.

The inclusion of 'print disabled' - anyone who cannot access print due to any form of disability - as a beneficiary furthers the objective of nondiscrimination and equal opportunity. It reminds us of the concept articulated by George Kerscher to describe persons who cannot "access print because of a visual, physical, perceptual, developmental, cognitive or learning disability."However it does not cover people with auditory issues, mental disability etc, who also have problems with accessing printing works. Moreover, Article 3 does not clarify the qualifying indicators for 'blindness', 'visual impairment' etc. The Treaty leaves the specifications of the spectrum of impairments and disabilities to be decided by national laws - hoping that all nations follow a social model of disability and include all who are in real need.

c. Authorized Entities and Cross Border Exchange

Article 2(c) of the Treaty defines "authorized entity" as an entity that is authorized or recognized by the government to provide education, instructional training, adoptive reading or information access to beneficiary persons on a non-profit basis. The Article specifically states that authorized entity also includes a government institution or non-profit organization that provides the same services to beneficiary persons

as one of its primary activities or institutional obligations. It is worth mentioning that to qualify as an authorized entity there is no specific process.

Article 4(2) seeks to address the exceptions create by the member states in their national copyright laws. It seeks to permit authorized entities, without the authorization of the copyright right holder, to make an accessible format copy and supply these copies to beneficiary persons by any means, including non-commercial lending or by electronic communication when all of the following conditions are met:

    i.   the authorized entity wishing to undertake the said activity has lawful access to that work or a copy of that work.

    ii.   no changes are introduced other than those needed to make the work accessible to the beneficiary person.

    iii. such accessible format copies are supplied exclusively to be used by beneficiary persons and

    iv. the activity is undertaken on a non-profit basis.

To put it a bit differently, this gives them the right to reproduce, the right to distribute, the right to make it available to public and the right to make changes to the work to convert it in to an accessible format.

Article 5(2) which deals with cross border exchange of accessible format copies specifies that a contracting party may fulfill Article 5(1) by providing a limitation or exception in its national copyright law such that authorized entities shall be permitted (without the authorization of the right holder) to distribute or make available for the exclusive use of beneficiary persons accessible format copies to an authorized entity or to a beneficiary person in another Contracting Party. Read with Article 6, it gives authorized entities access to the material from the importing country without the prior consent of the copyright owner.

Thus the Marrakesh Treaty mandates national laws to allow cross border exchange of works in accessible format provided the following conditions are met:

    a.   Accessible works are exclusively distributed to differently abled persons.

    b.   The Three Step Test as laid down in the Berne Convention and later in TRIPS and WCT is satisfied.

        i.   The exception or limitation must be a special case.

        ii.   It does not conflict with the normal exploitation of the work and

        iii. It does not prejudice the legitimate interests of the copyright holder.

To be true to facts, Article 11 orders that governments carve exceptions so as to make sure that the interests of authors are not unreasonably prejudiced.

The Indian Saga

On May 17, 2012 - much before the Marrakesh Treaty came in to picture - the Indian Parliament introduced a rather liberal disability friendly copyright exception. More specifically under Section 52 of the Act, which concerns fair use dealing, Section 52(1) (zb) was introduced which exempts from infringement "the adaptation, reproduction, issue of copies or communication to the public of any work in any accessible format by

    i.   any person to facilitate persons with disability to access to works including sharing with any person with disability of such accessible format for private or personal use, educational purpose or research or

    ii.   any organization working for the benefit of the persons with disabilities in case the normal format prevents the enjoyment of such works by such persons.

Provided that the copies of the works in such accessible format are made available to the persons with disabilities on a nonprofit basis but to recover only the cost of production. Provided further that the organization shall ensure that the copies of the works in such accessible format are used by persons with disabilities and takes reasonable steps to prevent its entry into ordinary channels of business."

Thus the section brings with its ambit the following broad kinds of activities:

i.   Conversions by the disabled persons for his/her own use and for sharing with others in the community.

ii. Conversions by third parties (individuals or organizations) working for the benefit of the disabled on a nonprofit basis.

In case the conversion and distribution are done for profit, the concerned entity will have to apply under Section 31 B (Compulsory License for benefit of disabled).

The Indian copyright disability exception marks a watershed in the history of copyright and disability jurisprudence. The provisions therein apply not just to the visually impaired, but to the disabled in general. It was the culmination of more than a decade of concerted advocacy by a diverse and disparate group of experts. It helped build significant momentum for an international treaty.

ABC & Sugamya Pustakalaya

No discussion on the Marrakesh Treaty will be complete without a reference to the ABC(Accessible Books Consortium) which is a public private partnership led by the WIPO. It includes libraries for the blind, standards bodies, organizations representing authors, publishers and collective management organizations apart from of course organizations that represent people with print disabilities such as the World Blind Union. The goal of ABC is to increase the number of books in accessible formats worldwide and to make them available to the visually impaired. On the Indian front, Sugamya Pustakalaya represents the country's largest collection of online accessible books.

The Field Reality in India

Several studies have been conducted on whether the provisions in the Indian Copyright Act have been effectively used for the benefit of the visually impaired persons and whether the amendments therein have offered any ideal benefits to the disabled community such as bringing them closer to the copyrighted material. Of these, special mention must be made of the research paper by Ms Anjana Girish and Ms Saraswathy Vaidyanathan which concludes that although India has hit the mark in drafting suitable legislation, there are deficiencies in its implementation. To quote just an example, even State Government websites used for payment of employees 'salaries are inaccessible to visually impaired persons as it is not compatible with screen reading assisting software.

The study highlighted:

• The provisions in the Marrakesh Treaty to facilitate cross border exchange of accessible format copies has been scarcely utilized.

• Awareness of copyright law and needless to say of the amendment therein is abysmally low. In fact even government functionaries are unaware of the policy per se and the beneficial provisions.

• Limited financial help or capacity and low technical capacity

• Poor communication with authorities with respect to grievance redressal

• Lack of volunteers to convert literature texts to audio books.

• No steps are taken to ensure that the accessible format copies are available in regional languages. This creates a barrier in the holistic development of the visually impaired community.

To put it in simple terms, incorporation of the provisions beneficial to the visually impaired persons has not aided in improving their access to copyright works. This is an alarming situation which calls for immediate intervention. One possible solution could be issue of a mandatory directive to publishers with respect to printing multiple accessible formats like the United States. Another step could be to ensure that websites are designed with a World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) format which makes every content available to visually impaired persons. Public libraries need to be mandated to devote space for the blind. Needless to say, all these have to be preceded by serious conscientisation efforts and establishment of a database comprising of audio books. Only a multi stakeholder approach in collaboration with all the key players-governmental bodies, authorized entities etc-can save the day. Otherwise the fruits of the Marrakesh Treaty will never reach the 63 million visually impaired people in the country - of whom 8 million are blind.

Conclusion

The Marrakesh Treaty symbolizes an attempt to bring in a more balanced approach between authors and users and marks a huge step forward towards inclusivity. It underlines the need for social integration and cultural participation of the 285 million visually impaired people across the globe - of whom 39 million are blind. It is to be viewed in the back drop of the reality that the shortage of accessible materials for them is due in part to gaps in international and national IP laws. Its importance lies in the fact that it is the first time human rights principles are enshrined in an international copyright treaty.

The Marrakesh Treaty is part of a growing body of internationally recognized disability rights law and involved a decade of negotiation and advocacy. It follows the rapid and widespread ratification of the CRPD (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) which recognizes the rights of equality and non - discrimination, the right to accessibility, the right to education and the right to participate in political and cultural life among others. States that comply with the Marrakesh Treaty also may be able to better respect, promote and protect rights contained in the UDHR.

Copyright, it must be mentioned here, is perceived as a hindrance to the free flow of information. The main reason why copyright owners are reluctant to provide accessible format copies for the disabled is that they feel the market that caters to visually impaired persons' needs is unprofitable. Therefore they are not considered by the publishers as a commercially viable customer group. Another concern of publishers is that converted books are also often used by persons who are not visually impaired, thereby leading to a loss in the market.

To put it more succinctly, the intersection of technology, market failure and copyright laws creates a complex access dilemma for the visually impaired, depriving them of equal opportunity. It is in this background that the Treaty is to be viewed - as the first international legal instrument that seeks to address a specific impediment (ie) the issue of book famine for the visually impaired. Though the Treaty does not take in to account the interests of persons with other disabilities, it is no doubt a step in the right direction. It proves that positive change can be made even in giant global institutions and against great odds. But the picture in the field is not so rosy.

Despite perceptions to the contrary, the rise of internet availability and mobile communications technology does not mean automatic accessibility for vision impaired persons. The logistic of practical access and integration with educational opportunities remain challenging. Conversion of books to Braille, large audio or electronic files requires political will, time and resources that not all governments have been willing to support. However the progressive developments recognizing state obligations to respect, protect, promote and fulfill the rights of persons who are differently abled in the backdrop of advocacy by DPOs (Disabled Persons Organisations) is a silver line in the horizon. One can only hope and trust that the glorious day on which the noble objectives of the Marrakesh Treaty are realized in letter and spirit is not too far away.

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Intergenerational Mobility Among Fisherfolk in Poonthura Fishing Village in Kerala

Shabna. J.S. &
Mothi George

The fisheries sector is one of the important subdivisions of India's Agricultural sector. It is accepted as a substantial income and employment generator to the country and stimulates the growth of numerous subsidiary industries. However, the socio-economic conditions of the fishermen in India remain very low. Kerala is one of India's major coastal states, and fishermen's socio-economic conditions follow the national pattern. The primary reason behind this backwardness is the lack of education and the uncertainties of their occupation. Educational attainment is an essential criteria for allocating individuals to better occupational and economic status. The paper examines education's influence on intergenerational occupational mobility among the fishermen community in Kerala with particular reference to the Poonthura fishing village.

Keywords : Educational Mobility, Occupational Mobility, Intergenerational Mobility, Intra generational mobility, Fisherfolk.

Introduction

Education is one of the most important components in an individual's career development. It is a kind of investment that helps in developing human capital, factor output, economic growth, and socio-economic development of a country. Educational attainment is an essential criteria for allocating individuals to occupational and financial status. If higher the educational qualification of an individual, there is more chances of achieving a higher occupation (Muhammad Shabbir and Ali Hina Jalal, 2018).Furthermore, since a high level of educational attainment is usually essential for increased technical and managerial positions, only those with high educational attainment can attain this status. A person with low educational attainment generally cannot acquire these prestigious positions. Therefore, a person's status in society has become correlated mainly with his educational attainment. High educational attainment is an essential means of upward mobility for those from poor socio-economic backgrounds. It is a source of empowerment for the marginal section of society, allowing them to participate more actively in social, economic, and political matters.

The fishing sector is accepted as a substantial earning and occupation generator for a large section of the poor people in the country. It earns huge amount of foreign exchange for the country. The Fishing sector also encourages the expansion of several subsidiary industries (Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, 2021).

The fishermen population of the country during 2019-20 is 28063537, of which 15665630 are Male and 12397907 are Female (Handbook on Fisheries Statistics, 2020). India is the world's third-largest fish-producing country, accounting for 7.96 percent of global production. Fish production in India in 2020-21 was estimated at 147.3 lakh MT. In 2020-21export of marine products stood at 1.15 MMT and was valued at 43717.26 crores despite the market uncertainties caused by Covid 19 pandemic (Annual report, 2021-22).

The socio-economic standing of Indian fishermen is extremely poor, nevertheless. The marine fishermen of India, who depend on fisheries for their subsistence, were significantly below the national averages in many of the key demographic indicators (G. Syda Rao et al. 2016). The southwest maritime states of India

comprise of three major states namely Kerala, Karnataka, and Goa. Kerala is one of India's leading coastal states. The socio-economic circumstances of Kerala fishermen are analogous to these.

Kerala contributes significantly to the maritime Indian economy thanks to its 590 km of coastline. Kerala is one of India's most significant contributors to the total marine fish landing. The whole fish production of Kerala in 2019-20 was 6.8 lakh metric tons. During 2018-19 Kerala exported 183064 tons valued at 6014.7 crore (Kerala Fisheries Handbook, 2020). Kerala has made vital contributions to the export of marine products to the country. The fishermen population of the state for 2020-21 is estimated at 10.54 lakh. They reside in 222 marine fishing villages and 113 inland fishing villages of the state. Out of the total fishermen population, 8.1 lakh fishermen belong to the maritime sector, while 2.4 belongs to the inland sector (Economic Review, 2022 volume 1). Alappuzha (1.96 lakhs) has the largest fishermen population, followed by Thiruvananthapuram (1.75 lakhs). Regarding the marine fishermen population, Thiruvananthapuram district is the largest, followed by Alappuzha (Economic Review, 2022 volume 2).

Fishing is a male-oriented occupation. The majority of Kerala's fishermen were forced into this profession due to its hereditary nature, poverty, and lack of education (Kerala State Planning Board, 2016). One of the key factors affecting socio-economic development is education level. In general, the level of education of the fishermen's community is very low. Most fishermen are illiterate and must use their thumb impression instead of their signature. Despite the low per capita domestic income, Kerala was declared as a complete literate state in 1991. However, this achievement cannot be claimed in the case of three major categories of the state's backward sections: the tribal folk, the marine fish workers, and the floating Tamil population (M K George and Domi J, 2002).

Education is significantly impacted by the high unemployment rate among the educated offspring of fishermen (John Kurien, 1981). Informal and circumstantial evidence of people occupied with fishing communities proposes that they are prone to low levels of literacy and schooling. It has been recommended that a 'vicious cycle of illiteracy' occurs in fishing communities, both the result and reason of continued poverty (Bryan Maddox, 2007).

Examining the intergenerational mobility among fisher folk would be worthwhile in the light of the above discussion.In this context, this is an attempt to analyze the intergenerational occupational mobility among the fisher folk in Kerala as a result of education.

Intergenerational Mobility

Mobility implies the ability to move quickly from one place, social class, or job to another. Sociologists commonly use the term mobility based on social mobility. In sociological parlance, mobility refers to the movement of an individual or group from one social position to another. Concerning mobility Piltrim Sorokin is the first sociologist who wrote a book titled "Social and Cultural Mobility." According to Sorokin, social mobility is meant "any transition of an individual from one social position to another in a constellation of a social group and strata" (Sorokin, 1959). Lipset and Bendix (1951) also used the term social mobility to mention how individuals move from one position to another in social position, which has been given specific hierarchical values by general consent. Researchers adopt different methods for measuring social mobility. While observing previous literature on mobility, most researchers take education, occupation, and income as variables. Intergenerational social mobility is the change in social position from generation to generation.

Social mobility can be achieved in various ways, and the most important among them is through high-remunerative occupations via higher educational qualifications. The movement of individuals from one occupation to another is known as occupational mobility. Obtaining higher education is also one kind of mobility. In other words, the ability of an individual to improve their educational achievements is known as educational mobility. Education is essential for obtaining occupational mobility (NachumSicherman,1990).

Mobility can be classified into different kinds on various bases. Two types of mobility are based on

generation, namely intra- generational and inter-generational. Intra-generational mobility refers to mobility within a single generation. It is measured by comparing an individual's occupational status at two or more points in time. The second type is intergenerational mobility. It refers to mobility between generations and is measured by comparing sons' occupational status with their fathers (Sorokin, 1959). Among these two, the present study only concentrated on intergenerational mobility.

According to Becker and Tomes (1979, p. 1154), Intergenerational mobility measures the effect of a family on the well-being of its children. It refers to mobility between generations and is measured by comparing sons' socio-economic status with their fathers. Intergenerational mobility deals with the association between parents' socio-economic status and the socio-economic outcomes of their children (Björklund & Jäntti, 2009; Blanden, 2009; Solon, 2002). This could be measured in many ways, such as income, education, or occupational prestige.

According to Blanden (2013), Intergenerational mobility concerns the relationship between parents' socio-economic status and the socio-economic outcomes of their children as adults. He pointed out that this can be measured in multiple ways, by family income, individual earnings, social class, occupational status, or education.

Intergenerational Educational Mobility

Educational mobility is concerned with the improvement in educational status. Intergenerational educational mobility is the change in educational status across two or more generations. It is high if the highest level of education a child achieves does not closely relate to that of his/her parents. Individuals' Educational attainment is a significant indicator of movements between occupation and income groups and across generations (Azevedo, Bouillon, 2010).

Intergenerational Occupational mobility

Occupational mobility is how individuals move from one occupational position to another. Intergenerational occupational mobility means the change in occupation from one generation to another. It refers to the changes in the occupational standing of the son/daughter relating to his/her parents.

Review of Literature

Sovani and Pradhan (1955) conducted a study on occupational mobility and measured mobility and immobility rates in Pune city. A sample of 5601 households were chosen randomly to participate in the research. According to this study, there was a clear pattern of occupational immobility throughout generations.

Jhilam Ray and Rajarshi Majumder (2010) attempted to study the educational attainment level and occupational structure among various classes in India by using National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) database. They found that educational and occupational mobility among Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was lower compared to advanced classes. The backward classes were primarily stuck in their parental occupation. However, compared to educational mobility, occupational mobility was comparatively sticky.

Dr.A. Sumathi and V. Sujadevi (2016) describe the patterns of intergenerational occupational mobility among the workers in traditional pottery industries in Kerala. The study was conducted among the members ofthe Velaar Community in Kottayam district. The study reveals no favorable intergenerational occupational among the Velaar community in Kerala and also establishes that there is no substantial representation of young people in government or professional jobs.

Using a nationally representative data set, the Indian Human Development Survey, Anustup Kundu and Kunal Sen (2022) examined three educational and occupational mobility among generations in India. They discovered that intergenerational mobility has grown over time in the educational arena but not in the occupation area.

The above literature shows that many studies have explored intergenerational educational and

occupational mobility among different communities. However, no studies deal with intergenerational mobility among the fishermen community. So, it is the need of the hour to study intergenerational mobility among fishermen in Kerala.

Objectives

The main objectives are:

1. To examine the intergenerational educational mobility among the fishermen community in Kerala.

2. To examine the intergenerational occupational mobility among the fishermen community in Kerala.

3. To assess the influence of education on intergenerational occupational mobility among the fisher folk in Kerala.

Methodology

Both primary and secondary data are used in this study. Secondary data is collected from economic reviews, statistics of planning, reports of the directories of fisheries, economic surveys, and published and unpublished books and journals. Primary data was collected through the interview method with the aid of a pre-tested questionnaire. The questionnaire primarily concentrates on the educational and occupational circumstances of the father and their son. Since fishing is male-orientated, the present study only discusses mobility among male members residing in Poonthura fishing village in Kerala. Thiruvananthapuram is a highly marine fishermen-populated area, followed by Alappuzha and Kozhikode. The Poonthura fishing village from Thiruvananthapuram is selected at random. Poonthura is a large fishing village with a coastal length of 1.2 Kilometers. Also, Poonthura is one of Thiruvananthapuram district's most populated and largest fish landing centers. Poonthura Fisheries village is spread over two wards of Thiruvananthapuram Corporation. The coastal wards of this village are 74 and 76. The village has 650 houses and 712 households (Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation). One hundred households were selected for the sample, in which one sample includes all the information of two generations of a family, particularly father, and son. Simple percentage and chi-square test are used to analyze the collected data on intergenerational mobility in education and occupation.

For analyzing educational mobility, the educational levels attained by fishermen have been classified into eight hierarchical levels. They are (1) Illiterate, (2) Primary, (3) Secondary, (4) Higher Secondary, (5) Technical Education, (6) Graduate, (7) Professional Graduation, (8) Post Graduation. To analyze occupational mobility, the occupational levels of fishermen have been classified into seven categories (1) Fishing, (2) Driver, (3) Private firm, (4) Business, (5) Abroad, (6) Government, (7) Professional.

Results and Discussions

The educational level of the fishermen in Poonthura fishing village over two generations has been analyzed by simple percentage method. From the 100 collected samples from each generation, it can be inferred that in the fathers' generation, the literacy rate was 92%. Among these literates, more than half percent have only primary education. However, in the son's generation, all are literate, and 80% attained higher secondary or more. In the father's generation, 48% are primary-level educated, whereas, in the son's generation, only 2% have primary education. Likewise, in the father's generation, 40% have a secondary level of education; however, 18% in the son's generation have secondary education. The trend is just the opposite in the case of higher secondary education. Because in the father's generation, only 4% have higher secondary education compared to 35% in the son's generation. No one has education beyond the higher secondary level in the parents' generation. However, almost nearly half of the sons have higher education. Sons who attained technical education are 8% and graduation is 25%. Sons having professional graduation is 5% and post-graduation is 7%. Thus, the results show that illiteracy has come down from father to son generation, and higher education is more visible in the son's generation compared to the father's generation.

The occupational level of the fishermen in Kerala over two generations has been analyzed using simple percentages. From the analysis, it can be inferred that in the fathers' generation, there were 83% were engaged in fishing. However, in the son's generation, only 32% are engaged in fishing. Almost similar numbers of individuals are engaged in driving occupations in both generations. In the father's generation, it is 5%; in the sons' generation, it is 6%. No one is in a private firm in the father's generation, whereas 14% are engaged in a private firm in the son's generation. Regarding business, four percent of fathers are doing business, which is only one percent in the son's generation. Occupational Mobility in the son's generation is visible when comparing the number of persons abroad. In the father's generation, 6% are abroad, but in the son's generation, 31% are abroad. The people in the government sector are only 2% in the father's generation. No one is engaged in a Professional occupation in the father's generation, but it is 12% in the son's generation. Therefore, it is evident that the number of persons engaged in abroad, private and professional occupations are visible only in the son's generation.

Table:-1 Association between Education of Father and Education of Son

Education of Son		Education of Father				Total
		Illiterate	Primary	Secondary	Higher Education	
Primary	N	2	0	0	0	2
	%	25.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0
Secondary	N	6	12	0	0	18
	%	75.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	18.0
Higher	N	0	35	0	0	35
Secondary	%	0.0	72.9	0.0	0.0	35.0
Technical	N	0	1	7	0	8
Education	%	0.0	2.1	17.5	0.0	8.0
Graduation	N	0	0	25	0	25
	%	0.0	0.0	62.5	0.0	25.0
Professional	N	0	0	5	0	5
Graduation	%	0.0	0.0	12.5	0.0	5.0
Post-	N	0	0	3	4	7
Graduation	%	0.0	0.0	7.5	100.0	7.0
Total	N	8	48	40	4	100
	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Chi-Square Result				Value = 190.513, df = 18, p= 0.000		

Note: Percentage within Education of Father, Source: Primary Survey, 2023

In case of the association between the education level of fathers and their sons (See Table 1), eight fathers were illiterate. Most fathers (48%) had primary education, followed by 40% who had secondary education. Only a small percentage of fathers (4%) had higher education. None of the fathers had technical education or higher degrees. Regarding the education level of their sons, 2 out of 100 sons had primary education, 18 had secondary education, 35 had higher secondary education, 8 had technical education, 25 had graduation, 5 had professional graduation, and 7 had post-graduation. Of the eight sons whose fathers

were illiterate, 100% were either primary or secondary education. Among the 48 sons whose fathers had primary education, 25% had secondary education, 72.9% had higher secondary education, 2.1% had technical education, and 0% had graduation or higher education. Among the 40 sons whose fathers had secondary education, 62.5% had graduated, 12.5% had professional graduation, 7.5% had post-graduation, and 0% had education lower than secondary or technical education. Among the four sons whose fathers had higher education, 100% had post-graduation. The chi-square test result indicates a significant association between fathers' education level and their son's (p=0.000), meaning a relationship exists between the two variables.

Table:-2 Association between Occupation of Father and Occupation of Son

Occupation of Son		Occupation of Father					Total
		Fishing	Driver	Business	Abroad	Government	
Fishing	N	32	0	0	0	0	32
	%	38.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	32.0
Driver	N	6	0	0	0	0	6
	%	7.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.0
Business	N	1	0	0	0	0	1
	%	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
Abroad	N	31	0	0	0	0	31
	%	37.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	31.0
Government	N	4	0	0	0	0	4
	%	4.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0
Private Firm	N	9	5	0	0	0	14
	%	10.8	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.0
Professional	N	0	0	4	6	2	12
	%	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	12.0
Total	N	83	5	4	6	2	100
	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Chi-Square Result					**Value = 131.842, df = 24, p= 0.000**		

Note: Percentage within Occupation of Father,   Source: Primary Survey, 2023

Comparing the association between the occupation of fathers and sons (See Table 2), it can be observed that the majority of sons whose fathers were fishermen also became fishermen (38.6%), and a significant number of sons ended up working abroad (37.3%). However, for other occupation categories of fathers, such as drivers, business people, and government employees, none of their sons ended up in the same occupation. The chi-square test result shows a statistically significant association between the occupation of fathers and sons (p=0.000), indicating that the occupation of fathers influences the occupation of their sons.

Table:-3 Association between Occupation and Educational Qualification of Father

Occupation of Father		Education of Father				Total
		Illiterate	Primary	Secondary	Higher Education	
Fishing	N	8	48	27	0	83
	%	9.6	57.8	32.5	0.0	100.0
Driver	N	0	0	5	0	5
	%	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0
Business	N	0	0	4	0	4
	%	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0
Abroad	N	0	0	4	2	6
	%	0.0	0.0	66.7	33.3	100.0
Government	N	0	0	0	2	2
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0
Total	N	8	48	40	4	100
	%	8.0	48.0	40.0	4.0	100.0
Chi-Square Result					**Value = 85.261, df = 12, p= 0.000**	

Note: Percentage within Occupation of father, Source: Primary Survey, 2023

Table 3 shows the association between the occupation of the father and the educational qualification of the father. The table presents data on the number (N) and percentage (%) of fathers who are illiterate, primary educated, secondary educated, and higher educated across different occupations. The total number of fathers in the sample is 100. The table indicates that out of 83 individuals in the fishing occupation, 9.6% are illiterate, 57.8% have primary education, 32.5% have secondary education, and none of them have higher education. Similarly, in the driver occupation, all 5 individuals have secondary education. In the business occupation, all 4 individuals have secondary education. In the abroad occupation, out of 6 individuals, no one have illiterate or primary education, 66.7% have secondary education, and 33.3% have higher education. In the government occupation, all 2 individuals have higher education.The chi-square test result for the association between the occupation of the father and the educational qualification of the father is significant ($p<0.001$), indicating that the two variables are associated. The value of chi-square is 85.261 with 12 degrees of freedom. The data suggests that the occupation of the father is related to the educational qualification of the father.The chi-square value is 85.261 with 12 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a statistically significant association between occupation and educational qualification of father.

Table:-4 Association between Occupation and Educational Qualification of Son

Occupation of Son		Education of Son							Total
		Primary	Secondary	Higher Secondary	Technical Education	Graduation	Professional Graduation	Post-Graduation	
Fishing	N	2	18	12	0	0	0	0	32
	%	6.3	56.3	37.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Driver	N	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	6
	%	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Business	N	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	%	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0

Abroad	N	0	0	16	8	7	0	0	31
	%	0.0	0.0	51.6	25.8	22.6	0.0	0.0	100.0
Govt.	N	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	4
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Private Firm	N	0	0	0	0	14	0	0	14
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Professional	N	0	0	0	0	0	5	7	12
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	41.7	58.3	100.0
Total	N	2	18	35	8	25	5	7	100
	%	2.0	18.0	35.0	8.0	25.0	5.0	7.0	100.0
Chi-Square Result						**Value = 223.081, df = 36, p= 0.000**			

Note: Percentage within Occupation of son, Source: Primary Survey, 2023

Table 4 shows the association between the occupation of son and educational qualification of the son. The data is presented in terms of frequencies and percentages. According to the table, among the fishermen, 6.3% have a primary education, 56.3% have a secondary education, and 37.5% have higher secondary education. None of them have technical, graduate, postgraduate or professional graduate education. Among the drivers, 100% have a secondary education. Among the businessmen, 100% have higher secondary education. Among those who work abroad, 51.6% have higher secondary education, 25.8% have technical education, 22.6% have graduate education, and none have postgraduate or professional graduate education. Among the government employees, all have graduate education. Among those who work in private firms, all have graduate education. Among the professionals, 41.7% have professional graduate education and 58.3% have postgraduate education. The chi-square test shows a significant association between the occupation of son and educational qualification of son, with a p-value of 0.000.

Conclusion

The present study reveals that fishermen in Poonthura fishing village in Kerala have educational and occupational mobility over two generations. Compared to the fathers' generation, there is 100% literacy in the son's generation, and 80% of them attained higher secondary or more. But in the father's generation, 92% are literate; with that, more than half of them have attained only a primary level of education. Regarding occupational mobility, in the fathers' generation, there 83% were engaged in fishing. However, in the son's generation, only 32% are engaged in fishing. From this, it can be inferred that the present generation prefers jobs other than their traditional fishing occupation. While observing the influence of education on the occupation of the father and the son, it is evident that there is a statistically significant association between occupation and educational qualification. In short, education significantly influences the occupational level of fishermen in Kerala. Providing more equal and affordable educational opportunities will drastically change the fisher folk's socioeconomic status in the future.

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