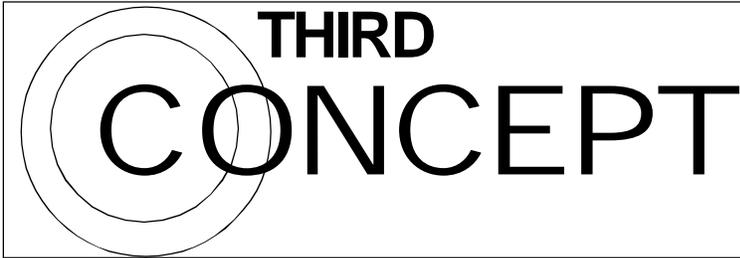


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Nepal's Tragedy

The earthquake that devastated Nepal on April 25 has left behind an untold and terrifying story. The quake that hit Nepal on past Sunday had a magnitude of 7.8 at Richter scale. The quake that was followed by aftershocks has wreaked havoc in terms of immense loss of human lives and by causing tremendous damage to property and infrastructure in Nepal and northern states of India, especially those bordering Nepal. Bangladesh and China have also been affected by it. Many ancient temples and buildings of historical importance, including the UNESCO World Heritage Site, have either collapsed or badly damaged in the aftermath of this earthquake. The death toll in Nepal is already nearing the 5,000-mark and is likely to reach 10,000 when more dead bodies are recovered from the rubble. The casualties have already exceeded 8,000-mark in Nepal alone. Deaths and casualties have been reported in India, China and Bangladesh as well. The U.N. spokesman Farhan Haq, citing Nepalese government figures, said recently in Kathmandu that an estimated 8 million people had been affected by the quake in 39 of Nepal's districts. More than 1.4 million people affected by this devastating earthquake in Nepal are in need of food assistance.

India's response to Nepal's natural calamity has been quick and timely. India lost no time in launching rescue and relief operations by pressing into service nearly two dozen aircraft, including heavy lift planes such as the C130J Hercules and C-17 Globemaster, and hundreds of personnel from the military and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) under Operation Maitri, making it one of the largest relief efforts mounted by India on foreign soil. Available scientific evidence shows that the entire Himalayan region, especially Nepal, is vulnerable to high intensity earthquakes exceeding 8.0 on the Richter scale which could adversely affect millions of people. Four major earthquakes have already occurred in the Himalayan region — Shillong in 1897 (8.7 on Richter scale); Kangra in 1905 (8); Bihar-Nepal in 1934 (8.3) and Assam-Tibet in 1950 (8.6).

In the aftermath of the quake, Nepal has been faced with a crippling economy and the uphill task of post-quake reconstruction that will further push its economy years back. Nepal is not in a position to fund a major reconstruction effort on its own. Broad estimates show that the economic losses from the quake constitute around 35 per cent of Nepal's gross domestic product. International aid has started pouring into Nepal. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has announced that it will provide a USD \$ 3 million grant to Nepal for immediate relief efforts and up to USD\$200 million for the first phase of rehabilitation.

According to media reports, the United Nations was releasing \$15 million from its central emergency response fund for quake victims of Nepal to allow international humanitarian groups to scale up operations and provide shelter, water, medical supplies and logistical services. Nepal's tourism industry, which is the backbone of Nepalese economy, employing over a million people and accounting for about 8% of the economy, is likely to take a hit in the near term. Broadly speaking, the cost of reconstruction over the next few years will be massive and rebuilding costs could exceed USD\$5 billion. The quake has literally wiped out major buildings in Katmandu and transportation infrastructure across the country has been laid to waste. Observers differ in their views on the task of reconstruction in post-quake Nepal. Some believe that reconstruction after natural disasters can usher in a period of better economic growth, as infrastructure is built back better in developing countries. Nonetheless, others say there is little empirical evidence to support such claims, as any positive impact from aid is negated by destruction of factories, private property and other infrastructure. The present fluid political situation pervading Nepal entails the potential of rendering the task of reconstruction more difficult with a broken political system.

The Nepalese tragedy is a stern warning of the mounting adverse impact of ongoing climate change which calls for joint efforts of the countries located in this part of the Himalayan region to cooperate in the sustainable management of trans-boundary natural resources. These countries should pool together their financial and technical resources to ensure judicious use of natural resources, including water. Specific emphasis needs to be focused on disaster management.

— BK

India-France Relations

Dr. Dipen Saikia*

The recent 3-day visit to France by Prime Minister of India in the second week of April this year is hailed as an important stepping-stone in developing an enduring and close partnership between New Delhi and Paris. India and France enjoy an exceptionally warm relationship, which is the fruit of deep affinities and the unwavering trust between the two countries since the independence of India.

Bilateral relations between India and France have traditionally been close and friendly. With the establishment of strategic partnership in 1998, there has been a significant progress in all areas of bilateral cooperation through regular high-level exchanges at the Head of State/Head of Government levels and growing cooperation and exchanges, including in strategic areas such as defence, counter-terrorism, nuclear energy and space.

France was the first country with which India entered into an agreement on civil nuclear cooperation following the waiver given by the Nuclear Suppliers' Group, enabling India to resume full civil nuclear cooperation with the international community. There is also a growing and wide-ranging cooperation in other areas such as trade and investment, culture, science & technology and education.

Indian Prime Minister's recent visit to France had been preceded by a State visit to India on 14-15 February 2013 by French President François Hollande. He was accompanied by a 6 member Ministerial delegation as well as a large business delegation. A joint statement was issued at the conclusion of the delegation level talks. In Mumbai, he interacted with Indian business leaders.

Four major agreements were signed during the visit, which inter alia included: (1) Cultural Exchange Programme (2) Letter of Intent on intensification of Cooperation in the fields of Education and Research (3) Statement of Intent for long-term Cooperation in Space (4) Joint Statement to follow-up and strengthen cooperation in the railway sector. In addition, there were a series of agreements signed in the Education, Science & Technology sectors.

The Strategic Partnership launched in 1998 constitutes the cornerstone of Indo-French ties and under this framework there has been a significant progress in all areas of bilateral cooperation, including in strategic areas such as defence, counter-terrorism, nuclear energy and space. The focal areas of this strategic partnership include Civil Nuclear Cooperation, Defence Cooperation and Space Cooperation.

Civil nuclear cooperation

Following the waiver by the International Atomic Energy Agency and Nuclear Suppliers' Group enabling India to resume full civil nuclear cooperation with the international community, France was the first country with which India entered into an agreement on nuclear energy. Moreover, France has been a strong supporter of India's increasing role in international organisations.

The bilateral cooperation agreement between India and France for the development of peaceful uses of nuclear energy, which entered into effect on 14 January 2010, defined the framework of cooperation in this field. In December 2010, a project was signed for two pressurised European reactors at Jaitapur, 400 km south of Mumbai, with an option for four more reactors. The \$ 9.3 billion framework agreement is a contract for Areva, a

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French firm, to build a 9900-megawatt nuclear power plant.

Following stiff opposition from environmentalists who are concerned about seismic activity in the area as well as fears about the safety of nuclear power following the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan, this project is facing rough weather. In an effort to allay concerns about the safety of the nuclear plant, both India and France have stressed that the Jaitapur units 'would incorporate the highest safety standards'.

Defence Cooperation

France has been a major provider of military hardware to India since 1953, when Dassault Aviation sold to the newly formed IAF some 100 Ouragan fighters, followed by Mystere IVA's a few years later. It also supplied the Alouette III (Chetak) and SA-315B Lama (Cheetah) light utility helicopters — which were also built locally under licence by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.

In the mid-1980s Dassault once again supplied the IAF some 50 single and dual-seat Mirage 2000H's. These, as per a recently signed agreement, are to soon undergo a major upgrade to Mirage 2000-5 levels for around \$2.4 billion. Moreover, the Rafale is one of two MMRCA shortlisted for the IAF alongside EADS' Eurofighter. French equipments have also been fitted into a number of other projects like the MiG-21 upgrade, Su-30 MKI, HAL constructed Advanced Light Helicopter 'Dhruv', Milan/Milan 2 anti-tank guided missiles, and the Russian T90s (Bhishma) MBT.

India's ambitious plan for defence modernisation and procurements till the end of the 13th Plan in 2022, entailing the whopping amount of \$80–100 billion, offers the European defence manufacturers ample opportunities to tap this market. The French interest in India also stems from a survey undertaken by French ambassadors in the late 1990s, in which

they identified it as one of the 'future powers' of the 21st century along with Russia, China and Japan.

France's support for India's 1998 nuclear tests in the face of international condemnation and sanctions by the US also lent an impetus to increased military sales leading, consequently, to the Indian Navy inking the \$4.11 billion contract in October 2005 to locally build six Scorpene diesel-electric patrol submarines. But an enthusiastic India was disappointed when France was reported to have refused the Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO) help in

overcoming technical problems in miniaturising the reactor to power the locally designed SSN, the classified Advanced Technology Vessel.

The first India-France joint army exercise was conducted in India at Chaubattia from 9-22 October 2011. The subsequent Indo-French Joint Army Exercise was conducted in French Alps in September 2013. The fifth edition of the Indo-French Air Exercise Garuda was held in Jodhpur on 02-13 June 2014.

The Indo-French Naval Exercise, Varuna, was held in the Indian Ocean in January 2011. Subsequent Indo - French Naval Exercise was held in the Mediterranean Sea off the port of Toulon from 19-22 July, 2012. Three Indian Naval ships made a port call at St Denis in the Reunion Islands in October 2014. Some defence experts feel that India can further learn from or take advantage of French security technologies in the sphere of terrorist or cyber attack.

Prior to the recent visit of the Indian Prime Minister to France, no major breakthrough could be achieved in the multi-billion dollar Rafale deal because there were issues which continued to plague the project. Moreover, the Cost Negotiation Committee, which was working out the final contract in negotiation with French firm Dassault Aviation, had yet to submit its report.

Rafale was selected by India from among five bidders in 2012 since it was the lowest bidder. While initially, the deal was expected to be around USD 10 billion, it was now estimated to be over USD 20 billion. However, India's insistence that Dassault Aviation could not renege on the Request for Proposal (RFP) clauses, which it had initially agreed to, was declined by Dassault because it wanted to raise the price to cover the increased cost of local production.

However, in order to break the logjam, Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi during the course of his French visit announced a plan to buy 36 planes from Dassault through the government-to-government route, after three years of price negotiations for local assembly of the aircraft produced no results. India's Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar told media persons that it had to be done to break the vortex, adding that the preferred method was now to talk directly to the French government, rather than return to commercial negotiations.

He further added: "Instead of going through the RFP where there is lot of confusion, chaos, it is now the situation that 36 will be procured ready to fly. What is to be done with the rest will have to be discussed."

Space Cooperation

France and India view each other as important partners in space technology and applications. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and its French counterpart Centre National de Etudes Spatiales (CNES) have a rich history of cooperation and collaboration spanning about five decades.

On 30 September 2008, both countries signed an agreement on the use of outer space for peaceful purposes, extended and clarified the areas of cooperation, emphasizing in particular the study of climate change using space-based facilities for Earth observation, or the development of

telecommunications satellites for commercial purposes. This agreement made it possible to develop the Megha-Tropiques satellite, launched on 12 October 2011, and the SARAL satellite, which was put in orbit on 25 February 2013.

Under a commercial Launch Service Agreement between Antrix Corporation Limited and ASTRIUM SAS, a company under EADS, France, and an advanced Remote Sensing satellite - SPOT-7 built by ASTRIUM SAS was successfully launched on-board ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle from India on 30th June 2014. On 7 December 2014, India's multi-band telecommunications satellite GSAT-16 was precisely placed into the intended Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit by the Ariane-5 launch vehicle.

Economic Dimensions

Cordial economic relations exist between India and France. The total goods trade between France and India in 2013 was €7.09 billion. India's exports to France accounted for €4.375 billion whereas French exports to India amounted to €2.713 billion during this period. This was mainly due to reduction in French exports to India. French imports from India also remained low due to weak demand. India registered a trade surplus of €1.66 billion, an increase of almost 18% from 2012.

Reports indicate that France has emerged as a major source of FDI for India with about 750 big French companies already present in India. France is the 9th largest foreign investor in India with a cumulative investment of €2.31 billion up to 2012 and French companies continue to look at India as an attractive investment destination in order to expand their profits and diversify risks.

Many observers feel that much more needs to be done in augmenting existing level of economic cooperation between India and France. Apart from being the fifth largest economy of the world, France is also a significant member of the G-8. Owing to

its vast technological strength France plays a crucial role in agricultural research, aviation, food processing, railways, space and transport. India can avail of French expertise in these areas under the canopy of its 'make in India' programme through joint ventures.

Conclusion

India offers a vast market for the French technology and defence industry. Some experts are of the view that it is critical that taking note of the French capability and India's growing stature and making full use of the growth opportunities available, the two countries ought to foster further cooperation in all arenas—economic, defence, political, space, science and technology, culture or education.

France, by virtue of its independent policies and sophisticated military-industrial complex, can be an important potential supplier of defence equipment to India. France can be a significant partner in India's ambitious push for 'Make in India', especially in the defence sector. Recently launched Scorpene submarine with French help shows that despite difficulties and delays, it is possible for India to assimilate, in a relatively short time, the latest technologies. In order to facilitate smooth transfer of state-of-the-art technologies for harnessing them in national development, the government should ensure congenial environment devoid of delays, frictions with the 'supplier' and price overruns.

The bilateral economic relationship with France has potential for a significantly stronger partnership than

exists currently. Nevertheless, France has some significant investments in India in sectors such as power and automobiles, and India's exports to France have grown significantly at 20.5 per cent over the last nine years. However, the extent of the relationship can be strengthened through much greater collaboration in high-tech areas such as aviation and nuclear technology and also consumer products and agri-businesses.

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Perspectives on Violence against Women

Dr. Kiran Bala*

[On a global level there are mainly two viewpoints concerned with women, which are related to the theoretical and the practical aspects. From a theoretical angle, the civilized society accepts that there is no difference between men and women. But from the practical angle through a predominantly discriminate approach, women are evaluated on a lower level (in comparison to men). Besides this, there is also such a group whose mentality is influenced by religious dogmatism and due to this group's conviction that – women can never be equal to men -, is the cause of insult, slight and abuse they are subjected to. The status of some scholarly women is interpreted in terms of inheritance, participation in social works and currently practised traditions and rituals while some other scholars evaluate their problems in terms of ever changing values.]

Today, incidence of women cruelty is on the increase from a global level right up to the local levels. In countries like Britain, China, Mauritius, Myanmar, Philippines, Somalia, Peru etc., violence against women is rampant in some or other forms¹.

Studies also clearly show (according to a British survey) that out of those women who either witness or are subject to crime, only 12 percent of them reported to the police, which is obviously less than the total quantum of crime being committed against them. Its main causes (viz. traditional feminine mindset, natural hesitation, social dignity and social phobia etc.) further promote the crime against them².

In India, the first of views regarding position of women is that in the beginning, women were treated equal to men. The second one is that, women were not only subjected to insults but they were also discriminated against. The first viewpoint cites an example of Yajnavalakya who said, “women are embodiment of divine virtues on the earth”. Som has bestowed his whole sanctity to them. Gandharva has bestowed his whole luster to impart melodious voice and fire-originated attractions³.

Several ideals related to women are cited from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The second viewpoint cites examples that women were considered means of desire-fulfillment. In

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Mahabharata, it has been mentioned at a certain place that there are women at the root of evils. Women are an illusion constructed by Maya. She is the edge of the razor. She is fire⁴. These referenced quotes which might have been said in different contexts, the actual evaluation of women can be done by the present behaviors towards them.

During Vedic period, the status of women was not inferior to men. In Puranic period, inhibition of widow marriage, inhibition of education of women and tradition of veil began. During Buddha period, the condition of women improved. The Bhakti movement, which occurred during medieval period, initiated new trends in the religious and social life of women. But major changes could not take place.

During the British period, change occurred in socio-economic fabric and inequalities decreased between men and women in the field of education, employment and social rights. After the attainment of independence by India, various rights were granted to women by the Indian Constitution.

Article 14 of the Indian Constitution provides equal rights and opportunities to men and women in political, economic and social fields. Article 16 provides equal opportunities of employment to all its citizens⁵. Even today, after receiving constitutional rights, worry about half of the population is seen everywhere. On the one hand, women, under the influence of modernity and industrialization, have come out of their homes. Ample opportunities of

employment are available before them yet about women's status and role in society, our ideas have not transformed adequately.

As a result, problems such as rape, sexual exploitation, domestic violence and dowry-deaths are being faced. In broad sense, violence is such an act in which a person is subjected to injury willingly or by force. Hence, sexual offenses (rape, etc.) kidnapping, offences against widows, female foeticide, exploitation and cruelty are issues coming under the domain of women violence.

In India, in 2012, a total number of 244,270 crimes against women were committed which included 24,923 cases of rape, 8,233 of dowry deaths, 38,262 of kidnapping, 1,065,427 of torture, 45,351 of molestation, 9,173 of sexual exploitation, 2,563 of immoral trafficking, and 9,038 cases registered under dowry prevention act 1961⁶.

According to a report, about 50 per cent working women face sexual exploitation at their work place out of which 85 per cent women are not aware of the Supreme Court's decision in this regard. 68.26 per cent women face being whistled at, comments made at them, mental agony for sexual advances. 25.17 per cent women face physical exploitation like touch⁷ while in the Vishaka vs. State case; the Supreme Court has issued guidelines and directives for preventing sexual exploitation of working women at workplace.

Dowry is a serious issue. For matrimonial alliance, the costliest groom is considered a high posted person like an IAS. The amount of dowry reaches a crore if the groom belongs to a Reddy or Khamba caste of Andhra⁸. Mukesh Ahuja elaborated through his study of Jaipur 1993 that about 10 per cent widows were subjected to sexual exploitation⁹.

According to a report issued by the National Family Survey, about 59 per cent of women are required to take permission from a male member of their family to go to market or to visit home of an acquaintance. 47 per cent of women are subjected to domestic violence on account of returning home late, and not cooking meal in scheduled time, 31 per cent cases of sexual violence or cruelty occur at homes¹⁰.

Social Scientist Giddings has expressed his opinion that from a violence point of view, home is the most dangerous and unsafe place. From statistical angle, the frequency of physical torture of person of any age or sex is more at home rather than on street¹¹. The root cause of cruelty against women is male-female difference. Discrimination against women continues from cradle to grave, which is expressed through their sexual exploitation, problems relating to dowry, keeping them bereft of nutritious diet and education¹².

Table-1

Crime against Women in India 2008&2012

Sl. No	Crime Head	Year					Percentage Variation in 2012 over 2011
		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	
1.	Rape Sec. 376 IPC	21467	21397	21172	24206	24923	3.0
2.	Kidnapping and abduction	22939	25795	29795	35565	38262	7.6
3.	Dowry Death (Sec. 302/04)	8172	8383	8391	8618	8233	-4.5
4.	Cruelty by Husband & Relatives	81344	89596	94041	99135	1065427	-7.5
5.	Assault on women to outrage her modesty	40413	38711	40613	42968	45351	7.0

6.	Insult to the modesty of women	12214	11009	9961	8570	9173	7.0
7.	Importation of girl from foreign country	67	48	36	80	59	-26.3
8.	Commission of Sati Prevention Act, 1987	1	0	0	1	-	-100.0
9.	Immoral representation of women (prohibition)	1025	845	895	453	141	-68.9
10.	Immoral Trafficking Prevention	2659	2474	2499	2435	2563	5.4
11.	Dowry Prohibition Act 1961	5555	5650	5182	6619	9038	36.5
	Total	195856	203804	213585	228650	244270	6.8

From Table-, it is clear that there has been an increase in the total incidence of rape, kidnapping, torture and immoral trafficking.

According to the data of National Crime Record Bureau, maximum incidences of rape cases have occurred in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, West

Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. Incidence of kidnapping is higher in the states of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar, and Dowry deaths are higher in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. The incidence of beating (by husband or other family member) is higher in West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan which is clear from the table given below.

Table-2
Incidence of Crime against Women 2012

State	Rape (sec.376 IPC)	Kidnapping & Abduction (sec 363-369 371,373)	Dowry deaths (sec.304 8 IPC)	Cruelty by husband & his relatives (sec.498A IPC)
Andhra Pradesh	1341	1403	504	13389
Madhya Pradesh	3425	1127	743	3988
Rajasthan	2049	2697	478	13312
West Bengal	2046	4168	593	19865
Uttar Pradesh	1963	7910	2244	7661
Bihar	927	3789	1275	3686
Other state	13172	17168	2396	44626
Total	24923	38262	8233	106527

Source: Crime in India 2012 Statistics, NCRB, pp. 385-391

To curb women violence, the Government of India has taken certain steps. The year 2001 was declared as “Women Empowerment Year”. Hindu Inheritance Act 1956, Immoral Trafficking Prohibition of Women / Girl’s Act 1956, Dowry Prevention Act 1961 and Domestic Violence Prevention Act 2005 are in favour of women. But despite these laws, there has been no reduction in the incidence of violence against women.

After deliberating the causes of women violence it becomes clear that

- The low position of women is an expression of patriarchal system which supports the monopoly of men in societies.
- Due to economic dependence on men, women become subject to violence easily. Although only by achieving economic progress will not curb the incidence of violence to women. In the social system, the castes or groups coming up higher are putting more restrictions on women for their high social reputation, but in areas, where women have got opportunities of getting education and employment, the economic progress has influenced the status of women favourably¹³.
- Low level of education in women is the main cause of violence to them. In a state like Uttar Pradesh, the literacy rate is low, together with the suppression of economy and active participation of women is also at its highest¹⁴.
- Girls are considered a burden due to ill-traditions like dowry. This is the cause of female foeticide and rise in keeping them bereft.
- Although women have been granted right in father’s property, they are traditionally kept bereft of this property.
- The low participation of women in work force is also a result of this traditional practice. In 1981, women contributed 13per cent of nation’s total work force, which could rise only to 28.57per cent in 1991.
- The ‘culture of enjoyment’ is spreading rapidly. Today, several media like movies,

advertisements, Internet, pornographic literature, etc. are promoting sexual crimes like rape by showing women in half clad or naked sexy postures.

- The low level of scientific consciousness in women is also a cause of violence to them. Due to illiteracy, being occupied in domestic chores and dependence on men, women do not remain wakeful to their rights. From a survey conducted in a village it became evident that only 10 percent of women were aware about their rights of marriage and re-marriage. It is also known to very few women that they have a right to the property of their father¹⁵. Therefore, to reduce violence against women some suggestions are anticipated.
- Women should be made aware about their rights by imparting them information about legal provisions.
- Expansion of education among women will not only reduce number of incidence of violence but will also increase health, nutrition, diet in children as well as increase in girl education.
- Economic participation by women should be ensured to a maximum along with promotion of vocational and technical education women.
- Besides legal security, the legal processes need to be made easier.
- Violence cannot be prevented without creating adequate public awareness.
- It is of paramount importance to bring change in the mindset of the society towards women, as a bigger section of the society still clings to the traditional, old/outdated values.
- There is a need of change in the attitude of the police towards women, because it is seen that police behaves indecently with women and often works against their sentiments.

It is worth mentioning that after Verma Committee Report, Criminal Act (revised) 2013 has been passed in the Parliament to severely punish sexual offenders of women. Although in our country, after

independence, attention has been paid in improving legislation for women, yet study of women-related legal provisions shows that besides these legal provisions some more steps are needed to be taken and women should be made aware of these changes¹⁶.

Besides this, women avoid getting their complaints registered due to lengthy legal procedures. Due to social phobia also, they bear the injustice silently and the society also anticipates such behaviour from women, because the Indian society is passing through a transitory period, where on the one hand, there exists a traditionally rigid social system, and on the other hand violence due to modern attitudes is posing a serious challenge in spite of legal protection and policies.

The actual data relating to violence to women is much more than what comes to the light. Therefore, such an environment needs to be created wherein women can lead their life without fear and with dignity. They must not feel insecure. Comprehensive participation in social and economic areas needs to be ensured. Political participation will increase as a consequence to passing Women's Reservation Bill in the Parliament, because a society can progress only with widespread role of women and only then we shall be able to construct an organized, equitable and civilized society.

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Women Empowerment through SHGs

Marami Gohain*

[Women constitute almost half of the world's population. They are an integral part of every economy so all-round development and harmonic growth of a nation would be possible only when women are considered as equal partners in progress, along with men. But women today in many countries, including India, are victims of multiple socio-economic and cultural factors. As far as social status of women is concerned, they are not treated equally as men, in many places. Though in the Western countries women are treated on par with men in most of the fields, but their counterparts in the East suffer from many disabilities.]

The disabilities on the one hand and inequalities between men and women on the other hand, have given rise to what is called 'gender problem'. All over the world and particularly in south and east Africa the gender problem has assumed importance during the recent years. The gender issue has become virtually a crucial point of argument.

The Indian Constitution guarantees that there shall be no discrimination on the ground of gender. In reality, however, rural woman have harder lives and are often discriminated against with regard to land and property rights and in access to medical facilities and rural finance. Women undertake strenuous tasks by getting involved in the day-to-day running of households including, the collection of fuel wood for cooking and fetching drinking water.

But their nutritional status and literacy rates are lower than those of men. They also command lower wages as labour as compared to those of men. In 2007 only 8% of all seats in the national Parliament were occupied by women.

The United Nations in its various declarations has made it abundantly clear that men and women should be alike, women should not be asked to wait for any more time and they should be made free from sufferings, problems, disabilities and humiliations.

Empowerment of Women

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It is now believed that empowerment of women, that is- 'Providing equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities', is essential to remove the existing gender discrimination.

Women empowerment has long been a central feature of the partnership between IFAD and the government of India. Key instruments for supporting women empowerment are self-help groups (SHGs). The SHG approach was not created by IFAD rather it supported mainstreaming of this approach in India. The financing of programmes for promoting SHGs in states such as Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra etc, was supported by Women Development Corporations.

Since women comprise the most essential component of society, it is imperative that their emancipation be of utmost importance. Educational, emotional and financial independence should be provided to women so that they can contribute more to the development of society. In the age of high level technology and fast paced lifestyle, spirituality provides coherence and meaning to inner-self which is vital for self-empowerment. Such a spiritual life is vastly useful to us for empowering ourselves.

Self-empowerment in its simplest terms implies taking charge of every sphere of one's own life. Social-empowerment being the key for badly needed reforms in society; self-empowerment comes to the forefront as the first step in the process.

Empowerment of women can be defined as 'the process of challenging the existing power relations

and of gaining greater control over the sources of power and to enable poor women to gain access to and control of both material and informational resources.'

They key word in empowerment is 'power'.

Empowerment of women pre-supposes a drastic, dynamic and democratic change in the perception of and expectation from women in our society. To help women to attain economic independence is the first priority. Economic independence enables a woman to become the mistress of her own body and author of her own decisions. She can even take free choices for her sex and life and no one can force her to be used for someone's pleasure and benefit.

A scientific perception about women's needs is essential for the process which leads to empowerment. It is seen that a woman gets power from access to and control over the following three sources.

- i. Assets-land, cash, wealth, jewels etc.
- ii. Knowledge-information, good ideas etc.
- iii. Attitude-strong and good beliefs, values etc.

Women are generally powerless because-

- i. Women do not have own assets. Even if they have assets, they do not seem to have power to use them.
- ii. Most women do not get good access to knowledge and information.
- iii. Women's opinions in different cases are not valued by the society.

Factors which contributes to powerlessness-

- i. Low social status due to traditional social structure, class and caste system, religious discrimination, unequal access to resources etc.
- ii. Patriarchal system.
- iii. Denial of opportunities like education employment or asset ownership.

- iv. No independent access to resources, markets and extension services.

Powerlessness is due to a complex mix of factors-historical, cultural, social, economic and political.

Thus empowerment of women could be in any sphere of life-legal, social, political or economic. Economic empowerment of women is considered as means of achieving overall empowerment. There is a strong connection between a woman's access to independent income and her control over family resources and her position in the family. It is believed that when women are provided credit and they take up income generating activities, their income is expected to increase and when they earn more money it is seen that their position in the house gradually increases/improves.

Empowerment is a continuous but slow process. Measuring empowerment is not easy but it can only be felt over a period of time. It can be achieved through the following ways-

- i. Building strong groups of women
- ii. Providing women access to credit and savings facilities which will help them in taking up income generating activities.
- iii. Convergence of various programmes and inputs as per the needs of women.

Empowerment is a sense of internal strength and confidence to face life, make choices and power to control their own life inside or outside the house. The confident smile on the faces of women may be the ultimate measurement of empowerment.

Key instruments for supporting women empowerment are Self Help Groups (SHGs). The formation of SHGs is not ultimately a micro credit project but an empowerment process. Thus empowerment of women through SHGs would give benefit not only to the individual women but also for the family and community as a whole through collective action for development.

What are Self Help Groups?

Self Help Groups are groups formed by people who meet regularly to discuss issues of interest to them

and to look at solutions of commonly experienced problems. They may or may not be involved in any government or NGO programme.

SHG can help to achieve economic security for women and their families and there are many examples of women groups being formed to establish thrift credit and income generating activities or health awareness programmes.

SHGs can be a very powerful way to bring about change and to achieve target aimed at improving conditions within a local area and improving the lives of the members of the society. Organising in groups can help women to develop confidence and offers them the opportunity to try out new ideas and activities. SHGs are recognized as an effective way for women to set their own direction and ultimately to fuel empowerment.

SHG bears strong possibility of social empowerment among the rural women. They provide a platform

for women to come together, exchange their experience and ideas, enhance cohesiveness among the members, develop and understand their problems and also find out ways to tackle these problems and fulfill their needs.

The SHG has added a new dimension to the socio-economic lives of the poor and under-privileged women of our country. Therefore, the present study tries to analyse social and economic empowerment of 'Ellora' in Mahara Gohain Gaon, Lakhimpur district.

The major aim of the SHGs is to promote savings and to offer credit for production and consumption purposes. This is true because many women in the study area joined the SHG for either getting loan or for social status because SHGs gives identity to the members. Also 67% respondents joined SHG for improving their savings and for social, cultural or political improvement.

Table below shows the monthly income of groups before and after joining SHGs :

Sl.No.	Monthly	Before Joining No. of respondents	SHGs%	After Joining no. of respondents	SHGs %
1	Less than 1000	51	34	18	12
2	1000-2000	31	21.33	49	32.67
3	2000-3000	16	10.67	59	39.33
4	3000-4000	9	6	24	16
5	Non earning members	42	28	0	0
		150	100	150	100

Self Help Groups can enhance the status of women in the following ways-

- i. Sharing of management.
- ii. Respect for role both outside and inside the home.
- iii. Equal participation of women as that of men in the development of nation and equal commitment of work.
- iv. Women become self-reliant and self-directed.
- v. Promotes freedom and equality of women.

- vi. Develops women's ability to analyse critically.
- vii. Fostering leadership and ability to take right decisions at the right time.
- viii. Enhancement of positive self-esteem, self-concept and self-confidence of women to fight against violence.
- ix. Development of communication skills and life skills.
- x. Providing information, knowledge and skill for economic independence and development.

- xi. Ensuring equal participation in the development process.
- xii. Enabling women to make informed choice in areas like education, employment and health (specially reproductive health)

Thus, the five qualities needed among members of Self Help Groups for overall development of women and the society are—

- i. Self appreciation.
- ii. Vision
- iii. Power of purpose.
- iv. Commitment
- v. Contribution.

Self Help Groups have also created better understanding between the members of the different religious groups. This change must be welcomed in order to have better understanding and tolerance towards the members of other religions particularly in a country like India, where there is a diversity of religions and castes.

Moreover, the NCUI, which promoted the SHGs, makes constant attempts to guide and help women in every sphere of their activities. However, SHGs are not very active and there are many challenges in the path of empowerment.

Challenges

Apart from weak market linkages in the context of income generating activities, there are also a few other concerns in relation to women empowerments.

- i. First is the capacity of building self help groups, which are in need of support in accounting financial management and organizational development.
- ii. The second is the concern about gender focus in rural financial services. So gender focus in designing and implementing rural microfinance service should be enhanced.
- iii. The third challenge is about how to link SHGs to agricultural activities, which are of key

importance for the livelihoods of small farm holders in India. But presently, SHGs have not undertaken much agricultural activities and these are carried out mainly by men.

The SHGs are voluntarily formed by women to save whatever amount they can save every month and mutually agree to contribute to a common fund to be lent to the members for meeting their productive and emergent credit needs. These groups are linked to the banks once their activities are stabilized. Besides focusing on entrepreneurial development of the beneficiaries, the SHGs undertake the responsibility of delivering non-credit services such as literacy, health and environmental issues.

The SHG, which mainly consists of minimum 10-20 members, meets 3-4 times a week. There is a president, a secretary and a treasurer in each SHG. All the groups maintain the records such as membership register, savings records, loan records etc. They prepare action plans after a detailed discussion of their proposed activities. Every member of the group gets an opportunity to put forth her views and opinions. Thus, SHGs have achieved success in bringing women to the mainstream of decision-making.

The present study has found a remarkable change in personality of women after joining the SHGs.

Conclusion

To conclude, the SHGs have made lasting impact on the lives of women particularly in the rural areas. Their quality of life has improved a lot. There is an increase in their income, savings and consumption. This shows the improvement in their standard of living.

Moreover, women have gained self-confidence. They have achieved an opportunity in their life to nourish, focus and display their hidden talents. Also it is seen that after joining SHGs, women have acquired the courage to speak freely in front of large groups of people. They got recognition in their family and in the society. The SHGs have also given women a greater role in household decision-making.

To sum up, SHGs provide a platform for women to come together, exchange their experience and ideas, enhance the cohesiveness among the members and also find out ways to tackle these problems and fulfill their needs. Thus, the SHG have entered a new horizon to the socio-economic lives of the poor and under-privileged women of our country.

Despite all this, in many places it is seen that the SHGs are not very active as they should be so the National Cooperative Legion of India guides or assists SHGs to concentrate on making efforts to activate such SHGs, thereby, facilitating the process of women empowerment. So the paper concludes with suggestions for more effective participation of SHGs in all fields.

Many SHGs lacks good leadership, unity among the members and interest of women for development, so SHGs should set up their own targets clearly. They should set up joint activities like group income generating activity, community development project, economic uplift through income generating programmes, etc.

A group without such basic objectives is aimless. Focused and effective successful self-help groups are those that have their own needs and priorities, set their own targets and design their own activities. Self-Help Groups must 'own' their problems and solutions and have a strong sense that any work

they do will be built around solutions identified and owned by the group.

Also, measuring empowerment is not very easy. It can only be felt over a period of time. The confident smile on the faces of women may be the ultimate measurement of empowerment/success of empowerment.

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Tea Plantation in Assam: A Colonial Analysis

Phulmoni Das*

[Tea industry is one of the India's oldest and the most organized sector which has been an integral part of the economic development of the country. India has the second largest area under tea cultivation after China and is considered to be the largest producer, consumer and also the third highest exporter of tea in the world at present. India's leading states in respect of tea industry are Assam and West Bengal.]

Tea plantation in Assam dates back to the colonial history. Though as per historians' records, tea was used by some tribes of Northeast India, but its settled cultivation started after the annexation of Assam under the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 into the British Colonial regime. Ever since then, many changes were made to the political, economic and demographic structures of pre-colonial Assam.

The demographic changes started with the migration of new trading classes, missionaries, husbandmen (Nepalese), soldiers (Punjabi), Burmese, Bhutanese porters, Afghan traders, Bengali officials etc. The most important change in the socio-economic history of Assam was the foundation of tea plantations industry in Assam.

The tea industry in Assam led to the development of hierarchical class structure in Assam's tea plantation areas, where the managers of the gardens stood at the apex, the doctors, office assistants and technician in the middle and the labourers of the plantation industry at the lowest strata of the class structure of colonial Assam.

Tea plantation being a very labour-intensive industry, preferred women and child laborers with cheap labour for the task of plucking tea leaves, weeding etc., which required the planters to hire, huge amount of labour-force for which the locals were inadequate and unsuitable. These phenomena led to the import of labourers from other states of colonial India.

In order to maintain the stability and immobility of the migrated labourers, the colonial planters imposed various draconian contracts on the labourers which became one of the prime symbols of the plantation industry. Different estates were created and houses were constructed for the settlement of the contract laborers with an element of 'savagery' to this community.

In order to exclude the migrated plantation labourers from the mainstream population, the colonial planters introduced the divisive policy i.e. protective policy. This isolationist policy speaks of the long history of economic and cultural exploitation of these migrant tea garden labourers.

Despite their policy of isolation, the tea plantation workers, for the first time, raised voice against the colonial planters in 1848 when the labour of the Assam company went on a strike and gheraoed the Superintendent's office to release their three months arrear of their wages, and participated in the garden non-cooperation movement (1921-22) under Gandhi's leadership.

But the Assamese middle class elites and politicians kept themselves aloof from supporting the cause of the plantation workers except few Congressmen like Omeo Kr. Das, Hem Chandra Bordoloi, Nabin Chandra Bordoloi etc. Thus the isolation policy of the British was perpetrated by the local people of Assam which led to a very minimum cultural assimilation with the mainstream Assamese society.

As a result, in the post-independent Assam, the tea-garden community though tried to assimilate themselves into the common composite culture, at

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many times overtly or covertly asserted for their independent ethnic identity by trying to enlist-themselves in the S.T. list.

Origin of tea plantation in Assam

Tea plants grew widely in the hill and forests of Assam and people belonging to the Singpho tribe has been making use of tea since time immemorial. The indigenous people of Assam have been drinking tea and used it as a medicinal herb. But unfortunately, due to the absence of any acceptable record of tea in Assam, it is the East India Company which took the opportunity to claim the credit of discovering tea in Assam.

But recent research has proved that Assam had its own variety of tea and long before tea was first brought from China.¹ According to *Tea in Assam* by Samuel Waildan, Moniram Dewan, the great patriot and freedom fighter first discovered tea among the tribals of Assam living in Singpho hills and it was Dewan who for the first time escorted Robert Bruce of East India Company to those places in Assam where indigenous tea were grown and used.²

The East India Company began to take firm steps towards the establishment of tea plantation in Assam and with this, the monopoly of the Chinese traders over tea finally came to an end. The recorded history of tea industry in North East India is nearly 170 years old and it can be traced back to 1837 AD with the establishment of the first experimental tea estate in Assam in 1837 at Chabua (which means Cha-tea, Bua-to grow) in Dibrugarh district in Upper Assam.

But later on, in 1839 the first tea company, namely the Assam Tea Company started the production of tea on a commercial basis in Assam which was followed by the Jorhat Tea Company in 1858. Like Brahmaputra Valley, Barak Valley is also known for its potentiality for the development of tea plantation in Assam during the middle of the 19th century.

Because of the favorable topographic settings and climatic condition for the growth of tea plantation

in Barak Valley nearly after 23 years of the first discovery of tea, Captain Fisher, the superintendent of Cacher and Sylhet in 1855 established there a tea garden.³ Since then, tea industry of Assam has registered a significant growth.

Assam produced 432.51 m Kg of tea in 2002 in an area of 270.163 hector which was 52.35 percent of total production and 52.77 percent of total area under Indian tea respectively.⁴ Now tea is not only the most important cash crop and a major source of revenue and employment, but is also the most important industry of Assam.

Structural Analysis

The unique feature of the tea industry is the employment of huge labour force in all spheres of work in the tea estates and about 20 lakh people of Assam are estimated to be directly or in directly dependent on the tea industry at present. The recruitment of labourers in the tea gardens of Assam has a long history. The tea plantation requires manual workers for planting the tea plants and plucking the same which requires hard working laborers.

But during the formative period of tea industry in Assam, in the first half of the nineteenth century, scarcity of labourers was acute which led the Assam Company to mitigate this scarcity by recruiting staffs from China. The staff of tea plantation composed of hard working labour class, middle class as doctors, office and managerial staff, Whites as the upper class and the owners of the tea garden. The labourers working in the plantation industry happened to be the backbone of tea industry.

Assam Company in its early years paid its Chinese staff, composed of 70 workers, four to five times more wage in comparison to the Assamese local labour.⁵ Thus recruitment of Chinese work force lessened the profit of tea industry which resulted to termination of the imported labour in 1843 and finally the local people became the sole work force till 1859 in the tea industries of Assam.

The total labour force in Assam plantation in that year did hardly exceed 10,000 although the

requirement for the province was 16,000 to 20,000 hands for current cultivation alone.⁶ It was basically the Kachari tribe of the Darrang district who were recruited in the plantations. Besides this, the other tribes namely Matak, Kukis, Nagas, Singphos and Apatanis were also employed with the active assistance of the Chiefs of these respective groups.

Finally it was realized that, the indigenous labour proved to be of little help, as the local people were reluctant to work in the plantations. The reasons for the reluctance were generally speculated as, firstly, the indigenous people thought themselves to be a self-sufficient, secondly, due to their socio-cultural background they were reluctant to work under the colonial rule.

Hence, the labour scarcity became the constant hindrance to the expansion of tea plantation in this state. Consequently, the British decided to import labour from outside the state. This led to the policy of recruiting laborers from various cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversities from other provinces.

Different groups were recruited from different places, e.g. the Mundas and Gonds from Bihar, Santals, Tantis and Bhumij from Bengal and Bihar, Oraons from Bihar and Orissa, Goalas from Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh and Boyas from Tamil Nadu etc.⁷

Since 1841, the laborers were employed through contractors. But later on government passed the Transport of Native labourers Act of 1863 for licensing recruiters and to regularize the process of recruitment system. These recruiting agents are called Arakattis. The Arkattis moved to those places from where it was easier for them to recruit labourers.

Basically, the deprived and poverty ridden tribal people became the main target as they did not find any other means for their livelihood. Poor people were given false hopes and promises of lucrative life in Assam and mentally prepared them to enter into the contract to work in Assam tea plantation. It is also to be noted here that the emigration of the

Indian labourers in the tea garden was not always voluntary and could not be considered as free labourers. They were sometimes recruited forcibly, having had to sign a contract pushing them to join the labour force.

The Transport of Native labourers Act of 1863 was amended in 1870 when it recognized the Sardari system of recruitment. But the Arkattis system of recruitment was not stopped. The two systems of recruitment were practiced by the planters till 1915. Another amendment in 1873 permitted free recruitment. Under the Assam Labour and Emigration act of 1915, recruitment through Arkattis was made unlawful and the Sardari system remained as the only recruiting system in tea plantation.⁸

Later on, the formation of Tea District Labour Supply Association in 1917 with the objective to control and coordinate recruitment under the Sardari System tried to legalize it. But the problem of unemployment of the immigrant labourers became the factor behind not favoring further migration of labourers into Assam. However, in 1955, about 11,000 labourers were recruited from outside Assam.

But since 1959 recruitment from outside Assam had been reduced drastically. From 1960 onwards, recruitment from outside was stopped and the Tea District Laborer Association was abolished.⁹ From that time onwards, laborers were employed only from the exiting unemployed laborers which were available within the state.

The workers who were recruited in the tea plantation of Assam were tortured, exploited, inhumanly treated and deprived till India attained freedom in 1947. The condition of recruitment was inhuman. During the period of two years from 15th December 1859 to 21st November 1861, the Assam Company brought 2,272 recruits from outside Assam of whom 250 or 11 percent of them died on the way.¹⁰

As they were living far away from their home or their native places and were bounded by contract and this made them the source of easy exploitation

and torture by the Britishers. The slave owning system during feudal times in European history was practiced in India by the British imperialism. Epidemics were common and mortality rate was alarmingly high.

Due to the unhygienic condition and inadequate food many labourers died like cattle. Those who survived and reached the plantations destination stayed forever and they were never allowed to return back to their home. Even after the end of one contract, they were forced to enter into another contract, which was unlawful.

Those who tried to run away or escape the planter disciplined them with punitive punishment by inhuman torture of all kinds. They were not provided with proper houses, sanitation facilities, drinking water and medical facilities etc. These features of Assam tea plantations were more inclined to the serfdom as well as slavery.¹¹

The inhumane treatment meted to the tea garden workers was similar to those of the American Negroes in the agricultural estates of America in the post-independent period. But the sacrifice, toil and hard work of the labours since the beginning of tea plantation in Assam, with lot of sufferings and misery, gave rise to the structure of present-day tea industry of Assam.

Immediately after independence, seeing the pathetic condition of the Plantation labourers in the country, the Parliament of India passed an act called the Plantation Labour Act 1951 and under this act, schemes for socio-economic development of the community were assigned to the tea management companies who employed the labour for production.

After India's independence, the owners of tea gardens established their own companies in Assam. Presently, almost 20 percent of the tea business is controlled by Assamese tea planters. The Government of Assam also owns tea garden and these are managed by the Assam State Tea Development Corporation. However, the socio-economic condition of tea community is yet to be improved.

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Psycho-Analyzing Human Rights in Literature

Dr. Sunita Samal*

[Rhetoric in literature has a chance of being rhetorical only in becoming. In case of human rights, that literature is essentially perverted and that pervert ability is the positive inspiration for psychoanalyzing human rights. Human rights are the un-de-construction condition of deconstruction if these do not consider the literature of 'other'. It seems that one must have some psychoanalytic resonance if it is to be intelligible to the discourse of human rights. Human literature comes across through various stages—from apollonian to post-structuralism. The end of antagonism is the end of discourses of rhetoric on human rights. We must create a dialogue between modernism and post-modernism to enrich literature on human rights by making question of reasoned deliberation central to 'otherness'.]

From its inception at the dawn of the twentieth century, psychoanalysis has drawn critics of literature towards new insights into the power of language and the transformative possibilities of literary texts. And of course literature has transformed psychoanalysis in turn—beginning with Sigmund Freud's interpretation of family dynamics through the lens of Sophocles 'Oedipus', literary writers have often provided psychologists with figures to describe the intricacies of the human rights.

Beginning in the early twentieth century as a mechanism for analyzing the inner conflicts, contradictions and desires, psychoanalytic criticism has evolved into a means of understanding textual complexities, particularly those circulating around question of 'other'. More recently psychoanalysis has been embraced by 'other' theorists of sexuality as a valuable critical tool, instrumental in illuminating the remarkable perversities of human desire. As generations of critics have demonstrated, psychoanalysis is a methodology with considerable explanatory power for analysis of Charles Dickens's fictions in particular among other literature.¹

However, a word about how psychoanalytic theory may or may not work to illuminate the relationship between an author's life and his or her work, though this was a compelling line of inquiry; it soon ran hard

into its limits as an analytical technique in human rights. In fact, psychoanalysis is most useful as an interpretive methodology less in its consideration of the rational, the real and the known than as a means to access to what is unknown, or knowable only loosely tethered to the historical real.

Analyzing the text

As Albert Hutter writes in 1976, the most powerful diagnostic tool of psychoanalysis is its 'ability to desire unconscious and infantile meanings from a conscious and adult text. The reductive principle may ... lead to significant distortion where by all events begin to look the same when seen through analyst's peculiar prism.

Hutter explains that in any auto-biographical statement—whether written nostalgically imagined or re-accounted on an analyst's couch over a period of years as a fabrication – facts are distorted, relationships colored because of the individual desire to make sense out of the past as he understands it in the present.

In other words, autobiographical statements, whether offered explicitly or through the veiled medium of literary representation, involves an alchemy of past and present and an agenda to make coherent retrospectively and retroactively the incoherence of personal history. It is interesting to read Oliver Twist as the vulnerable young. But to

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read the novel only biographically is to miss out on *Oliver Twist* a work of art, irreducible to rigid coordinates of a single or singular interpretation.²

For Freud, history resolutely refuses to stay in the past, instead inhabiting the present as the not-quite-visible and not quite-knowable ghost in the machine of orderliness and reason. To be a subject is to live at once in the present and the past. Thus a progressive and stable society, as Dickens demonstrates, puts its ghosts to good use—for resisting the repetition again and again of the historical conflicts.

In *A Tales of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens explored question of self-determination as a human right in historical context. He suggested that individual characters are produced by histories both social and private—which histories do not and cannot fully understand. *A Tales of Two Cities* might seem like perverse text to choose to demonstrate Dickens's psychoanalytic intelligence.

The novel is about the 'real' events of history-yet, I have just suggested that psychoanalysis is a methodology best turned to question of the unreal, the unknowable, the unstable, unaccounted. The novel also relegates the individual subject to second order status, while psychoanalysis is the theory of modern, liberal individualism, which is concerned primarily with the etiologies of individual human development, rights and relations—concerned with questions of character, its evolution and complexities.

The novel's consideration of these assumptions—which concern the individual subject's relation to history and temporality and the desire to break patterns of historical repetition—enables new insights into psychoanalytic method.³ For Dickens the 'story' in question is a big one, the French Revolution. It proclaims Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. If a historical novel takes up the panorama of social events, *A Tales of Two Cities* is one that sets its sights on the grandest of horizons.⁴

Individual subject and history

There is at once historicizing the subject in question and destabilizing that subject's claim to historical

knowledge and credibility. For Freud as for Dickens, present day consciousness is composed of the endless repetition of unresolved psychic conflicts: the traumas and unspeakable and un-resolvable desire are repressed from the conscious mind. Human being does not know that he is deprived of human rights in her conscious level.

In 'Remembering, Repeating and Working Through' an important 1914 essay about psychoanalytic technique, Freud writes that 'the patient does not remember anything of what he has forgotten and repressed but acts it out. What he reproduces is not as a memory but as an action. He repeats it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it.'⁵ This is the obsessive compulsive disorder which brings distortion in realization of human rights.

Freud counsels psychoanalysts that their patients will repeat repressed event in the therapeutic relationship itself. Freud calls this 'transference and suggests that psychoanalysts can use patients' re-staging of old conflicts to help them to become conscious of and thus work through, history's endless repetition loop.

We admit it into the transference as a playground in which it is allowed to expand in almost complete freedom and in which it is expected to display to us everything in the way of pathogenic instincts that are hidden in the subject's intermediate region between illness and real life through which the transition from the one to the other is made.⁶

What we call substitution, Freud calls displacement. This explores the effects of historical situation on the minds and hearts of individuals imprisoned in a particular space and time. In Freud, the interest in the relationship between the individual and the social dramatically favors individual.

When Freud sources his theory of unconscious desire and its repression in a reading of Sophocles' 'Oedipus Rex', he concerns himself neither with the social circumstances nor with literary conventions. Rather, he suggests that the central conflict is universal rather than situated in a historical or even literary context.⁷

Shifting identity

There is a storm: The love between the writer and reader is never celebrated in the post-modern era. There is a potentially shifting identity. The reader enters through the text into another's space imaginatively and in ways that enhance identification. The text travels to the characters and connects the reader in new ways. There is also shifting construction. De-construction is of great assistance to the post-human culture when it comes to analyzing its relationships with literature.

The world of simultaneous homogenizing forces around market capitalism, information technology and global consumerism begs the question as to whether there is the appearance of a single universal system in literature. They have tended to place human rights in a transcendental position with respect to all other discourses.⁸

Many dissents of human rights have considered ways to move across centers and peripheries instead of encouraging one way travel to a fictitiously fixed notion of identities from where one tries the differences. These actions point to majority trends in a certain ideal in typical ways with Western literature carrying its promises around the world.

In the name of tolerance, it denies that the invented 'others' to whom one gives space possibly has something in common with one's self. A coherent politics of empathy could be imagined as real possibilities for the future. Still others will readily go on reconstructing to make the world a better place.

Nostalgic politics

Politics can be nostalgic. The more inclusive and more tolerant, the stronger and wiser is the literature. Identifications are sometimes more pressing than those relating to being exclusive. In some cases, global communication networks provide every individual with distorted image that is raising gigantic obstacles before any dialogue. There is sparring within the mainstream of the field which gives impression that in literature, now the constructivists and rationalists are having their day.

The reader enters through the text into another's space, imaginatively enhancing identification. The

central and most urgent political paradox of our time is communication. Technology can no longer be separated from everyday life. Its influence is so powerful; its integration is so seamless that it no longer makes sense to think of ourselves as human beings. The obsession with extreme culture to explore can no more distinguish human individual from its objects. Human beings see it in a deceptive form which brings about an end to human rights. It encounters its own limit.

The predominant liberal multi-culturalist model neglected the very direct encounter of human rights of 'other' within literature. The politics of psychoanalysis as the very core of inter-subjective relations is rooted in an unconscious structural relation to the realm that Lacan refers as symbolic.⁹ The Lacanian subject can change the destiny of an unconscious desire since every act of speaking involves an act of addressing the 'other'—always implying a search for recognition of rest.

The encounter with the real is most often equated with excess of the stuff that penetrates through the pores in the surface, like a science fiction alien who has an excess of existence over representation without existence.¹⁰

The politics of psychoanalysis depicts 'the thing' as that which always eludes symbolization rooted in allegiance to the Freudian universal law of incest and the 'Oedipus Complex' that structures human desire and 'other' relationship. The 'thing', as Lacan develops, comes to impact language in negative way from the point of human rights, as that which manifests desire for the real. It is a pre-symbolic object characterized primarily prior to any representation. The 'thing' remains unfathomable, an excess and outside moral relationship.

The real is an extra-moral matter, similar to what we find in Kant's moral system of rights. The Lacanian subject can change the destiny of an unconscious desire to the point of being verbal to the second power since every act of speaking and writing involves an act of addressing other—always implying a search for recognition of the rest. The subject is placed in a relationship with the enigma of the other through an unconscious transmission.

Other represents one of the many facets of the mystery and wonder of our existence. When we encounter someone unknown to us, we sense a shared human fate and we recognize a common form—the human body—but we also grapple with the discomfort of what we do not know about this person. The tension of encountering the other is a force that comes from undiscovered place. No science, reductionist or mystical, can hope to completely understand this force—the unknown.

Kant situated knowledge in quasi-analytical and synthetic judgments—within the intuitive form of space and time. These two forms are the necessary *a priori* intuitions without which we cannot perceive and conceive the objects. Space and time have empirical reality, writes Karl Jasper. But the transcendental identities' echoes of Kant reverberate throughout the sociology of Simmel, who believed he had secured new concept of literature.¹¹ 'Lack' introduces the idea of fullness and integration with the lost object. It was always introduced through an act of exclusion. Yet, we find that there is something that does fill in the symbolic in fantasy.

Modern self and other

Morality protects the web of inter-subjectivity of mutual recognition by which individual survives as a member of community. Levinas proposes inter-subjective relation not as reciprocal but as asymmetrical relations. It is precisely in talking the other as one point of departure that transcends. The non-egalitarian and inter-personal structure of ethical relations that transcends the political order is corrected by the requirement of equality which comes by taking into account the third party.¹²

Rhetoric can be defined as strategic use of language. Darwin was a rhetorician who brought history to science by excluding other. Fascism based on mysticism and romanticism views that meaning of history is something that lies outside it. In applying psychoanalysis to literature, we prove nothing can be fully hidden or fully repressed that challenges a-historical politics. The concept of man did not exist before eighteenth century because of lack of print media. After this there is the development of public sphere. The concept of man in literature did not

exist before eighteenth century. There is the 'Death of author' in a symbolic way to invade outside through reader in a revolutionary way.

With the rise of occult movement at the end of nineteenth century, there was the development of psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud. Simultaneously, there was change of world of ideas in literature which includes Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Occultism experienced great resurgence regarding nationalism since the late medieval period. Art as will power can be seen as expression of a thought held in force of emotional reassurance to conform. Hegel's nationalism sought to fashion synthesis of Greek philosophy and Christianity making full use of labor of his predecessors. Hegel saw philosophy did not stand between religion and poetry but above both.

Paradigm shift is a possible form of a global ethos that operates on the assumption that was in an inevitable aspect of human nature. Human subjective side in literature is restricted by rationality. Literature of nationalism starts from romanticism but ends in maintaining order. German philosopher Richard Wagner writing on music, drama and politics has attracted extensive comment.

In being anti-Wagner, Nietzsche was deeply opposed to the whole way of thought and feeling that relates to fascism and Hitler. He proposes Wagner's music as Dionysian rebirth of European national in opposition to Apollonian rationalist decadence.¹³

Cultural studies aim to examine its subject matter in terms of cultural practices and their relation to power. It attempts to expose and reconcile the division of knowledge in literature. As capitalist revolution has spread throughout the world, cultural studies have begun to analyze local and global forms of resistance to Western hegemony in literature. The conceptual barrier between so-called high and low culture has been increasingly seen as political distinction rather than aesthetic and intellectual one.

Nationalism is the key vehicle of romanticism. Romanticism, the anxiety against rationalism, broadened after industrial revolution because of cultural, social and political insecurity. There are

emotional needs to escape from anxiety and to believe in something larger than themselves which is close to other. Nationalism is the ideology of aspiring class which has previously shown the disjunction between history and politics.

The first root of nationalism was found in the ancient Hebrews who conceived of themselves as chosen people with common cultural history. National movement is a rhetorical construction having differential past, the contestation of present and divergent vision of future. The success of Fascism in Italy could be better explained by nationalism that excluded political 'other.'

The ideology of Fascism professes an organic unity of nation and state and elevates the nation to mystical height. In its idealization of nationalism it has crossed sword with both Marxism and liberalism. As Marxism is its main target of attack, it sets out to repudiate all the fundamental Marxist postulates. Thus materialism is replaced by mystical political idealism.

The conception of class antagonism is rejected in favor of organic unity of the nation-state that fuses and reconciles the anti-thesis of class interest. The sweeping idealization of the nation-state also serves to counter the opposing ideas of liberalism and individualism. The duty of the individual is to elevate himself to the heights of the national consciousness and lose completely his own identity in it. He has individual rights only in so far as they do not conflict with the needs of the sovereign state.

Fascism follows the political tradition of Hegel further. Its anti-liberal and even militarist implications are carefully exploited. Hence state and individual authority and liberty are treated as inseparable terms as a necessary synthesis. The authority of state is absolute. It does no compromise with it. It does not surrender any portion of its field to other moral or religious principle which may interfere with the individual conscience. But on the other hand, the state becomes a reality only in the consciousness of its individuals.

On the one hand it subscribes to tradition on the other hand it subscribes to power and force. It has

systematically undermined reason and human rights and subordinates it to the force of institutions. It is a kind of romanticism. Thus Mussolini spoke that they have created their myth and the myth is a faith. And it is the passion.

Nothing against the state

Hitler who has written '*Mein Kampf*' believed in the efficacy of irrational propaganda. All effective propaganda must be limited to a very few points and must harp on these slogans until the last member of the public understands what they want them to understand by those slogans. The motto is: 'Everything for the state; nothing against the state; nothing outside the state.'

Fascism, as it emerged most prominently in Italy and Germany and later spread to other centers, may well be characterized as the 'radicalization of rights. Out of the three mainstreams of political thought—liberalism, Marxism and Idealism—fascism is openly opposed to liberalism and Marxism. It wedded to the idealist theory, but only to its distorted form. The political scientists look to it for understanding political pathology.¹⁴

Adventurous leader like Mussolini or a fanatic leader like Hitler can play upon and exploit the sentiments of different categories of people under abnormal circumstances. They mobilize them for achieving certain goals which they would not approve of under normal mental and social conditions. Sociologists and social psychologists have found rich material for study in the abnormal conditions of society which gave rise to the emergence of fascism. In politics, fascism is identified with a sick mental attitude which sets aside reason as well as sound moral and social principles for the fulfillment of ambitions of narrow groups.

If we analyze '*Mein Kampf*', Fascism rejects equality and substitutes it with principle of hierarchy.¹⁵ It criticizes individualism and asserts that all rights and values are derived from state and are found in subjection of authority. Instead of regarding individual as the end and the state as a means, it establishes the monopoly of nation-state in all internal and external matters.

It rejects the pluralistic cult of liberal democracy. It may also be regarded as counter revolutionary because it sought to promote concentration of economic control in a fewer hands as also to stop diffusion of political power. In other words, it stripped capitalism of its democratic character.

Hitler similarly created the myth of race and developed his racist doctrine as a counterpart of the fascist image of the nation. He dwelled on the miraculous power of propaganda, in his notorious work '*Mein-Kampf*'. It sought to serve the interests of capitalism against the working class. It created the myth of the nation to secure concentration of economic and political control in the hand of chosen few and to demand obedience and devotion from the masses to the authority so created.

Liberals criticize fascism particularly because of its totalitarian character and its rejection of human rights. The main liberal objection against Nazism is that it sought to destroy individual's liberty by subordinating individual to the absolute authority of state and reduced individual to a means to serve the end of the state. In the second place, Nazism seeks to accentuate the irrational elements in human nature while liberalism pleads for the man's freedom treating him primarily as a rational being. Thirdly, Nazism hits at the pluralistic nature of society by establishing the monopoly of a single political party and eliminating free and open competition for political power.

Structuralism is critical for its rigidity and a-historicism. Post-structuralism says deconstruction is an attempt to break with structuralism thought. In literary theory, structuralism's criticism relates texts to a larger structure which explains why it is easier for experienced reader than non-experienced reader to interpret text. The rhetorical challenge today is to find discourse that cross- discipline without sacrificing the specific of each discipline.

Now the Internet revolution has given human beings a novel platform to interact in new ways through instant messages, social networking and the like which creates digital divide of 'us and other.' The difference between image and reality is gradually lost and they coexist. Writers move in an open field.

Socrates is recognized for the first time as an instrument of Greek disintegration as typical triumph of 'rationality' against 'instinct'. During the time of flourishing of Christianity there was absence of Apollonian and Dionysian culture which negates all aesthetic value that believes in 'other' which cannot be expressed by language. A key contention of rhetoric of science is that the practice of science in varying degree is persuasive.

Revolutionary changes happen through the defining notion of rhetoric: persuasion of this or that theory. Many scholastic outputs evolved around the theory of interpretation (hermeneutics), the knowledge making (epistemic) potential of rhetoric of science. The downfall of Roman Empire was marked by rise of Christianity. St. Augustine stands at the threshold of new era and middle age began with him. His interpretation of the fall of Rome paved the way for scientific study of history.

Protestant Reformation as religious movement was started by Martin Luther in Germany. Feudalism did not divide line between private and public sphere which made that distinction more political to other's human rights. The rise of cultural studies leads to decline of class politics.

Is man nothing outside history? Philosophers were declaring the 'death of God' in nineteenth century and anti-humanists proposed the 'Death of man' in twentieth century. Jurgen Habermas argued that positivist rhetoric fails because of the lack of intimate relationship between social science and history. Darwin's rhetoric brought science to history by excluding 'other' in the survival of fittest.

It is terrible danger of narcissism and paranoia that runs through the pseudo religions and their hysterical assertion of rightness against all that seems differently that constitute the ultimate risk—the sense that one can only solve one's problems of nation by destroying other. With the rise of occult movement at the end of nineteenth century, there was the development of psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud.¹⁶

Dickens's novel never hesitates to put the metaphorical vocabulary of domesticity and power

to use. Dickens is often associated with the sort of secular humanist democratic ideals expressed in public discourses of the French Revolution, he does not, in 'A Tale of Two Cities' glamorize either the intentions or the practices of the revolutionaries themselves, especially women. Psychoanalysis provides a means of interpreting human history of understanding the shifting meanings not only of religion and morality but of other ethical categories for the consideration of goodness and badness in their historical contexts.

Conclusion

Rhetoric in literature has a chance of being rhetorical only in becoming. In case of human rights, that literature is essentially perverted and that pervertability is the positive inspiration for psychoanalyzing human rights. Human rights are the un-deconstruction condition of deconstruction if these do not consider the literature of 'other'.

It seems that one must have some psychoanalytic resonance if it is to be intelligible to the discourse of human rights. Human literature comes across through various stages—from Apollonian to post-structuralism. The above description takes two authors as psychoanalytic cases and observes how they confront with human rights. One is Charles Dickens and another is Adolf Hitler. The end of antagonism is the end of discourses of rhetoric on human rights. We must create a dialogue between modernism and post-modernism to enrich literature on human rights by making question of reasoned deliberation central to 'otherness.'

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Political Participation of Women

Swati Chattopadhyay*

[The concept of political participation involves mass participation and popular involvement in political activities. The efficacy of political participation is being increasingly felt in the present day world. Gabriel Almond holds that it seeks to broaden the base of democratic political system. It enables men and women to take part in various kinds of overt or manifest political activities. It entitles them to adult franchise, support pressure groups and political parties keep contact with legislators and members of different representative public bodies. Attending political meetings, processions, holding offices of political parties and administration are also regarded as political participation. Political apathy of a section of the electorate as a mark of protest against mal-administration on non-fulfillment of people's demands is included in the meaning of the concept.]

In the background of feminist movement across the world, the demand for political participation of women in particular has been gaining momentum in protest against the patriarchal dominance since the mid-nineteenth century India. The issues of gender-equality and women participation in all public activities have been voiced not only in the West but also in different states of India.

The movement has resulted in adopting recommendations in World Conferences of women at Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995) for the political participation of women suffering from gender-discrimination for centuries together. In this paper an attempt has been made to portray the status of women in political participation in the district of Murshidabad during the period 1975 to 2010.

The constitutional recognition of universal adult franchise for both male and female opened the opportunity for women since 1950 to exercise franchise and to stand for election to all decision making public bodies. All political parties started to vie one another to woo women voters for the electoral success. Congress and non-Congress Parties embarked on constituting women organizations as their front organizations. Only in

1967 some leaders of the district congress took the initiative to form the District Mahila Congress. Since then six women leaders chaired the District Mahila Congress. But it has hardly succeeded in mobilizing women of the district in respect of political issues until 2005.

The present president has begun organizing meetings of women for a few years. Since 1960s, Left parties have been organizing women of the district to raise various socio-economic issues. All India Mahila Sanskritik Sangha of Socialist Unity Centre and Begum Rokeya Nari Unnayan Samiti of the same party formed in 1970s and the first decade of 21st Century respectively appear to be most active women organizations to address different issues of women like women trafficking, providing financial assistance to widows, divorcees, reforming personal laws to safeguard the interests of women.

They organize different meetings in the district and even outside the district. District Democratic Women Association affiliated to the Communist Party (Marxist) with its 426 branch committees has been agitating on women problems-banning polygamy, dowry, education for all and health for all etc., since 1980s.

If one goes through the nomination process in the different elections to decision-making public bodies

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like Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Municipalities, State Assembly, Legislative Council, House of the People – all political parties have shown reluctance to support women in the district. The patriarchal structure appears to like sidelining women party members.

In a sample survey of 25 Gram Panchayats of the district in 1992 it was found that out of 394 Gram Panchayat members there were only two elected female members. In Berhampore Municipality too, male chauvinism was apparent as no woman was elected to it till its completion of 100 years. Only in 1977 Smt. Smriti Rekha Saha, wife of ex-RSP commissioner Kartick Saha was elected as Commissioner.

The erstwhile Union government headed by late Rajiv Gandhi took the initiative in accelerating the process of political participation at three-tier Panchayat Raj and urban local bodies. Rajiv Gandhi said, “As regards reservation for women no State can claim to have done justice to half our population. At least a token number of seats are reserved for women. Reserved seats for women also need to be filled by direct election and not nomination.”

The 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Constitution providing one-third reservation for women (including women of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Communities) fulfilled the desire of Rajiv Gandhi. The recommendations of Fulrenu Guha Committee entitled ‘Towards Equality’ (1974), the report of the World Conferences of women at Nairobi in 1985, the recommendation of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discriminations Against women (CEDAW) 1979 for the participation of women along with men are likely to have influenced the Rajiv Gandhi Government in late 1980s.

The aforesaid two historic amendments, West Bengal Panchayat (Amendment) Act 1994, West Bengal Municipal (Amendment) Act 1994, Calcutta Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Act 1994 provide for at least one third reservation of women to all local governments. Thus to extend political

participation of women and weaker sections, the three amendments of State laws have provided that a minimum of one-third seats in a Panchayat body is reserved for women and while providing reservation for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, a further reservation for at least One-third of the total quota is made for them. Furthermore, reservation for the office of chairpersons of Panchayat bodies has been made for these three categories.

Following the said amendments in 1994, 34 percent seats in Gram Panchayats went to women and out of 2813 councilors of Municipalities of the State 1077 were women. The election of nearly 25000 rural women to the Panchayat bodies and the participation of about three times more in the election process led to a wave of mass enthusiasm among them throughout the State.

Following the state government announcement of the delimitation of constituencies and the increase of reservation of seats of women from 33% to 50% at the three tier Panchayati Raj in West Bengal on December 3, 2012 and February 14, 2013, 35 seats are reserved for women at Murshidabad Zila Parishad. Out of 35, 11 seats are earmarked for OBC and SC women and the only 22nd seat of Sagardighi stands reserved for ST women.

Seats at Gram Panchayat and Panchayat Samitis of the districts have also increased from 3466 to 4247 and 717 to 748 respectively. Out of 254 Gram Panchayats and 26 panchayat samitis 50% seats are reserved for women of different categories – SC, OBC and ST communities, the post of 127 pradhans of Gram Panchayats and 30 sabhapatis of Panchayat Samities are allotted to women of the said sections.

No doubt, this step of increasing the quota of women to PRIs is right one towards the empowerment of women. Still it is undeniable that until and unless women of SC, ST and OBC groups are being increasingly literate and adequately trained, they are likely to be reduced to a pawn in the hands of self-centered party members or their relatives.

Many scholars are not sure if reservations of women to urban and rural local government bodies have fulfilled the mission of women empowerment. It is regretted by K.D Gangrade, Brinda Karat and others that the reservation of women in Panchayati Raj institutions is still not very effective.

Smt. Karat found that there were about 300 women Panches in the Beri Block of Rohtak district of Haryana but only 20-30 attend meetings. The others were represented by male members of their families. This proxy politics is also present in PRIs in this district.

Gangrade opines that reservation for women in the electoral process is undoubtedly a positive step that needs to be extended to State Assemblies and Parliament. However, a more comprehensive view is required including equal emphasis on the economic rights of women. Otherwise, the inherent potential of the policy of enhancing the participation of women will not be fully realised.

In the Sagardighi block of the district the function of Balia Gram Panchayat Pradhan, Adila Bibi (Congress), was done by her husband Abdur Razzak who was the ex-pradhan. It is said that it is difficult for a housewife to supervise the official work in the Panchayat area, male members of the Panchayat assist her and she puts her signature or thumb impression on the documents.

Kabita Hazra the outgoing Pradhan of Tenya-Baidyapur Gram Panchayat under Bharatpur-II Block submitted her resignation to the Block Development officer on 8 April 2004 and publicly complained that she was used as an instrument of the local committee of the party.

Under these circumstances, nobody can expect that the attendance of men and women will be satisfactory in the Gram Sansad meetings. 'The average attendance (in all district Gram Panchayats) is below the expectation'. It was 18 per cent in the district and 12 per cent in the state in 2002. Those who participated were largely members or supporters of some ruling political party or the other.

'Those who could not belong to any political party stayed away from the meetings'.

The apathy of voters – male and female having the impression that the decisions are taken in the party office and not in the meetings – is also considered political participation. It is reflected in the boycotting elections of aggrieved voters. In the Assembly election of 2006, men and women voters of three villages of Sagardighi, Barwan and Salar Blocks boycotted the election. Their cries for better roads, electricity and drinking water fell on deaf ears for a long time.

While dwelling on the issue of political participation of women, John G Sommer has raised a knotty problem of divisions among women. According to him, apart from divisions between men and women, women themselves are divided from each other too, as caste, class, religions and ethnic distinctions factor in the equation. Building alliances with existing castes, classes, religions and ethnic groups are essential to empower the oppressed women of all categories. The same problem persists in the study district too.

In the same vein Anthony Giddens has focused on the concept of *black feminism*. Black feminists reject the idea of a single unified gender oppression that is experienced evenly by all women and argue that early feminist analysis reflected the specific concerns of white, middle class women. From this angle of division of women, it can be argued that the educated female service-holders and professionals of the district appear to remain indifferent to the miserable condition of thousands of ill-paid domestic workers and broadly speaking, the working women of the unorganized sector.

Similarly the problems of tribal & Muslim women of the district are not identical with those of Hindus in many cases. The statutory reservation of women along the caste, race and religion lines can hardly resolve the problem of divisions among themselves. Still, the attempt is afoot to build alliances with existing castes, classes, religious and ethnic groups of women as suggested by Sommer.

Political participation of women in the House of the People and State Assemblies is somewhat restricted because of the stiff opposition of a few parties in respect of the legislative bill for reservation of seats for women in these bodies. Their representation never crossed ten percent of the total number of members of the Lok Sabha (House of the people) in the last six decades. In the state Assemblies it is even worse in almost all states. In West Bengal it was below ten percent till the last election in 2011.

In the district, no female candidate was nominated to Legislative Council for the period 1952-1969. In the first twelve Assembly elections to the Assembly, the district Congress made the only nomination of Smt. Mayarani Pal, widow of the then sitting MLA Shankardas Pal in 1996. Chhaya Ghosh, a leader of Forward Block also got elected from Murshidabad and became a minister. In the election of 2001 of course, two female candidates of the Congress, one candidate of Socialist Unity Centre, one candidate of Forward Block contested in four seats out of 22 seats.

In the election to the House of the People, no female candidate was considered fit to be nominated to any of the four seats. The persistence of male chauvinism in the nomination of women candidates to different bodies was admitted by the former CM of West Bengal, Buddhadev Bhattacharya, district secretaries of both Indian National Congress and the CPI (M). They held that eligible women candidates in the party were hardly found.

In the Zila Parishad, the two female Sabhadhipatis and two Karmadhaksas from Indian National Congress and the Left Parties for the last decade displayed their energy in their roles promoting the urge of political participation among women, of course, under the banner of their respective parties.

Outside the banner of political parties, the humanist platform of Sultana Wazeda, Enamul Kabir and Giasuddin of Birbhum, Murshidabad and two 24 parganas demanding uniform Civil Code, secular education, rights of women and society without

religious terrorism since 2006, stands as a pressure group supporting voiceless women issues.

In the Human Development Report 2003, it has been asserted that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (including gender equality and empowering women) require not only capable effective states but also popular mobilization to sustain the political will for achieving them. The necessity of popular pressure for implementing the MDGs is especially stressed in that report.

In the district, the political participation of women has also been growing for a few decades. Urban and rural women of the backward district started to come out in hundreds in processions, assemblies, deputations, election campaigns, attending political meetings, seminars and various decision-making bodies.

In 1995, All India Mahila Sanskritic Sangha, a woman front organization of Socialist Unity Centre of India, organized demonstrations of hundreds of women to ventilate grievances against torture of women to the District Magistrate and police officers of Domkal Police Station. Similar demonstrations were made by women of Hariharpara, Raghunathganj, Berhampore to demand necessary action against culprits in 1996 and 1997.

In 2001, a large number of women of Hariharpara assembled before the offices of the BDO and the Pradhan of concerned Gram Panchayat against issuing new licenses to applicants for wine shops. Public protest was lodged to the District Magistrate as a part of the anti-alcohol agitation.

Members of Adivasi Janakalyan Samiti and some Self-Help Groups made protest against the administrative permission for the on-line lottery, wine-sale and gambling to officials of Raninagar Police Station. The district administration extended cooperation to the anti-alcohol, anti-gambling and the anti on-line lottery agitations all over the district.

In 2002, the District Democratic Women Association placed a 12-point demand charter with the issues of equal wage for women, enforcing anti-

dowry Act etc. In 2003 the 13th district conference of the Association organized a discussion on topics – the anti-dowry, anti-river erosion, uniform civil code, Health For All with 426 branch committees of the district at Berhampore.

The Association claimed in the district conference that 19 per cent of women of the district were members of the Association. Women fronts of other political parties like Indian National Congress, Revolutionary Socialist Party, Communist Party of India, Socialist Unity Centre of India and the present ruling party Trinomul Congress have their influence among a good number of women of the district. The expanding membership indicates greater political participation of women of the district. In 2005, the first women conference under the District Mahila Congress voiced protest against torture on children and women.

Although the aforesaid AIMSS and the District Women Association highlighted problems of Muslim and Adivasi women in the past by stressing on banning polygamy and dowry, enforcing uniform civil code, health for all, education for all, steps against domestic violence; the emergence of Begum Rokeya Nari Unnayan Samiti headed by Khadija Banu in 2009 in the district, points to the urge of Muslim women to fight separately for the cause of Muslim women.

In the USA, black feminism rejects the idea of a single unified gender oppression that is experienced evenly by all women. In India too, women are said to be divided from each other as caste, class, religion and ethnic distinctions factored in the equation. Thus, a section of Muslim women under the banner of the said Begum Rokeya Samiti demands reforms of Muslim personal laws, government assistance to divorcee Muslim women and flood-ravaged villagers.

Khadija in her survey of 100 villagers of Hariharpara, Domkal Raninagar, Islampore, Jalangi, Beldanga blocks found that each village had at least ten divorcee Muslim women, even 60 divorcees in a single village. In the Jangipur sub-division the number

of divorcees was much less, because women of that region could earn by rolling 'bidi' leaves.

The Samiti demonstrated with hundreds of distressed women before the offices of BDOs of Bhagawangola-I, Domkal Nabagram, Hariharpara in the period 21-30 September 2009 for providing necessary relief to them. Bengal Forum for Muslim Women's Rights and Empowerment, a Calcutta-based NGO and Humanist Forum led by Enamul Kabir and Sultana Wajeda of the district appear to be united with Begum Rokeya Samiti.

'One cannot escape concluding that though legal measures create an enabling atmosphere, they have not been successful in giving women great empowerment.' Women fronts of political parties, women NGOs and media have geared up administrative agencies, sensitized the police and other government machineries and women as a whole by spreading knowledge about women's rights.

The urge for political participation of women has been increasing for the last two decades with the increase in female literacy from 29.57% in 1991 to 48.33% in 2001, the provisions for reservation in Panchayat institutions and the glare of the media.

In spite of the socio-economic problems of malnutrition, starvation, river-erosion, lack of communication, the maximum female votes cast were in Bhagawangola and Domkal constituencies 90.66% and 90.45% respectively in the Assembly election of 2011. The percentage of female votes in Farakka, Raghunathganj, Samsanganj, Suti, Jangipur, Lalgola, Hariharpara, Jalangi was also encouraging- 88.42, 88.27, 86.34, 86.25, 88.79, 86.27, 89.89 and 89.41 respectively Surprisingly, the percentage is comparatively low in the Sadar Block being 79.56 per cent only.

Another significant development in the matter of political participation is the growth of thousands of Self Help Groups throughout the district. Through the formation of SHGs in all blocks, women have been turning not only their dream of self-reliance

into a reality but focusing on the present social taboos and socio-economic issues. District Rural Development Agency assists hundreds of SHGs in Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana for marketing their products in fairs to empower women socially and economically.

Mohora Bibi, Sabina Khatun, Sulakha Bibi and seven other members of a SHG of Tartipur under Hariharpara block in 2010-2011 persuaded four parents to cancel marriage of their child girls and to agree to train up girls in tailoring, making of broomsticks etc. for earning. Earning income and participation in running Self-Help Groups have been enhancing the honour and role of women in conservative rural areas of the district.

While the patriarchal society of the district denied participation in political activities, physical security and livelihood choice of women for a long time, the affirmative action of the state, women fronts of political parties, pressure groups like All India Mahila Sanskritik Sangha, Begum Rokeya Unnayan Samiti, Murshidabad Adivasi Janakalyan Samiti have been organizing women in seminars and rallies, to ensure personal rights, security and the maintenance of livelihood.

The Unnayan Samiti has been organizing socially deprived women for last three years to demand the opportunities of the central and state developmental schemes and to propagate against anti-women degrading social norms.

To conclude few will disagree that political participation of women has been making strides in local governments for the last two decades in the district. The female literacy, the awakening of women in the matter of basic needs and obsolete social customs have made women bold, outspoken and conscious of dignity and rights.

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Law and Foeticide Ethics in India

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[Responding to the petition made by NGOs and women's groups, the Government of India passed an Act prohibiting the practice of pre-natal diagnosis of sex of the foetus (Pre-natal Diagnostic techniques- PNDT – Act, 1994). In accordance with provisions of this Act, individual medical practitioners, clinics or centres cannot conduct test to determine the sex of the foetus or inform the couples about it. It is a cognizable, non-bailable and non-compoundable offence to have recourse to pre-natal diagnostic techniques under the pretext of detecting chromosomal abnormalities. It is also an offence on the part of the pregnant woman who undergoes the tests.]

Maharashtra, which took the lead in 1988 by enacting the Regulation of Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, was faced a lot of opposition to such a law from certain quarters. The Act got diluted as a result. Further, there was absence of such law in neighbouring states. The need for a central legislation with stringent provisions was strongly felt. Accordingly, a bill was introduced for this purpose in 1991 in the Lok Sabha¹ which matured as PNDT Act, 1994 and thereafter Amendment Act was followed in 2002.

In the statement of Objects and Reasons to the 1991 Bill, it is stated: "It is proposed to prohibit pre-natal diagnostic techniques for determination of sex of the foetus leading to female foeticide. Such abuse of techniques is discriminatory against the female sex and affects the dignity and status of women. A legislation is required to regulate the use of such techniques and to provide deterrent punishment to stop such inhuman act."

The 1991 Bill seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- (i) Prohibition of misuse of pre-natal diagnostic techniques for determination of sex of foetus, leading to female foeticide.

- (ii) Prohibition of advertisement of pre-natal diagnostic techniques for detection or Determination of sex.
- (iii) Permission and regulation of the use of pre-natal diagnostic techniques for the purpose of detection of specific genetic abnormalities or disorders.
- (iv) Permitting the use of such techniques only under certain conditions by the registered institutions.
- (v) Punishment for violation of the provisions of the proposed legislation.

Legislation of PNDT Act 1994

The PNDT Act, 1994 (as amended by 2002 Amendment) provides for the *prohibition* of sex selection, before or after conception, and for regulation of pre-natal diagnostic techniques for the purposes of detecting genetic abnormalities or metabolic disorders or chromosomal abnormalities of certain congenital malformations of sex-linked disorders and for the prevention of their misuse for sex determination leading to female foeticide.²

The Act has three aspects viz. prohibitory, regulatory and preventive. It prohibits sex selection completely either before or after conception. It regulates the use of pre-natal diagnostic techniques for legal or medical purposes and prevents misuse of illegal purposes.

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In order to look into various policy and implementation matters the Act provides for the setting up of various bodies along with their composition, powers and functions. Under this Act, registration is mandatory for every genetic clinic.

Public Interest Litigation was filed in the Supreme Court. The petitioners contended that the Act for all its intents and purposes was toothless piece of legislation. It has been interpreted in various ways and misused or not used at all. "The problem today is the interpretation of this Act by the ultrasonologists, the abortionists, the doctors and most importantly the government" the petition says.

The petitioners contended that the narrow interpretation of the Act presupposes the exclusion of pre-natal sex selection from its purview. Thereby, there were widespread advertisements by various clinics providing pre-natal selection. This technique has been condemned by the Beijing Convention as violation of human rights and ethical medical practices, and India is a signatory to the same as early as from 1995 and the same is binding on India.³

The Supreme Court issued a series of directions to appropriate Government during 4th May 2001 to 10th September 2003.⁴ The Apex Court observed that advancement in diagnostic technology in medical sciences is increasingly used for removal of foetus (may or may not be seen as causing death of a person) but it certainly creates imbalance in the sex ratio.

The unfortunate state of affairs of the crime is that it is more prevalent in economically better off and developed states within the country. The dismay has been that 'we are not in a position to change mental set up which favours a male child against a female.' The executive arm of the nation ought to have implemented the PNDT Act in its normal course, but there are gaps and it is not happening.⁵ Such then is the attitude of the government towards a crime which hits at dignity even before conception.

The Court feeling the need for intervention issued a set of guiding directives, so as to get the PNDT Act executed by the (i) Central Government, (ii) Central Supervisory Board (CSB), (iii) State Governments/

Union Territories Administration and (iv) Other Appropriate Authorities. At the core of direction, the concern has been for creation of awareness in the society against the practice of pre-natal determination of sex and female foeticide through appropriate releases/ programme in the electronic media.

Directions issued by the Apex Court

- (i) Central Government was directed to implement with all vigour and zeal the PNDT Act and the rules framed in 1996.
- (ii) The intervening period between two meetings of the advisory committees to advise the Appropriate Authority shall not exceed 60 days.⁶
- (iii) Meeting of the CSB will be held at least once in six months. The members (medical practitioners, social scientists, etc.) constituting of the CSB are to be appointed by the Central Government. It is hoped that this power will be exercised so as to include those persons who can genuinely spare time for the implementation of the Act.
- (iv) The CSB shall review and monitor the implementation of the Act.
- (v) The CSB shall issue directions to the Appropriate Authorities to furnish quarterly reports to the CSB giving a report on the implementation and working of the Act. These returns should *inter alia* contain specific information about:
 - a. Survey and registration of bodies specified in section 3 of the Act.
 - b. Action taken against non-registered bodies operating in violation of section 3, inclusive of search and seizure of records.
 - c. Complaints received by the appropriate Authorities under the Act and action taken pursuant thereto.
 - d. Number and nature of awareness campaigns conducted and results flowing there from.

- (vi) The CSB, being an expert body, shall examine the necessity to amend the Act keeping in mind emerging technologies and difficulties encountered in implementation of the Act and to make recommendations to the Central Government.
- (vii) The CSB Shall lay down a code of conduct under Section 16(iv) of the Act to be observed by persons working in bodies specified therein and to ensure its publications so that public at large can know about it.
- (viii) The CSB will require medical professional bodies/associations to create awareness against the practice of pre-natal determination of sex and female foeticide and to ensure implementation of the Act.

In the course of judgment, the Apex court directed all states to confiscate ultrasound equipment from clinics that are being run without licenses.⁷ On 19 September 2001, the court took notice of the fact that even though certain Genetic Counseling Centers, Genetic Laboratories or Genetic Clinics were not registered, no action has been taken as per the provisions of the Act, except issuing warning.

An anguished Bench (comprising M.B. Shah and R.P.Sethi, JJ.) expressed surprise and wondered “whether the implementing authorities are aware of law?” “The Act provides for prosecution and not warning.” Authorities under the Act are not empowered to issue warnings and allow these centers to continue their illegal activities.”

Visualizing the significance of a data base of information, the Court emphasized the survey of clinics and empowered the district level authorities to conduct the survey and to initiate criminal action, search and seizure of documents, records, objects, etc. of unregistered bodies under Section 30 of the Act.⁸

On 6 November 2001, the Central Government came forward by assuring the Supreme Court, with concrete steps in the direction of implementation and suggested that it is setting up a National Inspection and Monitoring Committee for the implementation of the Act. In 2003, the court said

that such committee is to continue to function for the effective implementation of the Act.

Recasting PNDT Act 2012; Contents of amended Act

On 31 March 2003, it was brought to the judicial notice that in conformity with the various directions issued by the Apex Court, the PNDT Act has been amended *inter alia* and re-titled as “The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act.” The amended PNDT Act, 2002 provides for:

- (a) Ban on sex determination tests to include pre-conception sex selection techniques.
- (b) A Compulsory registration for clinics having sex determination /selection techniques.
- (c) Maintenance by doctors of written records of procedures carried out.
- (d) Ban on advertisements promoting sex determination/selection.
- (e) Vehicles (mobile labs) with ultrasound machines should also be surveyed and reported.
- (f) Seller/dealer of ultrasound machines should furnish information to the Appropriate Authority.
- (g) States monitoring authorities will have to include non-government entities like women activists and doctors.
- (h) Vesting in authorities, at the state, district and sub-district level, powers equivalent to those of civil courts to ensure compliance with the law. Authorities empowered to initiate suo *moto* legal action.
- (i) Follow up of reports on violations and misconduct.
- (j) Increase in punishment for violation of the law.
- (k) State authorities to create public awareness about the issue.
- (l) Public of reports by Supervisory bodies regarding implementation and working of the Act.

- (m) Public information and access to records maintained by various bodies under the Act.
- (n) Code of conduct for medical professionals, owners and employees of medical units.

Thus, most of the directions issued by the Supreme Court have been incorporated in the 2002 amendment for PNDT Act. The court's judgment has been rightly hailed as a positive step in the implementation of the PNDT Act. The Apex court specifically announced that its portals are open to the parties finding any difficulty in implementing the directives.

However, the fact that the Supreme Court directive was necessitated brought to the fore the lack of political will, indeed reluctance, to correct the prevailing gender imbalances and biases.⁹

Flaws in the PNDT Act

Besides the ground realities noted in the functioning of the Act (highlighting inadequacies in the law and its implementation), some other flaws observed in the PNDT Act are:

1. The 2002 amendment in the PNDT Rules, 1969, inserted two new categories of units-the "Ultrasound Clinics" and the "Imaging Centers". The Rules, however, provide no clear directives on what the requisites are for the registration of such units.¹⁰

It may be noted that those clinics which do not conduct pre-natal diagnostic procedures may obtain registration under these two categories. Though such clinics require registration, they do not have to keep records in the manner prescribed under the Rules (i.e., a strict referral system), unless the test is in any way related to pregnancy.

2. In respect of qualifications to be possessed by medical professionals in registered units (GCC, GC or GL), the Rules prescribe additional trainings experience. However, it does not provide for a procedure for the certification for such training/ experience or identity institutes or persons who are eligible to provide such certification. Hence, the registering authorities,

who are medical professional themselves, have the discretion to decide whether such training/ experience is valid or adequate.¹¹

3. The Central Supervisory Board has no statutory representation from radiologists or sonologists.¹²
4. Neither the Act nor the Rules provide for a situation where the advice of the advisory committee is at variance with the opinion of the Appropriate Authority. There appears to be scope for conflict as the Advisory Committee rules prescribe that the advice tendered by the Advisory Committee "shall be adopted".

However, since the decision- making powers are vested in the Appropriate Authority, the final decision has to be taken by him/her. It must, however, be shown that the advice of the Advisory Committee was duly considered while arriving at a final decision.¹³

5. The police have no role to play in the implementation of the Act. Hence the Appropriate Authorities have been entrusted with the role of investigation and inspection of units as well as the search and seizure of offending objects. There has been expression of apprehension by appropriate authorities with regard to undertaking such activities. This is because they feel it is dangerous for a lone medical officer to raid the premise of a unit especially when the unit has political backing.¹⁴
6. The penal provisions in the Act are not strong enough to act as a proper deterrent. There had been no convictions under the PNDT Act so far. Since the foetus is done away with in secrecy, there is no one left to complain about this breach. There are no witnesses on whose statement a case can be registered.

Medical Ethics

Sex- selective abortion is totally illegal, unconstitutional, and, a criminal act on the part of the doctor. It is one organized crime against women encouraged by professionals. The gradual but definite shift of the control over public health from public institutions to private medical entrepreneurs

has ensured that business interests take precedence over public health. The amendments to the PNDT Act to curb the practice of female foeticide were resisted strongly by a powerful lobby of the doctors. A question arises as to why the doctors with good intentions not want regulations.

The eye opener breaking news of “Dainik Bhaskar”¹⁵ reveals one quasi scam of as many as ten thousand abortions being conducted on pregnant women in Indore, flaunting all the provisions of Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971, on account of unfettered, unlimited and unbridled operations conducted by the private hospitals of Indore taking the pretext of legitimate abortions.

The statistics reveal that on an average 2000 operations are being conducted annually. Who has operated and why is not recorded, at all; it deems rather concealed. The Health Department of the Government of Madhya Pradesh has no information in the age of information and technology explosion.

If the enquiry or investigation is made honestly, this statistical estimate would reach another real climax higher than suspected. During 2011-12 (financial year) 250 Medical termination of pregnancy cases were reportedly conducted. The statistics of Health Department of Madhya Pradesh reveals following state of affairs –

Year	Abortions
2008	2490
2009	2547
2010	2315
2011	2607
2012	249 (Jan.-May)

Thus, the figure of 10,000 abortions is conclusive evidence. It also tells a secret that pregnancy is certainly a misnomer. In fact these are foeticides (male/female) but statistics are anomalous and ambiguous. Every year 2500 women are aborted but their names are “concealed” deliberately.

“Also the fact is that hospitals are reporting only figures/numbers and therefore this is somewhat

better situation because, before this, they didn’t report any number as such despite all strict instructions,” said CMHO (Dr. Sharad Pandit, Indore), “Strict action shall be undertaken” he added.

It shall be improbable to obtain figures of female foeticides for a researcher as such which has risk of punishment existing there but no perfect legal/judicial mechanism is given any attention till yet.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Science cannot tell us how to live our life. It is silent on ethical and moral issues. It is the task or job of technologists now to find the ways in which technology can serve humanity but it is not his/her responsibility to determine whether a nuclear weapon should be used or not. It is the society as a whole that must frame and enforce morals as well as legal codes of human conduct.

So rapid the adventure and sophisticated and complex are details of science and explanation of the technology that even an informed person finds it irritating and difficult today to comprehend exactly what is happening. Today the rate of social change and techno-scientific change differ (in which there is real assimilation of scientific and techno discoveries of the time, which has become large and continue to increase). The situation has created an ideal environment for exploitation of society by scientific and techno experts.¹⁶

In the age of homo-commerce human genetic material is increasingly becoming the object of exploitative blood sucking economics. The issue raised by the human genetics reveals confusion and concern among legislators or judicial policy makers and above all general public about the appropriate hints of privatisation and commercialisation rushing to achieve globalization.¹⁷

Unless the information unleashed by human genome research is subjected to rigorous discipline and control of law, there are ample chances for occurring evils of great orders and decay of civilisation itself on the whole. The information gained from genetic

testing may predict future risks for individual's health and can also predict and forecast risk for benefit.

Genetic counseling needs more accountability role of the health professional. However, the regulation of genetic counseling involves not only stringent legislation but some ethical conduct of the medical professional and scientists to enforce and monitor.

This is what makes the difference between law, ethics and morality. The law on the one hand puts down minimal standards. While the ethics present a target/goal to which at least the elite society must endeavour to conform to higher and finer levels of value orientation for which extremely civilised societies are aspiring to human life.

Privacy has undeniably great value but policy framers must also recognise the effects of privacy laws on other social goods e.g. healthcare, public health, medical research and justice restoration. The future challenge for social planner reformers and democratic leaders lies in equitable balance among privacy protection and other worth goods.¹⁸ Genetic privacy seems to be a far cry in India. But to keep pace with the technology, some sort of specific treatment is a *sine qua non*.

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2. The Preamble to the PNDT Act, 1994 (as amended by 2002 Amendment).
3. The Ethical Committee of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), on the X-Y chromosomal separation of sperms for the pre-determination of sex, had opined that the concept of pre-conceptual sex planning is not covered under the PNDT Act. However, as noted earlier, the PNDT Act has been amended in 2002 to take care of such practices under its ambit.
4. CEHAT v. Union of India (2001) 5 SCC 577; (2003) 8 SCC 398.
5. The court castigated Union Government for not setting up an Appropriate Authority to implement the Act. It should have set up the authority five years ago, the court added.
6. The authorities and committees in the majority of states, barring West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Bihar and Chhattisgarh, have not had such meetings.
7. The court also asked the manufacturers of ultrasound machines-Philips, Symonds, Toshiba, Larsen and Tourbo and Wipro Ge-to give the names and addresses of the clinics and persons in India to whom they sold these machines in the last five years. "This" the court said, "would help the government find out whether these clinics or persons were registered."
8. M.Rao, *Supra*, p.137.
9. *Frontline*, p.87, February 1(2002).
10. I.Jaising(Ed.),*Supra*, p.18.
11. *Id.*, p.23.
12. *Id.*, p.42.
13. *Id.*, p.49.
14. *Id.*, p.53. The Appropriate Authorities could take a police person along with them, as the police have been vested with the responsibility of maintaining law and order under all conditions.
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Career Aspirations of College Female Students

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[Denial of educational facilities has often hampered career options for women universally. With the expansion of female education, women have been aspiring for different careers and are getting concerned about their career development. This article examines factors wielding influence on career aspirations of female college students, with specific emphasis on occupational status and educational level of parents along with the socioeconomic status of the family. The article lays emphasis on the need for further research in this field to determine qualitative and quantitative improvement in the career options for women. Ed.]

Education is an important ingredient in the development of any nation. This is because education enlarges people's choices in life thereby enabling them to have access to essential resources for a decent standard of living. Kwapong (1995) and Anamuah-Mensah (1995) note that there can be no meaningful development of a nation without emphasis on education. Addae-Mensah (2003) has opined that the greatest need of a country's socio-economic development is the right type of manpower and not just the availability of natural resources. He further notes that, "a county's greatest asset is not the gold or oil or diamonds in its soil. It is the quality of its manpower, and that, manpower development is heavily dependent on the provision of education from the basic to the highest level".

A peep into past history shows that female education and career options for women were not looked upon favourably by the contemporary society. Some critics accused working women of being negligent mothers. Women were expected to perform duties as wife and mother, in addition to fulfilling their professional responsibilities. Some women experienced feelings of guilt or selfishness if they put their career interests first. It has been observed that with regard to women's careers, 'achieving professional status may be more difficult for women than for men.'

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Objectives of the study

The present study focused on three important objectives.

1. To know about the career choices and career aspirations of the female pre-university students;
2. To assess the factors which determine the career choices of the female students;
3. To study about the barriers to female education in different career options.

Methodology

The study will begin with the literature review. The researcher will refer to Sociological Abstracts, leading regional, national and international journals and books published in the fields such as female education, female career choices, professional education for girls, barriers to female education etc. The secondary information derived on the basis of such published secondary literature forms the basis of present study.

Career Aspirations of Women

Guttek and Larwood (1987) have defined a career as "a series of related jobs within an organization or different jobs within various companies" (p.9). Career development refers to any job a person holds, and it should represent progress, whether through increased recognition or salary, or the respect one receives from colleagues. The more a person's career progresses in this manner, the more he or she will be judged successful (Ibid).

Career aspirations represent an individual's orientation toward a desired career goal under ideal conditions. More simply stated, career aspirations "provide information about an individual's interests and hopes, unfettered by reality" (Ilelenga, Aber, & Rhodes. 2002: 200; Rojewski. 1996). Adolescence would be an ideal time to study the career development of young women, as many changes occur during this time, which strongly influence the formation of career aspirations and preferences (Watson et al. 2002).

Factors Influencing Female Career Aspirations

Career aspirations are influenced by factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, race, parents' occupation and education level and parental expectations (Khallad, 2000; Watson et al. 2002). Researchers examine such factors to determine their role in career behavior and how they affect individuals' career decisions (Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996; Rojewski & Yang, 1997). In recent years there has been an increased awareness of the impact of socioeconomic status, race and gender on the career decision-making process and career development.

Gender influences

Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996) stated, "Gender is clearly one of the most powerful of all influences on vocational behavior" (p. 63). In the past, only countable occupational choices were available to women due to factors such as sexism, discrimination, and limited education. Studies on gender and career aspirations in the 1970s revealed girls had more restricted career aspirations than boys, and girls often opted for a narrow range of occupational categories (Looft, 1971a; Mendez & Crawford, 2002; Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000).

Additionally, Ileins et al. (1982) reported that families often encouraged the educational and career aspirations of male children not those of female children. Thus, not only did sex differences in career aspirations develop early in childhood, girls appeared to learn quickly that certain adult statuses were available to them, reflecting societal sex-role expectations (Looft, 1971b).

Occupational status and educational level of parents

The occupational status and educational level of females' parents have had a significant impact on their career aspirations and career choice (Burlin, 1976). Wahl and Blackhurst (2000) indicated children's career aspirations were more closely related to parental occupations. Among adolescent females in particular, career choice was strongly influenced by the mother's occupation (Burlin: Wahl & Blaekhurst). The mother's occupation was credited with impacting children's aspirations because children often attended work with their mothers and were more likely to know what their mothers did for a living.

Likewise, Burlin (1976) deduced career choices and aspirations in females were significantly predisposed by the mother's type of work. In an early study of college women, Burlin determined daughters of working mothers chose a life pattern comparable to their mothers more often than life patterns comparable to their fathers. Burlin's findings reiterated the importance of mothers as role models in the development of their daughters' career goals and aspirations.

Similarly, Signer and Saldana (2001) in their study have found the social status of mothers' occupations as opposed to the social status of fathers' occupations, having a stronger correlation with the social status of female students' career aspirations. The researchers attributed this finding to the fact that mothers exhibit a greater presence in many homes.

Parents' educational level has been positively related to aspirations of youth (Mau & Bikos, 2000). Burlin (1976) stated that both parents' educational level wielded a strong influence on career choices of their daughters. Signer and Saldana (2001) noted the positive relationship between adolescent females' career aspirations and their mothers' educational achievement. Jones and Womble (1998) found that students whose mothers completed either a two-year or four-year postsecondary degree had higher perceptions of work and career-related issues.

A woman's educational level has also been a strong predictor of the number of years she will be employed. With more women choosing majors that require continuous employment, women are extending their participation in the workforce (Nieva & Gutek). In addition, women themselves have tended to associate a postsecondary degree and increased salary, thus perceiving a greater pay off to pursuing postsecondary education than men (Troupoucis, 2004).

Socio-economic status

Although few studies exist regarding effects of socioeconomic status on career choice, researchers agree that socioeconomic status influences career choice (Gottfredson, 1981; Sellers et al., 1999). Mau and Bikos (2000) cited previous findings showing a positive association between a family's socioeconomic status and aspirations. Youth from higher socioeconomic status were more likely to be knowledgeable about choice of professional occupations (Sellers et al.).

In contrast, Brown and Barbosa (2001) found career aspirations of young females who came from low-income families were confined to experiences of their relatives and friends. Influential siblings are thought to play a key role in the career development of adolescents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Ali, Mc Whirter & Chronister, 2005).

Conclusion

Women's career aspirations have evolved steadily during the recent years resulting in their increased workforce participation rates. A multitude of factors have influenced and inhibited women's career aspirations and career development over the years (Nieva & Gutek, 1981). The types of careers women choose and factors influencing their choices are relevant issues to examine, especially since bulk of research reveals women continue to work in lower-paying, traditionally female-oriented jobs (Rainey & Borders, 1997; Watson et al., 2002).

Continued research on the lifelong processes of women's career aspirations and career development is necessary to explain their unique occupational paths (Rainey & Borders, 1997;

Schoon, 2001). Of equal importance is the need to study female adolescents in the early stages of career development, as aspirations are often crystallized during this time (Hellenga et al. 2002; Rainey & Borders).

It is necessary to continue studying the career interests and career development processes of women, as they will remain an important sector of America's workforce (Gutek & Larwood, 1987). Gaining insight into career aspirations and career interests may also be useful in expanding career options available to young women (Rainey & Borders).

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Office Automation

Dr.Ritu*

[Today, for any nation to progress, telecommunication has become an important part of its national infrastructure, perhaps more important than even transportation. The integration of computers with communication network has further given rise to powerful value added communication services. This in turn has brought the world closer and has led to shared economic growth.]

The invention of the telegraph ushered in the era of communications with electrical signals. This form of telecommunication remained unchanged for the ensuing 40 years until a major breakthrough with the invention of the telephone took place. The telephone brought the telecommunication facility to the household.

One generation later came the radio (wireless communication). The introduction of the television in the 1930s added image to voice. The second breakthrough came with the invention of the microprocessor chip in the 1960s, heralding a revolution in the telecommunication sector. So stupendous was the outcome of this revolution within 30 years that it converted the plain old telephone system (POTS) into Pretty Amazing New Service (PANS). In addition, it gave rise to new electronic pathway such as satellite communication, fiber optics microwave communication, over which information could be sent at lightening speeds.

“GLODOM” (the global village), is more a pipe dream. The latest specialized services made possible due to the marriage between computers and communication are the Electronic mail (E-Mail), voice mail, radio paging and video conferencing services to name a few. All these services have just entered India and are proving to be popular.

Electronic Mail (E-Mail)

The advent of the E-Mail in the mid 60s was a result of computers being made compact due to the

microchips. As computers started getting inter-linked with each other through modem and the plain old telephone networks, it became possible to send typewriter of ‘Keyed’ information from one computer to the other and it gave rise to the concept of E-Mail.

Many computers can be connected in the form of network, each with an address. If one computer ‘addresses’ information to another computer that is a subscriber to such network, the information reaches the ‘addressed’ computer very fast, this is how an E-Mail works.

An E-Mail network can be large, covering many cities, towns and countries as well. For example, an E-Mail ‘hub’ (mail collection/distribution center) could be in Bombay and another in Delhi. A subscriber in Bombay could ‘address’ information from his computer to that of another subscriber in Delhi. This information is collected by the ‘hub’ in Bombay, transmitted to the ‘hub’ at Delhi and further transmitted to the addresses.

Sometimes, network can have a single ‘hub’. The Government of India has set up networks like the I-net (Indian Network) or the RABMN (Remote Area Business Message Network) which is satellite based, over which subscriber can send E-Mail to each other. These networks will enable information to be exchanged when between very remote locations.

A facsimile (fax) can send message better than an E-Mail because it can send information that cannot be keyed in such as signatures, curved lines, figures

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etc. Fax is also connected to very- widely-established old networks, namely the POTS. However, more people have a PC than a fax machine, as a PC is mainly required for the computational and data processing work. Hence E-Mail, which is PC based, is becoming more and more popular.

Applications of E-Mail

Business

Marketing and sales information can be quickly sent to regional offices, distributors, dealers etc. Financial upgrades can be sent to regional offices. Dispatch of reports, interaction with experts, processing of routine purchase orders directly without human intervention can be made possible. This can help lead to a paperless office.

Medicine

Surgeons/physicians can consult each other anywhere in the world rapidly.

Education and Research

Academic information as well as information related to scientific research can be spontaneously shared between many experts all over the world.

It is predicted that with various telecommunication media, the pace at which scientific research will proceed would be unimaginably high. Never in the history of mankind has there been a possibility of having extensive interaction at will, by vast number of expert brains spread all over the globe working on the same problem, as it exists today due to the information age brought about by the integration on computers, communications and man.

Agriculture

Information relating to the improved methods of agriculture, awareness of environmental protection, weather, status of farm produce etc. can be shared. Frankly, the applications are limitless and pervading.

Voice Mail

The telephone network today is the largest telecommunication network all over the world and

still growing at an accelerated pace. Telephone instruments are found in millions of households. Voice communication over telephone is the most common form of telecommunication.

During telephonic communication, it is important that the person to whom one wants to speak should be available for complete and satisfactory information transfer. Hence, the telephone calls are often wasted when the called persons are not present. The matter becomes more serious, when an immature business call can lead to financial loss.

A telephone answering machine connected to one's telephone is the simplest form of a voicemail system. Modern digital electronic telephone exchanges, which are controlled by computers, can be programmed for interfacing with voicemail systems. A telephone user can become a subscriber to the voicemail service. A voicemail box is allocated to the mail telephone exchange for the telephone users. He is given one code for recoding into the mailbox and another code for retrieving the messages from his mailbox.

In case the called party does not answer the phone and is away, the telephone caller can speak his message, which is converted into digital signals and stored in the party's main telephone exchange. The voice messages so damped in the voice mailbox can be retrieved by dialing the required code from the telephone instrument and listening to the various messages being played back.

In the Indian telecommunication scenario, the voice mail has very important role to play. The television density in our country is extremely low. To install telephone lines, is an expensive proposal and hence the stress is on telephone being accessible to a wider section of people as compared to its ownership. In such a situation, people can make telephone calls through public phones. However, they cannot receive calls freely since they cannot be close to a public phone at all times.

Radio Paging

With the advent of the radio (wireless communications), the computer and the

microprocessor chip, it is possible to page for persons in a large city. The paging signal is sent via wireless networks to the person being paged who carries a device in his pocket, which picks up the paging signal for him and gives him an alarm (generally a few 'beeps').

The paged person then goes to the nearest telephone and dials a predetermined number to find out more details about paging. Such a device, which helps to page a person via wireless, is known as a 'Radio pager'. The Americans called it 'beeper'. In India, we believe in retaining historical nomenclature in modern times. The nomenclatures as such have a romantic ring to it.

Just as telephone companies (such as MTNL) can connect radio-paging systems to their main automatic exchange, it is possible for organization to connect radio-paging systems to their own EPABX systems. While subscribers to radio-paging connected to MTNL main exchange can be paged anywhere within the city, the radio pages connected to EPABX systems owned by organizations, help to page an employee anywhere on the premises of the organization.

If radio pagers are connected via satellite networks, then it is possible to page a person anywhere in the country. Modern radio pagers, besides giving 'beeps', can also display messages up to 50 words on their displays. They are known as alpha-numeric pagers.

The radio paging service introduced by MTNL in the city of Bombay has proved to be very popular particularly among the medical profession and businessmen. About 2000 pagers have already been installed within a span of less than a year.

Video Conferencing

A lot of information is exchanged, discussed, modified assimilated by people through contacts in person. Meeting at conferences related to business and talking to each other over long distance, however, is not enough.

Impressions are formed by observing the opposite person's facial expressions, Yes, general mannerisms etc. Such impressions along with the information exchanged from an important input to one's brain and aids in decision-making.

If, along with voice one could also transmit visual images of people talking in actual person; capturing visual motion pictures, converting them into electrical signals, sending these signals over thousands of kilometres and reconverting the electrical signals into visual images for viewers to see was achieved with the advent of television in the 1930s.

It was only after the microprocessor chip was invented that the basis for transmitting visual images along with voice communication was laid. Video conferencing is different from the usual television broadcast in the sense that is integrative, the transmissions/ receptions take places both ways.

Visual images which are converted into electrical signals have information content which is millions of times more than the corresponding voice content. Hence, the visual information which is so voluminous cannot be sent over normal telephone or telephone-like networks.

The video images thus sent are of a very poor quality. Hence video conferencing today can take place over more sophisticated electronic pathways such as satellite links, microwave links or fiber optic links. It also requires studies with video cameras, video monitors, proper lightening etc.

Video conferencing, as it stands today, is one of the most expensive telecommunication service ever devised by man.

Information Technology for Office Workers

Computing technology first made an impact on the world at large in the early 1960s. Microelectronics also emerged publicly around the same time, in the form, for example, of transistor radios. Telecommunication services like the telephone and telegraph were already widely used in the nineteenth century. These three technologies may have come from different roots and may apparently be

concerned with different types of activity, but they have a common thread: the raw material they operate on is Information. They have now melded together into a unified set of methodologies and techniques known as Information Technology.

Computer-based Office Systems

Computers are at the heart of all important new office technology systems. Physical computer equipment, the hardware, can memorize, analyze, manipulate and transmit a vast variety of information forms: text, graphics, pictures, voices, handwriting and more. Hardware operation is controlled by software, detailed programs of instructions that define each step that needs to be carried out to perform a task. The versatility of computer-based system comes from the fact that the same hardware can be used to perform a multitude of applications by reprogramming it with new software.

Data processing and Office Information Systems

The earliest use of computing power was in the form of large mainframe computers used for Data Processing (DP) applications, which had to be housed in specially maintained environments. Such systems were applied mainly to tasks with a clearly defined set of rules and routines that could operate on large volumes of data (the term used in computing to refer to information), structured into organized files.

Typical DP work consists of managing accounts, processing pay rolls, and maintaining and updating records, such as in customer, sales or supplier files. In early DP systems, work had to be physically transported to and from the computer, where it was processed as batches. Gradually, however, external links were developed through devices called Terminals, which could be in direct online communication with the mainframe.

In the 1970s, smaller more robust and cheaper minicomputers were introduced which were eventually capable of being operated in ordinary offices. The process of decentralizing computing

capabilities was given a dramatic boost in the 1970s when microelectronics made microcomputers available that were far smaller, more powerful and versatile than even the minicomputer. It became economically and technically feasible to have sophisticated computer-based systems on the office desk of a manager, secretary, clerk or technical profession.

There is a great deal of overlap between DP and office systems, but it is worth noting some crucial distinguishing characteristics that arise more from the nature of office work than the technology; similar hardware and software elements can be packaged in different ways for different application needs.

New Office Technology

Office work that can be assisted by computer-based systems can be categorized as follows:

1. Document Production – The creation of printed text and graphic material.
2. Professional Aids – Tools to help with specific tasks, such as electronic spreadsheets, which are simple but effective aids to financial management, and systems honed to assist architects, vehicle designers, doctors etc.
3. Filing/Retrieval – The storage of information that can be subsequently searched to find, analyze and present relevant items.
4. Communication Aids – The transmission of information and documents between locations.

The main forces in the office systems industry seeking to fulfill these users' needs also fall into four categories:

1. Word Processors – Primarily for the production of text documents although some do have basic graphic capabilities.
2. Integrated systems – Provide document production, professional aids, filing, retrieval, and other computing capabilities usually within a communication network.

3. Personal Computers – Microcomputers that offer a self-contained, general computing resource suitable for relatively small-scale applications, sometimes without any communication ability.
4. Mainframe and minicomputers – Act as a central coordinating system making available computing facility directly to users *via* online networks.
4. Hunting – Routing an incoming call through a number of possible alternatives until a connection is made, if the originally dialed number is engaged.

Expert Systems

A significant computing development, which began to make an impact outside research laboratories in the 1980s, is that of the expert systems which contain the distilled knowledge of one or more specialists in a particular subject or domain. Initially, expert systems were applied to narrow scientific fields but are now being extended to broader business applications. They are easier to produce when there are sets of rules to be followed rather than when more qualitative decisions need to be made.

Some expert system developments are oriented towards replacing human specialists by computers, but other work aims to apply increased computing knowledge and ‘intelligence’ in a way, which is used cooperatively with human expertise.

Integrated Systems

Managers, whose main experience of computer-based service has been with personal computers, realize that separate software systems are often needed to set up and perform distinct functions, such as word processing, spreadsheets and communications. One of the most significant trends in new office technology is towards integrating many services into a single system or workstation.

Electronic Mail

Telegraphs and telecommunications (PTT) were the methods first used to communicate information across long distances. Throughout the world, PTT authorities have been established to provide such services, although it has now become clear that physical postal services are of different nature to electronic transmission.

Electronic mail, also known as Computer-based Message Systems (CBMS), provides a variety of facilities to assist human communication between locations. These should offer the following basic services:

Personal Information Management Systems

Some information is private to an individual or a group, and is maintained independently from corporate procedures and rules. There are various systems to assist handling such personal information, for example, some microcomputer software helps to create and manage small files of data in the form of electronic equivalent of a box of reference cards. Systems can also be programmed with tickler files, which are told by the user to remember certain events and then to give a reminder when the date comes close.

Electronic diaries can be maintained either as a purely stand-alone capability for an individual’s private use or in a shared system that allows meetings to be arranged by examining each other’s electronic diaries and fixing the appointment automatically.

Enhanced Telephony

Computers can also help to improve telephone services available to an individual for example, through categorized exchanges and the incorporation of microchips in telephones to offer facilities such as:

1. Callback – Automatic redialing of a number that is engaged until a connection is made.
2. Abbreviated dialing – Initiating frequently used telephone numbers by two or three digits.
3. Absent transfer – automatically rerouting a call to another specified extension when a person visits another office.

1. Message creation by the Originator
2. Routing of messages to the recipient(s)
3. Storing incoming mail until the recipient is ready to receive it
4. Delivery of the message

Electronic mail services can be of great benefit in assisting communication within and between organizations by providing facilities such as:

1. No time constraints
2. No interruptions
3. No geographical constraints
4. Multi destination
5. Voice messages
6. Controlling and monitoring of communications
 - The time messages are sent, received in the mailbox and read by the recipient, can be recorded.
7. Management of the System – The usage of the system should be monitored to assist in costing and accounting tasks.

Teleconferencing

Teleconferencing offers an alternative to face-to-face meetings. The computer conferencing facility provided by computer-based message systems described above can be regarded as a form of Teleconferencing, but this term is usually used for services that enable people to interact with each other immediately. The two main types of Teleconferencing are:

1. Audio-conferences in which people can talk to, but cannot see each other
2. Video-conferences in which people can see as well as hear each other

Facsimile Document Transmission

Telefax or facsimile (fax) scans a document, transmits its image and reproduces a copy on the receiving device. Early machines were originally

slow and generated blurred and indistinct copies. Computer-based digital techniques have improved speed and quality and reduced costs.

Corporate Databases

Filing, storing and retrieving information are common office activities. Filing cabinets with folders and papers have been an integral part of office work. Computerised databases provide new means of managing such information to reduce the amount of paper and space needed, speed up the search to extract relevant information, and enable people at many locations to access the same information source.

One of the problems with any database is getting information into it. Data input via a keyboard can be stored directly in computerized form. Techniques to recognize handwriting and human speech have taken longer to develop. Systems have been available for a long time that can read some printed characters (Optical Character Recognition, OCR), but it has been harder to get computers to read letters typed unevenly, mixed print and handwriting, drawings and pictures. Storage media that can adequately cope with images such as optical disks, only started to come in the market in the 1980s.

Image Banks

Optical disks, discussed earlier in terms of personal information systems, can be combined into jukeboxes to provide a source of information, held as images, which may be shared by many users. An image scanner is used to transfer documents to the disks. Information about each page is keyed in from a control workstation by providing details of various attributes that will help associate database management system to retrieve the relevant image and display it on a workstation screen. It is important to remember that information on such disks is stored as images of whole pages. It therefore cannot be searched in detail, as a text database could.

Networking Capabilities

Networks for office cover work either a particular building or set of offices (local distribution) or a broad geographical range (wide distribution). For

managers, the establishment of the telecommunications infrastructure is a key and tactical issue. The network effectively lays down the standards that determine the types of workstations that can be linked to it and the services offered.

Wide Area Networks

The telephone and telex networks are traditional examples of Wide Area Network (WANs). The performance of a network is determined by two main factors, the bandwidth of the medium transmission and the method used to route messages through the system. The copper wire of telephone network is of low bandwidth, but coaxial cables, with a thick conducting core, optical fibres, which send signals on beam of light through hair-thin glass fibres, microwave and satellite links provide much higher bandwidths. Two main types of switching have been common:

Private Automatic Branch Exchanges

Many organizations have had locally distributed telecommunication networks for many years in the form of intra-company telephone communications controlled by a private exchange, typically a switchboard operated manually. These are being replaced by computer-based Private Automatic Branches exchanges, known as PABXs or PBXs, which can offer a variety of office information services such as enhanced telephony, electronic mail and video conferencing.

One of the long-term limitations may be that the existing wiring does not have sufficient bandwidth to carry high volumes of traffic. An important advantage, however, is that a reasonably powerful network can be established without requiring any major rewiring.

Local Area Networks

PABXs give a local distribution of telecommunications that provide many additional services in addition to the basic transmission of data.

Systems that offer high-speed local transmission but with few, if any, additional capabilities are known as Local Area Networks (LANs). There are two main LAN families:

1. Broadband can transmit many channels on differing frequencies so that a mix of information can be carried at the same time.
2. Base band consists of a single channel that allows the transmission of one stream of data at a time.

Broadband networks can be used for a variety of purposes such as TV broadcasting, multi-channel audio transmission, environmental control, and for local cable TV networks. They generally cover a greater geographic spread than base band systems, which are usually restricted to cables of more than about one to three kilometres in length, although independent LANs can be interconnected. The speed required for a base band service is typically at least one million bits per second.

Future trends in new office technology

Above discussion has focused on systems and services that have already proven themselves in live business operations. Innovations in computer-based technologies are progressing at a rapid rate and new options are continuously coming into market. The main trends are as follows:

1. Further use of microelectronics to reduce the cost and size of computing, making available increased computing. More software will be turned into firmware as a part of this process.
2. Improved human-computer communication through new input and output aids, such as systems that understand human speech and handwriting, and increased implementation of criteria.
3. Greater use of knowledge-based systems and more intelligent software, such as expert systems.



Integrated Farming for Sustainability and Development

Sheeraz S. Bhat,* KK Sharma** and S R Meena***

[Research and development are the two facets of a coin, the value of which resides for long if the product/result is ecologically sustainable, socially acceptable, technically feasible and economically viable. Despite recent achievements in the field of science and technology, many issues still pinch when we look at the life of a common man in rural areas, especially in the tribal states of the world. The downtrodden masses need food security, healthy living and basic requirements of clothing and shelter on priority basis. According to United Nations, human development should be measured by life expectancy, adult literacy, access to all three levels of education, as well as people's average income, which is a necessary condition of their freedom of choice; thus incorporating all aspects of individuals' well-being, from their health status to their economic and political freedom.]

What the development of a nation is, can easily be understood from what the world leaders at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000 committed to achieve by 2015– the eight Millennium Development Goals:

i) eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, ii) achievement of universal primary education, iii) promotion of gender equality and empowering women, iv) reduction of child mortality, v) improvement of maternal health, vi) combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, vii) ensuring environmental sustainability, and, viii) to develop a global partnership for development.

Post-2015, world leaders are now targeting at an ambitious, long-term agenda to improve people's lives and protect the planet for future generations by tackling many issues, including poverty and hunger, health and education, climate change, and protecting oceans and forests.

United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 defined the development

as sustainable if it “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” But, is it possible to achieve inter-generational justice in the absence of present-day social and economic inequity at local and global levels resulting in threats from Green House Gas emissions and climate change and the after-effects?

The basic objectives of sustainable development always put an imperative on social aspects, economic growth with efficiency and stability, and the environmental aspects like healthy environment for humans, rational use of renewable natural resources and conservation of non-renewable natural resources.

Taking care of all these aspects, devising a system for efficient and sustainable resource management is the urgent need for higher productivity and sustainable livelihood for the 70 per cent of the world's poor who live in rural areas, for whom agriculture is the main source of income and employment. Although we have only 37.7 per cent of the total land area as agricultural land, unfortunately, depletion and degradation of land and water pose serious challenges to producing enough food and other agricultural products to sustain livelihoods here and to meet the needs of urban populations (World Bank, 2015).

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One viable and sound option is the integrated farming for combating these challenges and managing resources in a sustainable way for all round development from the grassroots level in the rural areas to the urban environs.

Integrated Farming

Integrated farming is the sustainable resource management for maximum productivity in the cropping system, with multiple components like trees, crops and livestock arranged spatially and temporarily over the same unit of land for the best utilization of the growing space. Here, not only the crops, but varied types of plants, mushroom culture, animals, birds, fish and other aquatic flora and fauna are utilized for production in such a way and proportion that each component complements the other; the waste of one is recycled as resource for the other.

Appropriate cropping system with mixed cropping, crop rotation and inter cropping are chosen so that there is less competition for water, nutrition and space and adopting sustainable eco-friendly practices.

In countries like India, where the majority of farmers hold less than two hectares of land and practice subsistence farming, risky and uncertain mono-cropping, it is the need of the hour to:

i) opt for diversified agriculture with sustainable and optimum use of resources for nutritional and economic security, ii) multi-storied arrangement of components with positive interaction amongst them leading to bio-diversification, round the year employment, besides meeting the multifarious demands of increasing human and livestock population, including food security, livelihood and health-care.

It will also check dwindling of land resources, combat climate change and environmental pollution, conserve the biodiversity, and is thus the key to sustainable resource management (soil, water, air and biodiversity).

In such system, whole farm productivity is increased, and if there are collective efforts amongst farmers in a society like cooperatives, the costs of production is reduced, thereby increasing net income from the system.

Case studies

Lac Integrated Farming system (LIFS)

Lac Integrated Farming system is based on different components, the principal one being the lac insect host. Lac insect (*Kerriallacca*) thrives on diversity of hosts, amongst which *semialata* (*Flemingiasemialata*), *ber* (*Ziziphus mauritiana*), *kusum* (*Schleichera oleosa*), and *palas* (*Buteamonosperma*) are the major hosts. Keeping in view of the different desirable attributes of the hosts from growth aspects, maturity of the lac crop and farmers choice, ICAR-IINRG Ranchi has also developed integrated farming system models based on these hosts, especially *semialata* and *ber*, to provide the above benefits to the poverty ridden tribal farmers of lac producing states (mainly Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal).

ICAR-IINRG has developed a multi-tier lac-horticultural system with *semialata* and *ber* (lac hosts) and aonla, guava and lime (fruit trees), besides vegetables as inter-cultivation. It constitutes paired rows of *semialata* alternating with fruit trees, with inter-cultivation of vegetables like bitter gourd and others, in both summer and winter season.

The different components maintain a synergistic relationship and complementary with each other in growth characteristics and nutritional requirement, besides the vegetable plant materials being used as mulch underneath *semialata* retains soil moisture and lowers the soil temperature in the hot summer season.

Other models based on different components like *semialata* with papaya and vegetables as inter-cultivation; *semialata* with maize and vegetables

etc. are also under practice. Such models have not only directly boosted the economy of the farmers, but also checked migration of these poor farmers to other states for employment, thus providing a sound base for socio-economic development.

Cereal-based Integrated Farming

Channbasavana *et al.* (2009) developed an integrated farming system model with rice, maize, sunflower, vegetables, fishery, poultry and goat. They compared it with rice mono-cropping. Of one hectare area, they allotted 0.73 ha for crops, 0.06 ha for fish pond and 0.21 ha for goats (including fodder area), and the model presented a sustainable way for resource and energy flow for small and medium farmers of the Tungabhadra project area of Karnataka. They found that the integration of crops with fish, poultry and goats resulted in higher productivity than adoption of conventional rice mono-cropping

Being a holistic approach to sustain productivity and better livelihood for the present and the future, different issues regarding integrated farming system can be understood in a precise way as follows:

Soil Health Issues

An integrated farming system improves soil's physical and chemical properties, its nutrient status and soil biological components. Addition of organic matter in the form of leaf litter, cow dung and other waste products enhances i) the water holding capacity of the soil, ii) slow release of nutrients to the plants, protecting them from leaching away, iii) soil structure and porosity, iv) water infiltration rate, and v) docile conditions for soil microbes in the system; thus having profound effect on soil health.

Soil and water conservation through regular crop cover on the soil protects the soil from erosion that enhances the water absorption during rains, thus, provides on-site and off-site ecosystem protection. Such interactive systems affect the microclimate, and provide a strong base to good agricultural practices

for increased productivity along with better resource management.

What needs to be taken under consideration is the inter-component interface for efficient use of growing space (soil, water, nutrients and space). Proper diagnosis and design needs to be followed for effective results to reach out to a cropping system, which is sustainable, productive and adaptable.

It is estimated that 95per cent of our food is directly or indirectly produced on our soils (FAO 2015). To signify the role of soils for development of agriculture, the 68th UN General Assembly declared 2015 the International Year of Soils (IYS), with theme 'healthy soils for a healthy life'. José Graziano da Silva, FAO Director General has rightly quoted, 'We must manage soils sustainably. There are many ways to do this. Crop diversification which is used by most of the world's family farmers is one of them: this gives time for important nutrients to regenerate.'

Climate change issues

Climate change is presently an urgent and complex problem of concern to people all over the world. Climate change is a long-term shift in the statistics of the weather like temperature and precipitation (including its averages) for a given place and time of year, from one decade to the next or over centuries (Anonymous, 2012). This majestic problem adds considerable stress to our societies and to the environment.

Climate change is a fundamental threat to sustainable development and the fight against poverty. From shifting weather patterns that threaten food production, to rising sea levels that increase the risk of catastrophic flooding, the impacts of climate change are global in scope and unprecedented in scale, in terms of ecological imbalances, biodiversity depletions and other environmental changes. Without drastic action today, adapting to these impacts in

the future will be more difficult and costly (UNEP, 2010).

Combating climate change, integrated farming practices have been simulated to have the maximum potential for carbon sequestration under different land systems in 2040. Soil carbon sequestration is seen as a viable option for sequestering atmospheric CO₂, having storage potential which is more than that of atmosphere (Kukul *et al.* 2009) and integrated farming has profound effect on increase of soil's organic carbon amongst different land use systems. Such practices also provide crop insurance, thus mitigate all vulnerabilities of climate change; whether it is climatic, biological or of socio-economic concern.

Millennium Development Goals

Integrated farming is the potent option to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, and achieve the objectives of global food security, poverty alleviation, health and nutrition, women empowerment, building capacity and strengthening institutions, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

Regarding eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, integrated farming provides easy food availability and diverse cash crop products to the farmers at their own door steps. It also helps in maintaining soil health through inter-cultivation of leguminous crops and adds to soil nutrients, thus enhancing overall crop productivity in a sustainable way. Being a check against loss from different failures unlike mono-cropping, it protects the farmer from falling in the poverty trap.

With agro-diversity being at the doorsteps of the farmers, and providing them with cereals, vegetables, fruits, pulses, fodder, meat, milk, and other food items, it will ensure them balanced diet, which will have sound impact on their health and well-being.

It may be further mentioned that when a society will have sound food security and better socio-economic set-up, it is expected to be at par with those being advanced in all spheres of life. Thus, the society shall tend to achieve better education at all the three levels, and shall have reduction of child mortality plus improved maternal health.

In some underdeveloped/developing countries, such cropping systems have good potential to change the socio-economic set-up and provide food security for healthy living, and will automatically check diseases. Further, for those affected with diseases like HIV/AIDs, especially in African continent, it becomes difficult for different insurance agencies for agri-finance/ long term investments, as the health of such farmers is at risk. This integrated farming itself bears the risk of different vagaries of nature, and provides such farmers basic amenities of life.

If a society is developed, there is assured promotion of gender equality and women empowerment. Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, has emphasized upon the gender equality being more than a goal in itself; a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.

Environmental sustainability is always ensured from such agricultural cropping systems as there is conservation of floral and faunal biodiversity, mitigation of climate change, better soil health management, whole family approach, pro-poor strategy and balanced natural resource management. Development of a global partnership for all-around human development to diverse spheres of life is only possible if there is socio-economic upliftment at the grassroots level in the country, for which such farming systems have good scope to achieve the goal.

Constraints and future prospects

What is still missing is the technology dissemination, which was also deeply stressed in the recently held World Congress on Agro-forestry 2014 at New Delhi, and was given due consideration for incorporating into the New Agro-forestry Policy of India to bring a paradigm shift in our agriculture. Mass media and extension experts can play a pivotal role in overcoming the gap.

Other problems include lack of innovation at the farmers' end, location of their fields to lead a step in planting trees at borders, distance of fields from households and security against theft of produce.

However, some future prospects which need due consideration include making climate smart agriculture work for the poor without gender disparity, sustainability challenges, climate finance for agriculture and livelihoods even at small-holders and agro-forestry extension, market structure and managing gaps in supply chain for better net income, microfinance, development of new technologies for creating new consumption areas, refining technologies for higher productivity and value addition of the produce, both public sector and private sector to come forward and join hands for livelihood improvement and the genetic improvement of components.

Conclusion

What we conclude is that, to achieve sustainable development, we need to go for efficient and balanced resource use at present, taking care of future generations. We cannot forget quotation of Ban Ki Moon, Secretary-General, The United Nations, that, sustainable development is the pathway to the future we want for all. It offers a framework to generate economic growth, achieve social justice, exercise environmental stewardship and strengthen governance.

2015 being the target achievement year of the MDGs, global leaders are now focusing on for an ambitious, long-term agenda to improve people's

lives and protect the planet for future generations. For all such aspects, integrated farming is a practical way to bring a paradigm shift in the agriculture of a country, thus benefiting the whole society, not just those who practice it, and adding a vital contribution to sustainable development by adding consideration of its economic, ecological and social objectives.

Even the emphasized issues at the Johannesburg Summit, known as WEHAB (Water, Energy, Health, Agriculture and Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management) are also well addressed by such cropping systems. And at last, a well-developed integrated farming system is itself sustainable, what so ever the components are, and we should promote it at present for the future.

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