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The Social Change and Development is a peer-reviewed journal of OKD Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati. The Journal intends to provide an academic platform to scholars belonging to the northeastern region of India as well as outside to project issues focused particularly on the region, express their views and analysis in larger detail. However, issues cutting across the region's border are also welcome. The unique diversity of the region in terms of ethnicity, culture, language, economy and social institutions makes the region a challenging area of study for the researchers.

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Demonetisation 2.0: Aims and Achievements*

Atul Sarma**

Abstract

The Government of India demonetised rupee notes worth 500 and 1000 to (a) curbing terrorism financing, (b) eliminating counterfeiting and (c) curbing unaccounted income or black money. This policy decision followed the Government's earlier Income Declaration Scheme 2016. The sudden announcement that Rs.500 and Rs.1000 notes 'cease to be legal tender from midnight of November 8, 2016' led to prolonged cash shortages in the weeks that followed—created significant disruption throughout the economy, threatening economic output. The implementation of the demonetisation was chaotic and haphazard which led to scarcity of cash and the huge informal sector of India suffered the most. While black money and counterfeit notes continue to be major deterrent to India's economic development the moot question remains: Is demonetisation the correct approach to root out black money? Black wealth of the country has primarily accumulated in the form of real estates, jewellery and foreign currency; while cash constitutes only 6 per cent of the black money. Coming to the question of eliminating the sources of black money generation what required are basic structural reforms covering tax reforms, bureaucracy, judiciary, police reforms and transparent political party funding.

Introduction

In an unscheduled televised address to the nation on November 8, 2016 at 8-15 pm, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi declared circulation of all 500 and 1000 banknotes as illegal with effect from the midnight of the same day. He also announced the issuance of new 500 and 2000 banknotes in place of the old banknotes. The Prime Minister in

* Keynote Address delivered at the National Seminar on Demonetisation and Indian Economy, organised by the Centre for Management Studies, Dibrugarh University, February 27-28, 2017. This is the revised version of the 34th Foundation Day Lecture delivered at Rajiv Gandhi University on February 04, 2017.

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his address said: there comes a time in the history of a country's development when a need is felt for a strong and decisive step and propounded two primary reasons for this decision. One was "to check enemies from across the border using fake currency". The other was to "break the grip of corruption and black money." The PM recognised that there would be short term pains in transition but wanted only 50 days for the people to bear with it for long term gains.

Motivating Factors

Later in a press conference, the RBI Governor and the Economic Affairs Secretary explained the reasons why this drastic step was warranted. They articulated as follows: the supply of notes of all denominations increased by 40 per cent between 2011 and 2016 while during the same period the 500 and 1000 banknotes had increased by 76 per cent and 109 per cent respectively owing to forged currency. This forged currency was used to fund terrorism against India. Demonetisation has been resorted to, to eliminate these notes. In short, this drastic policy aims at (a) curbing terrorism financing, (b) eliminating counterfeiting and (c) curbing unaccounted income or 'black money'. This policy decision followed the Government's earlier Income Declaration Scheme 2016 (opened on June 1 and ended on September 30) under which the black money holders could come clean by declaring the assets by paying the tax and penalty of 45 per cent thereafter. This Scheme could unearth mere 0.5 per cent of black money out of the estimated unaccounted income of 23-26 per cent of the GDP.

Demonetisation as a Tool

"There is no subtler, no surer means of overturning the existing basis of society than to debauch the currency" (stated by J M Keynes in 1939). Back home, in 2012 the Central Board of Direct taxes had recommended against demonetisation stating: "demonetisation may not be a solution for tackling black money or economy which is largely held in the form of *benami* properties, bullion and jewellery". According to data from income tax probes, black money holders keep only 6 per cent or less of their wealth as cash. If that is so, targeting this cash is clearly not the right strategy to eliminate black money. It is also relevant to recall what the then RBI Governor, I.G.Patel said when he was informed of impending demonetisation by the finance minister, H.M.Patel in 1978. He said, "such an exercise seldom produces striking results. Most people who accept illegal gratification or are otherwise the recipients of black money do not keep their ill-gotten earnings in the form of currency for long. The idea that black money or wealth is held in the form of notes tucked away in suit cases or pillow cases is naïve."¹

An extreme step, such as demonetisation is taken only in a situation of hyperinflation leading to fast erosion of currency value or some form of financial crisis. But the fundamentals of the Indian economy are strong: India recorded an average growth of

¹ RBI (2005), History of the Reserve Bank of India (1967-81), Vol. III as cited in A K Nag (2016) Lost Due to Demonetisation, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 51, No. 48 November 26

7.4 per cent in 2014-15 and 2015-16 and is expected to grow at about 7.5 per cent in 2016-17; inflation is well within the reasonable level of 3.15 per cent WPI and 3.63 per cent CPI; fiscal deficit is to be contained at 3.5 per cent of GDP and foreign exchange reserves are at a healthy level of about USD 360 billion. In such a state of robustness of the Indian economy, demonetisation is an ill-conceived measure. What is worse is its execution.

Earlier Demonetisation Exercises

However, it is not that India is the first country that tried demonetisation. Eight other countries, viz. Nigeria, Ghana, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, North Korea, Soviet Union, Australia and Myanmar also tried currency reforms through demonetisation and failed to achieve desired results. Very recently, Venezuela also introduced demonetisation but had to quickly withdraw in the face of huge public protest.

Nor is it for the first time that demonetisation has been resorted to in the post independent India. In 1978 the Government of India through promulgation of an ordinance on January 16, demonetised Rs 1000, Rs 5000 and Rs 10000 Bank Notes. Its objective was to eliminate 'the possible use of such notes for financing illegal transactions'. This demonetisation had little impact on the lives of the people. For, at that time, demonetised currency formed only 0.6 per cent² of the total currency in circulation whereas in 2016 Rs 500 and Rs 1000 Bank Notes formed 86 per cent of the total currency in circulation. Another aspect of the 1978 episode was that 55 per cent of the high denomination notes were with banks and government treasuries and only 45 per cent with the public whereas 95 per cent of the demonetised currencies were with the public in the week of the current demonetisation. Again, the motivation behind the 1978 demonetisation was to eliminate the possible use of high denomination notes for financing illegal transactions while the current denomination aimed at eliminating counterfeiting, funding terrorism and black money.

Appropriateness of the Tool

There is no question about the crying need to address the stated objectives but the question is whether demonetisation is the right tool to achieve these objectives, given the Indian realities. For one thing, 98 per cent of the transactions by volume and 68 per cent in value are in cash. For the other, 86 per cent of the cash in circulation is 500 and 1000 rupee notes. Again, 46 per cent of GDP and 93 per cent employment is contributed by the informal sector where most transactions such as wage payment, purchases and sales are carried out in cash.

Understanding the Nature and Dimensions of the Issue

One has to be clear about what demonetisation aims to achieve: flushing out black

² Rajakumar D J (2016) Demonetsation: 1978, the Present and the Aftermath, *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 26

money from the system, counterfeiting and funding terrorism. First of all, all cash is not black money. The black economy is outcome of both illegal and legal activities. Illegal activities include activities such as smuggling, drug-dealing and trafficking. Black money is also generated from legal activities where income is under reported for the purposes of tax evasion as in the case of transactions of real estate dealers, money lenders, professionals, merchant and traders, under and over invoicing etc. Black wealth is what has been accumulated over the years in various forms such as real estates, jewellery, foreign currency and also cash. But cash is only a small portion of black money. As mentioned earlier, cash constitutes only 6 per cent of black money.

The point to stress is that what demonetisation has actually aimed at is to flush out this small cash component of accumulated black money but not to arrest its future generation by rooting out the sources. This means that, demonetisation by itself will have no impact on the activities that generate the flow neither of black money nor on the forms of assets other than the small portion held in cash. Even most of the cash component of the black money appears to have been brought back into the banking system through a variety of ingenious channels.

In specific terms, 15.44 lakh crore was Rs 500 and Rs 1000 bank notes. As reported by Bloomberg News Service on December 30, 2016, 14.97 lakh crore or 96.96 per cent have come back into the banking system. The government expected that at least 3 lakh crore would be immobilised and to that extent, the black money will be flushed out of the system. The Government also expected that RBI would be able to transfer this amount to the government as a special dividend. Incidentally, mere withdrawal of legal tender status does not extinguish the liability of the RBI. Therefore, an Ordinance has been promulgated extinguishing the liability of the RBI for the portion of illegal tender that does not come into the banking system by March 30, 2017 and thus facilitating its transfer to the government.

As for counterfeit notes, a study sponsored by the National Investigation Agency at the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata estimated that the fake money in circulation was in order of Rs. 400 crore or mere 0.22 per cent the total bank notes. Another estimate made by Rajakumar and Shetty³ placed the fake notes at 0.002 per cent of the bank notes in circulation. Given such insignificant presence of counterfeit notes, demonetisation as an instrument to eliminate fake notes is like bombing the entire town to flush out a few terrorists there from.

As regards terrorism, demonetisation would certainly dry it up and also illegal activities such as smuggling and drugs but only temporarily. The crooks would soon find their ways even to reproduce the new notes.

³ Rajakumar J D, S L Shetty estimated counterfeit notes extracting data from Table VIII.8 of RBI Annual Report 2015-16 (P 97). See their article, Dometisation: 1978, the Present and the Aftermath, Economic and Political Weekly Vol. 51. Issue No.48, Nov 26, 2016.

Having seen the return of most of the outlawed bank notes to the banking system, Government of India (GoI) has changed goal posts and added new narratives. It is that demonetisation is a way to reboot the economy, to convert the informal economy into the formal one and leap frog into the digital cashless economy in which all transactions would be transparent and accountable. I would discuss pros and cons of digitisation later.

Legality of Demonetisation⁴

Previous demonetisation exercises in 1946 and 1978 were carried out through an ordinance. It became a law when it was passed by the competent legislature; In contrast, the current demonetization has been done through the issuance of notifications (Notification No. SO 3407(E) and 3408 (E) under sub-section (2) of Section 26 of the Reserve bank of India). Under this provision, the GoI has the power, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India, to declare 'any series' of notes of any denomination to have ceased to be a legal tender. Several petitions have been filed in high courts as well as in the Supreme Court questioning whether denomination can be carried out by mere notification by the GoI. It is also argued that 'any' in Section 26 of RBI Act does not include 'all'.

Another argument is that demonetisation exercise is a violation of the right to property protected under Article 300-A of the Constitution. It is contended that "by refusing to let people withdraw their money in cash, the government has restricted their right to property and by placing limits on exchange extinguished the right entirely."⁵ The Supreme Court in *Bishamber Dayal Chandra Mohan vs State of Uttar Pradesh* held that "an Executive Order is not 'law' for the purposes of Article 300-A. This could be extended to mean that unless the legislature allows imposition of cash withdrawal limits under a specific provision, or passes a new law, the government is constitutionally prevented from doing so."⁶

On grounds such as above the demonetisation or the manner in which it has been executed has been challenged in high courts and the Supreme Court. The courts are reluctant to interfere in the sphere of executive decisions of the government. Even so, the Supreme Court made a few casual observations about the difficulties being faced by the people in the wake of demonetisation but has not moved further.

Bungling in Execution

Apart from questioning about the soundness of the policy of demonetisation, its execution is totally unplanned, haphazard and casual. This is what has caused immense misery to the people.

⁴ For detailed discussion on the issue of legality of the current demonetisation, see, Kumar, A P (2016), *Demonetisation and the Rule of Law*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 10.

⁵ Kumar, Alok Prasanna. Op. Cit,

⁶ *Ibid*

The extent of unplanned and thoughtless execution of demonetisation can be gauged from the following facts.

First, a month after demonetisation, that is, on December 7, 2016 only 3.81 lakh crore new notes or less than a quarter (24.7 per cent of 15.4 lakh crore cancelled 500 and 1000 notes) were put in public circulation. That led to the acute shortage of cash and long queues. What is worse, the bulk of the new notes were in the denomination of Rs 2000 which caused difficulties in carrying out smaller transactions for the non-availability of requisite smaller notes. Incidentally, when one of the objectives of this whole operation, was to flush out black money, the rationale of replacing Rs 1000 notes by Rs 2000 notes is not clear. For, higher values notes facilitate hoarding better.

Second, the thoughtlessness of execution of demonetisation is reflected in the fact of printing new notes in different sizes from the old ones that warranted recalibration of the ATMs according to the size of new notes. Since recalibration of the ATMs required technical support and time, bulk of the limited number of ATMs were non-functioning. *Third*, from November 8 to December 30, that is, during these fifty days of its execution period, the GoI and the Reserve Bank of India, issued 74 notifications that included several roll backs. The RBI issued 53 notifications instructing banks and advising general public. Various ministries of GoI came out with their own 21 announcements that included advisory to government departments, banks and public⁷. All this shows unpreparedness and ad hoc nature of the execution of demonetisation. This can be illustrated by giving one or two examples. On November 8, it was notified that daily ATM withdrawal was restricted to Rs 2000 per day per card up to Nov 18. The limit shall be raised to Rs 4000 from November 19. On Nov 20, it was notified that daily ATM withdrawal limit was to remain unchanged at Rs. 2000 till further instructions. On November 13, however the daily ATM withdrawal was raised to Rs 2500 from Rs. 2000. Again, daily ATM withdrawal limit was fixed on November 8 but ATMs remained closed from Nov 8 to Nov 10 for recalibration to dispense Rs 50 and Rs 100 notes. Similarly, cash withdrawal over the counter was restricted to Rs. 10000 per day subject to an overall limit of Rs 20000 per week on Nov 23. Three days later weekly limit was raised to Rs. 24000 with a daily limit of Rs. 10000. Operationally, individual banks used their own discretion in disbursing cash. Here let me share my personal experience in this regard. After waiting for three hours from 8 A.M in an endless queue around Nov 15, when my turn came I was given only Rs. 4000. When I took up the issue with the bank manager for not giving me Rs 10000 as notified, he explained his options: with limited cash at the bank's disposal either give Rs 10000 as per entitlement to a few or give a smaller amount to a larger number of people even if it is not possible to service every one with limited volume of new currency at its disposal.

One another example of operational casualness is reflected in release of notes with printing errors or some such floppiness. For example, farmers from remote village in

⁷ For datewise listing of various announcements and notifications, see The Indian Express (Delhi edition). December 31, 2016

MP's Sheapur received from a State Bank of India branch new bank notes of Rs. 2000 without the image of Mahatma Gandhi (Times of India, January 5, 2017).

The Prime Minister rationalised this type of flip-flops in execution of demonetisation in an interview to the India Today as follows, "one must be able to distinguish between *niti* (policy) and *ran-niti* (strategy) and not to put them in the same basket. The decision of demonetisation, which reflects our *niti*, is unequivocally clear and categorical. Our *ran-niti*, however, needed to be different" (as paraphrased in The Indian Express, December 31, 2016). But the most pertinent question is whether *ran-niti* requires no planning and preparation and total disregarding of the human sufferings that have caused particularly to the poor and the vulnerable for no fault of theirs.

Cost of Demonetisation

There are studies⁸ which show that a large part of high value notes in the present economic conditions are used for transactional purpose, i.e. as a medium of exchange and not as a store of value. The informal sector in India which is essentially a cash economy, accounting for 46 per cent of GDP, uses high value notes as the principal form of working capital. Demonetisation has disrupted the functioning of the informal economy. Similarly, informal credit markets accounts for as much as 20 per cent of the total outstanding credit. Creditworthiness in such informal markets is assessed on the basis of cash flow of the borrowers and not on their assets. In a situation such as this, demonetisation has severely undermined the creditworthiness of borrowers and thus their economic activities. Taking into consideration similar other disruptions in the form of loss of business or sales, cost to households due to demonetisation as also cost of printing new currency notes, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) estimated the cost of demonetisation from November 8 to December 30, 2016 at Rs. 1,28,000 crore. The Reserve Bank of India would bear a cost of Rs. 16,800 crore, largely on account of printing new currency notes and transporting them to banks, ATMs and post offices. This is just an indicative measure of the cost to the economy. As the CMIE report puts it: "All estimates are admittedly conservative. All estimates are limited to the 50-day window. However, the impact of liquidity, broken supply chains and loss of confidence is likely to impact the economy over a longer period."

Economic Impacts

More than 100 people reportedly lost their lives while standing in queue to withdraw their own money from ATM or banks. There is no exact count yet but presumably daily wage earners lost their means of livelihood; a huge number of those who were engaged in the informal sector which is basically cash based economy lost daily wages and millions of man-hours were wasted while standing in queue to obtain cash in limited doses. The withdrawal of 86 per cent of the currency that was made up of Rs 500 and

⁸ Timberg, T A, C.V Aiyer (1984) Informal Credit Markets in India, *Economic and Cultural Change*, Vol.33, No.1, pp43-59.

Rs 1000 note has disrupted the economy in several ways. It is too early to assess its actual impact on different economic variables. At this stage, it could be only indicative.

India has a higher cash-GDP ratio at 11 per cent than most major economies such as US -7.5 per cent UK-3.4 per cent and South Korea-3.9 per cent. This shows the role of cash in economic transactions. The informal sector which is mostly cash-based provides jobs to 93 per cent of the workforce. Manufacturing, trade, construction and transportation contribute 73 per cent of the informal employment. This is the major sector that carries out its daily activities through cash transactions. Understandably, demonetisation has hit this sector the most and thus slows down its growth. Sectoral disruptions would lower revenue and profit growth, particularly in consumer goods, real estate, cement, steel, two wheelers, SUVs, gold and jewelry etc. Against this, information technology, finance and technology, cyber security, data communication and data analysis would be positively impacted. In short, demonetisation would lead to lower growth, lower inflation, lower interest rates and lower tax revenue collection. According to a forecasting agency, Viz. Nomura, “demonetisation has hit rural consumption demand harder than urban demand, services more than manufacturing and exports more than imports”. Such effects due to demonetisation could persist three to four quarters or till the end of 2017-18.

Cash crunch seems to have a heavy toll on investment. For example, only 177 investment proposals worth Rs 43,700 crore were made during 53 days between November 9 and December 11, 2016 of October-December quarter as against 227 new investment proposal worth 81,800 crore during 38 days prior to the pre-demonetisation of the same quarter⁹.

Several agencies, taking the factors such as above into consideration have trimmed their growth projections for 2016-17 from 0.4 to 3.3 per cent. The IMF has trimmed its growth projection by one percent to 6.6 per cent from 7.6 per cent. Even the Reserve Bank of India has downcast its growth projection for 2016-17 to 7.1 per cent in post-demonetisation from 7.6 per cent in the pre-demonetisation. The Economic Survey 2016-17 released on January 31, 2017 downcast the growth rate to 6.5 per cent from 7.6 per cent for the current year. In fact, (PMI) for services, i.e. Purchasing Managers' Index which is an indicator of the economic health “witnessed sharpest decline monthly since November 2008 (just after the Lehman crisis) and manufacturing PMI, too, slowed down”¹⁰.

There are some long term effects. Two of the negative effects are: *First*, demonetisation, the way it has been announced and implemented has severely dented the autonomy of the RBI and its credibility as an institution of public trust. Reportedly, it is only on November 7, 2016, that the RBI was advised by the GoI to demonetise the two high value currency. The *other* is that demonetisation has given a serious blow to public trust in money as a store of value.

⁹ As reported in the Indian Express, January 6, 2017

¹⁰ FE Bureau (New Delhi), January 2, 2017.

Against these, there could be some possible positive impact on the Indian economy. Two such positive impacts could be: *One*, demonetisation has given a boost to cashless transactions. The *other* possible impact could be: at least a part of the locked-up money in households that has come to the banking system could be channelised into productive uses depending on credit off-take. Again, there would be some revenue generation through the legal process of converting black money into white.

Cashless Economy or Digital India

As the outcome of the demonetisation exercise appeared disappointing, the GoI shifted its goal post from the initial objectives of flushing out black money, counterfeiting and drying up terrorism funding to promoting cashless economy. No doubt, there are several virtues of a cashless economy such as transparent and accountable transactions. But for one thing, demonetisation has nothing directly to do with promoting cashless transactions. Cashless transactions that have jumped in the post-demonetisation period were also due to various incentives that have been put in place. On the top of it all, not even the most advanced economies have become cashless. For example, Dollars in circulation in value terms have doubled since 2005 to \$1.48 trillion in US and Euros to 1.1 trillion. These countries use cash to a very significant extent as can be seen from the following Table. For example, US carry out 46 per cent and Germany 80 per cent of their respective transactions in cash.

Table: Use of cash across the developed countries

Countries	Cash	Credit Card	Debit Card
Australia	65	21	09
Austria	80	15	02
Canada	52	25	20
France	55	30	01
Germany	80	12	02
Netherlands	50	40	01
USA	46	27	19

Source: Bloomberg News Service, 2016

Nevertheless, for a cashless economy to thrive, what are required are adequate IT infrastructure, financial literacy, cyber security, laws for protection of privacy. India wants to promote a digital economy when 950 million Indians out of a 1.25 billion do not have access to internet¹¹ and only 17 per cent have smart phones. Similarly, with 287 millions of illiterate adults accounting for 37 per cent of the global total, India is clearly not ready for a cashless or digital economy. At another level, it is widely recognised that cyber security in India is very fragile. Even in a technologically much advanced country like USA, data protection could be quite challenging as it appeared from stories of hacking including the accounts of the Democratic Party. Further, it is

¹¹ A joint study by Assocham (The Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry) and Deloitte.

argued that a fully cashless society would be a serious threat to privacy since there would remain a digital trail of every action you take through your purchases and transfers. It could be very serious in the context that has no privacy laws. Furthermore, a fully cashless society could mean the end of dissent.¹² The government could use data it can gather to fix any dissenter. It could make any opponent a pauper with keystroke, freezing bank accounts while an alleged misdeed is investigated. The knowledge that the government has such powers ‘could have a chilling effect on dissent’.¹³ In short, “in the absence of legal, supervisory and regularity clarity and institutional capacity of enforcement”¹⁴ as also given the objective realities as noted above, cashless society or digital India is rather a fantasy.

Concluding Remarks

While concluding, one may raise two questions. One, despite the disappointing outcomes of the demonetisation, why is it that there is not much of public resentment even after a vast number of the poor and the vulnerable have borne disproportionately heavier burden in terms of loss of daily wages, standing long hours in queues and so on. The other is how the laudable objectives of the exercise should ideally be addressed at the source of black money generation.

The first question relating to lack of public resentment in spite of immense loss and human sufferings should be viewed in the following perspective. We are living in a post-truth era in which public perception/opinion is shaped less by objective facts than by appeals to emotion and personal belief. Demonetisation has been projected as the tool to fight corruption, black money, counterfeiting and terrorism funding; it is an arm against the corrupt and the tax evaders. By undergoing short term sufferings, the people have been made to believe that they are lending support to the government in its fight for a national cause that supposedly aims at containing the menace of rampant corruption and black money. All this has shaped the public perception.

In reality, Demonetisation 2.0 is, at best, an attempt to unearth only 6 per cent of the accumulated stock of black money leaving unaffected the remaining 94 per cent which are in the form of real estate, foreign currency, gold and jewellery. This tool also does not address the sources of black money generation. Even within the limited sphere, the available statistics show that only 3 per cent or about 47,000 crore out of Rs. 15.44 lakh crore cancelled notes has not come back to the banking system till December 30, 2016. It would be still less since people were allowed to exchange their cancelled notes in the RBI till March 30, 2017. If that is the measure of black money that could be unearthed through this operation, its cost is enormous- the cost of demonetisation has been estimated at Rs. 1.28 lakh crore.

¹² For elaboration the points made here, see Varma, A (2016), Three reasons why a cashless society would be a disaster, *The Times of India*, December 18.

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ Arun T K (2016), *Times of India*, December 28.

Coming to the question of eliminating the sources of black money generation, broadly speaking, what is required are basic structural reforms covering tax reforms, bureaucracy, judiciary and police reforms and transparent political party funding. In specific terms one recent article¹⁵ has identified six core activities that lie at the root of black money generation in the country. These relate to gold, real estate, taxation, hawala, administration and political and election funding. Regarding gold market, it is suggested that customs duty on gold encourages smuggling and allows sellers to offer discount and incentivise buyers to make cash payment. Similarly, cash payment in real estate business arise for tackling the problems in buying agricultural land because of its illegality and accessing urban infrastructure such as water, electricity and building plan approvals. At another level, cash payment is preferred to avoid stamp duty. As for tax system, high tax rates with numerous exemptions making the tax system very complex leads to corruption. Similarly, cross border activities are subject to complicated regulations. Such capital controls induced hawala business in the country. As for administration, “arbitrary power is the root of corruption. We have to be cautious when persons in government have the discretion to change a rule, give license, conduct an investigation, or hand down punishment. Each of these situations must be covered by procedural law which enshrines good governance.”¹⁶ Similarly, regulators could be problematic since they combine the legislative power - power to write law, i.e. regulations, the executive power- the power to issue license, the power to conduct investigation as also quasi-judicial power –the power to give punishment. This adds up to huge power. As is well known, running a political party and elections require huge resources and its sources are opaque. Corruption emanates from this. Fundamental reforms are called for to make political and election funding transparent and accountable. In short, corruption free system calls for structural and continuous reforms in areas such as above.

A big bang measure such as demonetisation could be symbolic but does not go beyond scratching the surface of the gigantic menace of black money and corruption that has afflicted our society. It has certainly caused short-term dislocation of economic activities and human sufferings while its long term impact is unclear and uncertain.

¹⁵ Kelkar V, A Shah (2016) Six battlefronts for the war on corruption, *The Mint*, November 21

¹⁶ *ibid*

State of Finances of the Autonomous District Councils in Meghalaya

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Abstract

There are 10 Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in the states of North East India constituted under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution towards promoting social, cultural and political autonomy of the people in tribal areas. These ADCs are operating in tribal areas of four states of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura - where the provisions of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments Acts are not applicable. This paper examines the trends in the finances of the three ADCs in Meghalaya, looks at the budget accounting system and compares the trends in receipts and expenditures and also the extent of financial devolution to the councils so as to shed some light on the financial status of these institutions.

I. Background

All countries of the world have their own histories of local governance although not necessarily these are in institutional forms. India has one of the oldest traditions of strong governance at the local level. The year 1992 can be marked as a watershed of local governance system in India when the village level bodies (the *panchayats*) were given a Constitutional mandate with the 73rd amendment of the Constitution of India. In addition to this the 74th amendment of the Constitution endowed the municipalities in urban areas with powers and resources to enable them to function as third tier of government. However, some tribal areas in north east India have been exempted from the purview of the above amendments as they come under the jurisdiction of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) constituted under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. At the time when the Constitution was adopted in 1950, the ADCs were constituted to provide tribal minorities in the then erstwhile composite state of Assam with a political and administrative framework which would work to safeguard and promote the rights and interests of the tribal in these areas, while at the same time preparing them to

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assimilate with the national mainstream. These institutions have been functioning since the early 1950s and represent sub-state government in tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura. Although ADCs are endowed with legislative, executive and judicial powers over subjects delegated to them, their main mandate is administration of tribal institutions and protection of the interest of the tribals by regulating trading and control of land ownership.

The entire state of Meghalaya comes under the jurisdiction of three ADCs, namely the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC), Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council (JHADC) and Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC). The three ADCs have been functioning since the early 1950s, but we find very few studies that have examined the finances of these institutions in detail. There are, however, some studies that have commented on the finances of the councils in Meghalaya (Gassah, 1998; Jyrwa, 1998; Stuligross, 1999; Dutta, 2002; Syiem, 2007). This paper is an attempt to look at the budgetary data of the ADCs for an extended period and looks at the budget accounting system, followed by analysis and comparison of trends in receipts and expenditures of the councils. It is well understood that financial status of these institutions reflects the challenges faced by these Institutions to address the objective for which these institutions were created.

The data for this paper is sourced from the actual of revenues and expenditures collated from the budget documents of the three ADCs. The periods of analysis is as follows: (i) KHADC: 1993-94 to 2013-14 (ii) JHADC 1993-94 to 2012-13 (iii) GHADC: 1993-94 to 2011-12.

For analysing the trends in real revenues and expenditures of the ADCs there is need to eliminate the effect of inflation over period of time. For this we have used Gross Domestic Product deflator to convert nominal values of revenues and expenditures to their real values (Anderson, 2012). Further, we have computed 3-year moving average of revenues and expenditures to smooth out the year to year fluctuations and show the trends overtime more clearly. To account for the difference in population under jurisdiction of the three councils, we have computed the per capita revenues and expenditures by dividing real revenue and expenditures with the population of respective councils for different years under consideration. Population figures used in the study is based on census of 1991, 2001 and 2011 with population growth between two census years calculated with exponential growth equation $P_t = P_0 e^{rt}$ (Bartlett, 1993). For projecting population from 2012 to 2014 we have used the base year 2011 and the population growth rate between census year 2001 and 2011.

The state of finances of the ADCs has been studied by using trend monitoring and analysis. Except where noted, average annual growth rates (AAGR) for revenues and expenditures have been calculated using least square growth rate, which is the most commonly used procedure for calculating growth (Kakwani, 1997). For the study of volatility of revenues and expenditures, we have used the measurement of coefficient of variation (CV) We have also used ratio analysis to study the extent of fiscal

decentralisation (World Bank, 2000) enjoyed by the councils in Meghalaya using revenue decentralisation ratio (proportion of local revenue from own sources to total state government revenue) and expenditure decentralisation ratio (proportion of local expenditure to state government expenditure).

II. Budget Accounting Format of the ADCs

The statement of receipts and expenditures of the ADCs for a particular year, which is conventionally called the budget, consist of two parts, namely (i) The Annual Financial Statements and (ii) Demand for Grants. The Annual Financial Statements consist of Abstract Financial Statement of Receipts, Abstract Financial Statement of Expenditure and the Detailed Financial Statement of Receipts. The Statement of Demand for Grants contains the detailed statement of expenditure of respective sections/departments of the councils.

The accounts of receipts and expenditures of the ADCs in Meghalaya are not maintained in the six-tier hierarchical structure followed by union and state governments (GoI, 2012). In the case of the three councils, the accounts under receipt and expenditure heads are shown at two to three levels of disaggregation namely as major heads, sub-heads and detailed heads. Accounts under receipt heads show proceeds from tax and non-tax sources and other receipts according to nature and source, while accounts under expenditure heads are reported in reference to the spending department rather than according to its objects or purposes. The three ADCs do not follow a uniform reporting of their sources of receipts. While the Abstract Financial Statement of Receipts of KHADC and JHADC shows 14 receipt major heads that of GHADC shows additional two more heads. In table 1 we present the main receipts major heads of the three ADCs in Meghalaya.

Table 1: Receipt major heads of the ADCs in Meghalaya

1.	Grants for civil works
2.	Share of royalty from minerals forest
3.	Share of motor vehicle tax
4.	Taxes on profession, trade, calling & employment
5.	Trades
6.	Markets
7.	Land revenue
8.	Administration of justice
9.	Revenue from toll gates
10.	Grant-in-aids to protect tribal lands and interest
11.	Stationary & printing
12.	Miscellaneous receipts
13.	Interest on investment

Source: Authors' compilation from Budgets of the ADCs in Meghalaya

Analysis of the receipts of ADCs at sub-heads and detailed heads shows that in many instances revenues from more than one sources of origin are included in one major

head. For example, in KHADC budget the receipt major head 'Land revenue' includes both own revenue collected by the council as well as grants from the state government. Similarly, under receipt major head 'Forest' own revenue raised by the council and grants received from state government have been included. So also in the budget of GHADC receipt major head 'Forest' includes own revenue as well as share of mineral royalties received from the state government. In another case, GHADC receipt major head 'Taxation' includes both own revenue and share of vehicle tax received from the state government.

Table 2: Major heads of receipts with more than one source of revenue by origin

ADCs	Origin	Revenue type type
KHADC		
Major head:		
1. Land revenue		
Sub-head:		
(i) Income from fisheries	ADC	Own revenue
(ii) Land reforms and land records	State government	Grant
(iii) Mortgage fee etc.	ADC	Own revenue
Major head:		
2. Forest		
Sub-head:		
(i) Timbers	ADC	Own revenue
(ii) Other forest produces	ADC	Own revenue
(iii) Miscellaneous	ADC	Own revenue
(iv) State plan schemes	State government	Grant
GHADC		
Major head:		
1. Forest		
Sub-head:		
(i) Receipts from forest produces	ADC	Own revenue
(ii) Miscellaneous receipts including registration fees	ADC	Own revenue
(iii) Share of royalty on minor and major minerals from State government	State government	Shared revenue
Major head:		
2. Taxation		
Sub-head:		
(i) Taxes on carts, cycles, boats	ADC	Own revenue
(ii) Share of motor vehicle tax from state government	State government	Shared revenue
(iii) Taxes on trades, callings and employment	ADC	Own revenue
(iv) Income from trading by non-tribals	ADC	Own revenue
(v) Kisti money and security deposit of toll gates	ADC	Own revenue

Source: Same as Table 1

Therefore, in our analysis for each receipt major head we have separated revenue as per origin at sub-head and detailed head levels and reorganised source of revenues into three categories of Own revenue, Shared revenue and Grants as per source of origin. Own revenue are tax and non-tax receipts which are levied, collected and appropriated by the councils. Shared revenue which includes motor vehicle tax and share of royalties from minerals are sources of revenue levied and collected by the state government which are shared with the councils in a given proportion. Grants from the union and state governments constitute the third source of revenue for the councils which are meant for specific projects and also for supporting general administration of the councils.

Expenditure data is reported in reference to the spending department at three level of disaggregation as major heads, sub-heads and detailed heads. The Abstract Financial Statement of Expenditure provides details of expenditure under the major head of accounts which correspond to a particular function or department of the councils. Disaggregation of expenditure data by sub-heads and detailed heads are provided in the Demand for Grants. Expenditure sub-heads denote the different expenditure components within the function or department. Detailed heads provide the object or nature of expenditure such as salaries, allowances, establishment cost, office expenses, contingencies, etc. The expenditure data are not classified into revenue and capital expenditures or development and non-development expenditures. For our analysis we have classified expenditure into Revenue and Capital expenditures by reorganising expenditure items at detailed heads level.

III. Trends in Revenue of the ADCs

The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution empowers the ADCs to collect taxes for generation of own revenue as well as sharing of revenue from mineral royalties collected by the state government from areas under jurisdiction of the councils. Another source of revenue for the ADCs is the financial assistance in the form of grants from state and union governments. We have reorganised and classified the receipts of the councils under three sources of revenue which is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Typology of sources of revenue of the ADCs in Meghalaya

Sources	Type	Receipts	Remarks
(A) Own Revenue	Levied, collected and appropriated by ADCs	(i) Taxes on profession, trade, callings and employment (ii) Land revenue- house tax, ordinary land revenue, mortgage and survey fees, land, valuation charges, grazing tax etc. (iii) Stamps and registration fees. (iv) Forest-sale of timbers, weight bridges, royalty on forest products, etc. (v) Administration of justice-court fee, application/certifying fees	Revenue collection from area under jurisdiction of respective ADCs

		(vi) Trades- trading license fees and fines. Markets-collection from councils markets and other markets (Hats)	
		(vii) Stationery and printing-sale of forms, tender fees, etc.	
		(viii) Toll gates-collection from toll gates. Water works-water supply charges	
		(ix) Income from fisheries., receipts from traditional institutions and other receipts	
		(x) Miscellaneous receipts-rents from councils' buildings, etc.	
(B) Shared revenue	Levied and collected by State government and shared with ADCs	(i) Motor vehicle tax (ii) Royalty on major minerals (iii) Royalty on minor minerals	Between State government and ADCs at 40:60 for Motor tax and minerals, except for Coal (75:25)
(C) Financial transfers as Grants	1. State government 2. Union government	(i) Enforcement of machinery under the schemes for trading by non-tribal. (ii) Land reforms schemes. (iii) Forest state plan schemes (iv) Rural communication schemes (i) Plan assistance from Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India under Article 275(1) (ii) Non-lapsable central plan resources from Ministry of Development of North-Eastern Region (iii) Finance Commission award for the up-gradation of Tribal Administration	Funds from Union Government are transferred to State government and are disburse by the department of District Council Affairs

Source: Same as in table 1

Own revenues comprises of tax and non-tax revenues. These are (i) Taxes on professionals, trades, callings and employment (ii) Forest (iii) Trades (iv) Toll gates (v) Land revenue (vi) Markets (vii) Administration of justice (viii) Stationary and printing (ix) Miscellaneous. Shared revenues are from taxes on motor vehicle and royalties on major and minor minerals levied and collected by the state government which are shared with the councils in a given ratio as shown in Table 3. Grants from the union and state governments are for specific projects and also for supporting general administration.

Our analysis of the budgetary data of the three ADCs show that annual revenue receipts of JHADC is the highest among the councils in the state. In 2010-11 the 3-year moving average real revenue of this council was Rs. 32.8 crore compared to Rs. 25.6 crore for KHADC and Rs. 25 crore for GHADC (chart 1). Across the three councils we see the dominance of shared revenue as the main source of revenue.

Chart 1: Trends in inflation adjusted revenues of the ADCs

Source: Authors' calculation

AAGR of real revenue was highest for JHADC at 9.6 per cent. All the three ADCs also recorded high AAGR in shared revenue with JHADC recording the highest growth at 12.3 per cent. However, shared revenue also showed high volatility among the three sources of revenues as reflected in the high coefficient of variation for all the three councils (between 42 to 53 per cent). We also find considerable volatility in receipts under grants across the three ADCs (Table 4) This surge and dip in the annual revenue is on account of fluctuation in receipts from the all the three sources particularly from shared revenue and grants. Both these two sources of revenue originating from higher governments show high revenue volatility, indicating unpredictability and irregularity in sharing of revenues between state government and the councils and also in the flow of grants from the state and union governments to the councils.

Table 4: Revenue volatility of the ADCs, 1995-96 to 2012-13

		Own revenue	Shared revenue	Grants	Total revenue
KHADC	Growth rate [#]	3.9*(9.6)	10.5*(11.8)	6.6*(4.5)	6.9*(11.6)
	Coefficient of variation	23%	53%	45%	39%
JHADC	Growth rate	4.0*(4.6)	12.3*(13.4)	4.7*(2.9)	9.6*(19.2)
	Coefficient of variation	32%	53%	48%	47%
GHADC	Growth rate	2.0 ^{nc} (1.3)	8.3*(11.0)	6.6*(5.4)	5.6*(9.3)
	Coefficient of variation	35%	42%	36%	33%

[#]Growth rates have been estimated by fitting a log linear trend equation of the form $\ln(y) = a+bx$. The t ratios of growth coefficients are given in brackets with the level of statistical significance (one tailed-t-test) denoted as: * = 1 per cent level); For the study of volatility we have used the measurement of coefficient of variation = (Standard deviation/Mean) *100

Source: Same as in Chart 1

The three major sources of own revenue of the councils are Professional tax, Forest, Trading licences, and Markets. Real revenue from professional tax has increased over

the years for all the ADCs, but much more for KHADC as the state capital and trading centres are within the jurisdiction of the council. Revenue from Forest was the dominant source of own revenue for all the three ADCs till 1996-97. However, receipts from this source has dropped substantially in following years due to the implementation of the Supreme Court order in 1996 regulating felling of timber. It may be noted here that absence of any forms of regulation on logging and timber felling has done serious damage to the forests of the state. For KHADC and JHADC, revenue from trading licence fees charges from non-tribal business operating under councils' jurisdiction has seen a marked rise over the years due to increase in number of licenses issued over the period as well as enhancement of license fees levied on different trading activities from time to time. In case of GHADC, revenue from markets has emerged as the main source of own revenue followed by professional tax. Other minor own revenues of the three councils are from Toll gates, Land revenue, Administration of justice, Stationery and printing and other miscellaneous receipts. The trends in composition of own revenue receipts of the three ADCs are given in chart 2 to 4.

Chart 2: Trends in composition of real own source revenue of KHADC, 1995-96 to 2012-13

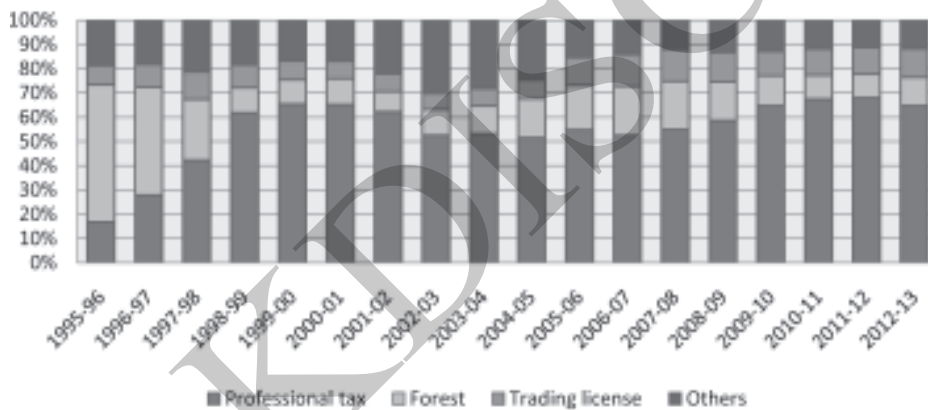


Chart 3: Trends in composition of real own source revenue of JHADC, 1994-95 to 2011-12

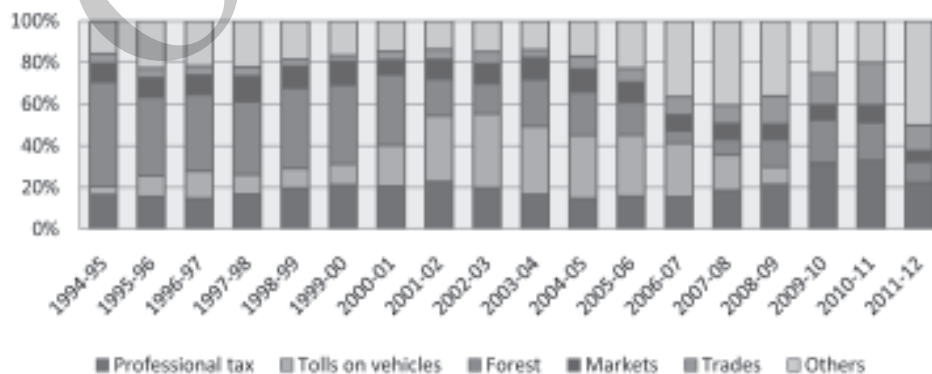
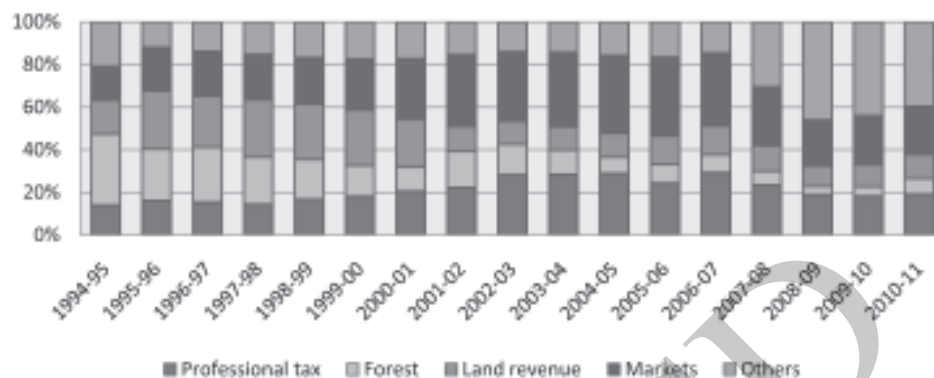


Chart 4: Trends in composition of real own source revenue of GHADC, 1994-95 to 2010-11



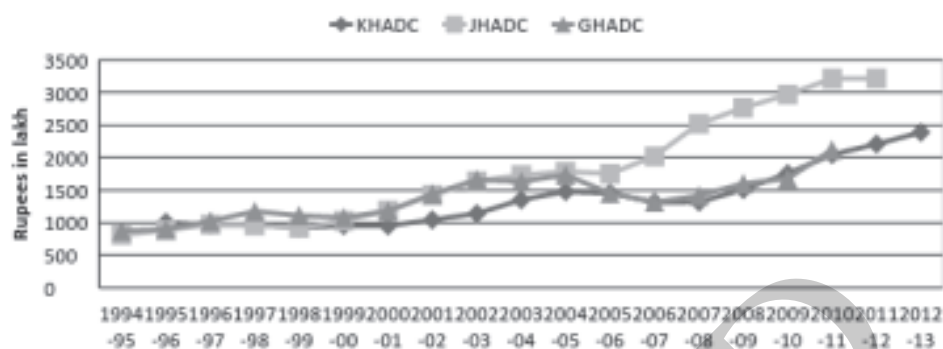
Source: Authors' calculation for all the charts

A comparison of the revenue base of ADCs with *panchayat raj* institutions (PRIs) shows that the Sixth Schedule has allotted very limited powers to the tribal councils to levy and collect taxes as compared to assignment of tax and non-tax powers to the latter. Alok (2012) has identified as many as 32 taxes or fees that are collected by the PRIs in different states in India, while Victovic and Kopanyi (2014) have listed out as many as 24 different principal revenue sources for local government across the world. In our case we could identify only about 20 sources of taxes and fees collected by the three ADCs in Meghalaya which falls under own revenue and shared revenue.

IV. Expenditure of the ADCs

Among the ADCs in the state, JHADC recorded the highest growth in expenditure in real terms at AAGR of 9.2 per cent compared to 5.5 per cent for KHADC and 4.4 per cent for GHADC. Chart 5 shows the trends in real expenditure of the three councils for respective study period under consideration. While expenditure of the ADCs has been growing overtime, bulk of spending of the councils is towards meeting revenue expenditure (between 63 to 88 per cent) with major proportion of it being on account salaries and pension liabilities. Another important component of revenue expenditure of the councils is travelling allowances and POL (petroleum, oil and lubricants) grouped under 'TA & POL'.

Chart 5: Trends in Inflation adjusted Expenditure of the ADCs



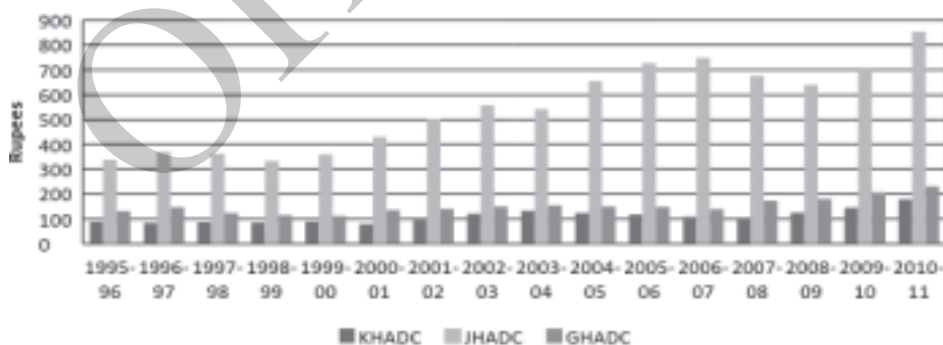
Source: Authors' calculation

On the capital expenditure side, bulk of spending is towards construction of buildings, markets and minor projects which is mostly funded by grants received from union government. Other two components of capital expenditure with substantial outlays are purchase of furniture, tools and vehicles and on plantation projects of the councils.

V. Comparison of Size and Composition of Revenue and Expenditure of the ADCs

In terms of comparison of revenue of the three ADCs in the state, per capita real revenue of JHADC is the highest for all the years under study primarily because of the high receipt under shared revenue and the comparatively lower population in the area under the council. This is seen in chart 6 which shows per capita revenue of JHADC several times higher than that of the others two ADCs. Per capita real revenue is least in KHADC as seen in Chart 6.

Chart 6: Per capita real revenue of the ADCs

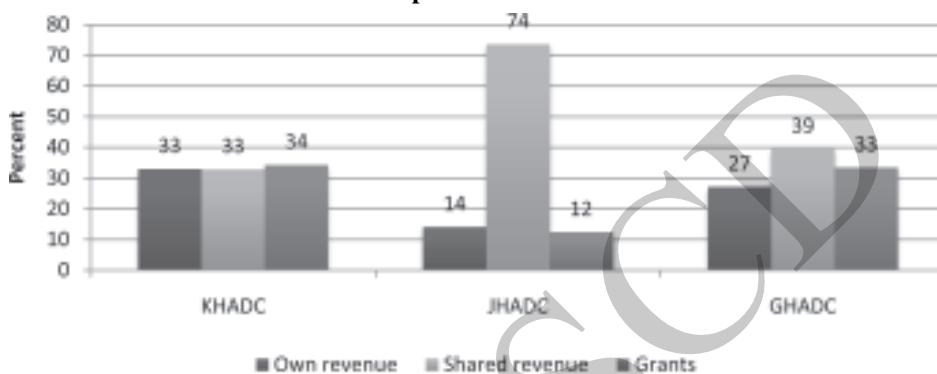


Source: Authors' calculation

Comparison of the average percentage share of own revenue, shared revenue and grants of KHADC shows almost proportionate contribution of the three main sources of

revenue (between 33 to 34 per cent), while for GHADC percentage share of shared revenue is highest (39 per cent) followed by grants (33 per cent) and own revenue (27 per cent). The picture is however very different in case of JHADC where we find percentage share of shared revenue (74 per cent) substantially higher than the other two sources of revenue (Chart 7).

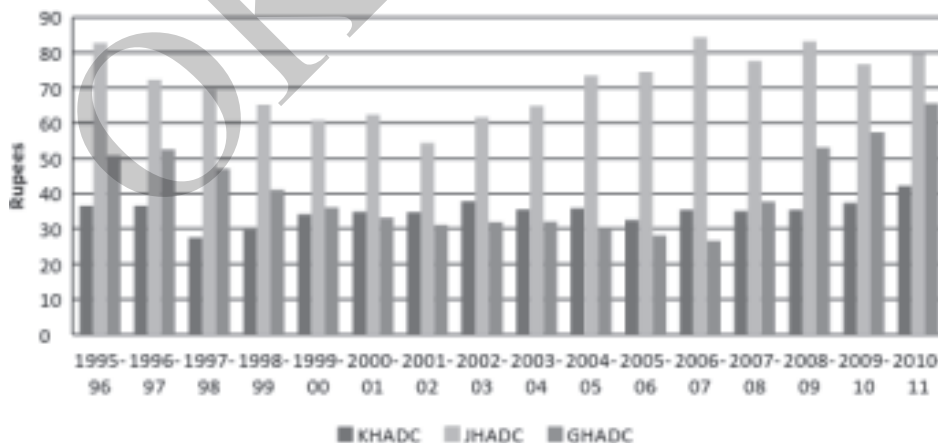
Chart 7: Average percentage share of three main components of revenue receipts of the ADCs



Source: Authors' calculation

The comparison of per capita own source revenue of the three ADCs shows JHADC with the highest amount throughout the studies period ranging between Rs. 54 (2001-02) and Rs. 84 (2006-07). In case of KHADC the per capita own source revenue is between Rs. 28 (1997-98) and Rs. 42 (2010-11) while for GHADC, the amount is between Rs. 27 (2006-07) and Rs. 66 (2010-11) (Chart 8).

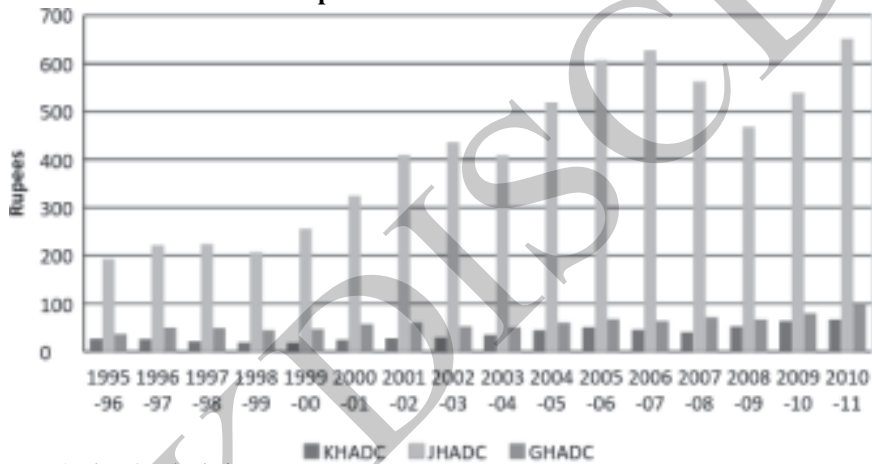
Chart 8: Per capita real own revenue of the ADCs



Source: Authors' calculation

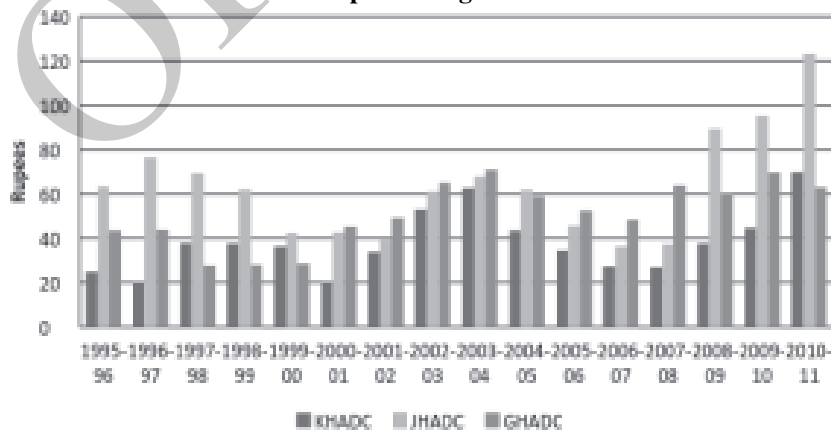
JHADC received huge amount of royalty from coal and limestone as the area is rich in minerals deposits. This coupled with relatively small population size of the council translate into high per capita shared revenue which has risen from rupees 193 in 1995-96 to Rs. 651 in 2010-11. For GHADC the per capita shared revenue rose from Rs. 37 in 1995-96 to Rs. 103 in 2010-11. The corresponding values in KHADC was Rs. 27 in 1995-96 and Rs. 67 in 2010-2011 (Chart 9). In case of Grants, per capita amount received by the three ADCs fluctuated from year to year as shown in Chart 10. The councils received grants from both the State and Union government. In case of the latter, grants are routed through the state government. At present, there is no provision for statutory grants to the ADCs either from State or Union government. Much of the grants, particularly grants from Union government, received by the councils are discretionary in nature for supporting specific schemes/projects of the three councils.

Chart 9: Per capita real shared revenue of the ADCs



Source: Authors' calculation

Chart 10: Per capita real grants of the ADCs



Source: Authors' calculation

VI. Financial Devolution to the ADCs

We have also tried to measure the ability of the ADCs to meet their revenue expenditure from own revenue and shared revenue separately and also when combined together. Table 5 shows the ratio of own revenue (O) to revenue expenditure (RE), shared revenue (SR) to revenue expenditure (RE) and combined own revenue and shared revenue (O+SR) to revenue expenditure (RE). Our analysis shows that the three councils are able to meet only a small percentage of their revenue expenditure from own revenue. Among the three councils, we find that KHADC is in much better position to cover revenue expenditure from own revenue as the council in a much better position to raise resources from professional tax and fees collected from trading licences as the state capital and main trading centres are within its jurisdiction.

The ability of the three ADCs to cover the revenue expenditure from own revenue and shared revenue combined together improves significantly in most of the years under consideration, particularly in case of JHADC. This shows the high dependence of the councils on taxes on major and minor minerals particularly on coal -which is main component of shared revenue- to finance their expenditure. However, the over reliance on this one source also indicate the financial vulnerability of the councils as any disruption in revenue flow from royalty from minerals would severely affect the functioning of the councils.

Table 5: Proportion of own revenue and shared revenue to revenue expenditure

Period	KHADC			JHADC			GHADC		
	O/RE	SR/RE	(O+SR)/RE	O/RE	SR/RE	(O+SR)/RE	O/RE	SR/RE	(O+SR)/RE
1995-96	51	38	89	29	67	95	51	38	89
1996-97	49	36	85	24	75	99	50	48	97
1997-98	35	28	64	23	75	98	42	44	87
1998-99	40	25	65	22	71	94	39	43	83
1999-00	47	25	72	19	79	98	37	48	84
2000-01	50	35	85	19	97	116	34	59	93
2001-02	46	37	84	15	114	129	29	56	85
2002-03	49	39	88	16	116	133	29	48	76
2003-04	47	46	93	17	105	122	28	45	73
2004-05	48	59	107	18	128	146	27	56	83
2005-06	44	69	114	19	153	171	28	67	94
2006-07	48	62	111	20	147	167	30	71	100
2007-08	48	56	104	15	109	125	40	77	117
2008-09	47	70	117	15	86	101	53	68	121
2009-10	44	75	119	13	92	105	51	71	121
2010-11	43	68	110	13	104	116	44	69	112

Source: Authors' calculation

The comparison of combined revenue and expenditure of the three councils to the revenue and expenditure of the state government is depicted by revenue decentralisation ratio (RDR) and expenditure decentralisation ratio (EDR), respectively. The values of these two ratios measure the extent of financial decentralisation in the state. Both RDR and EDR fall within the range of two to three per cent showing very limited financial decentralisation and negligible impact of the functions and activities of the ADCs in the state as indicated by meagre funds at the disposal of the three ADCs in Meghalaya (table 6).

Table 6: Fiscal decentralisation statistics of Meghalaya, 2001-02 to 2011-12

		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
		-02	-03	-04	-05	-06	-07	-08	-09	-10	-11	-12
RDR	All ADCs	0.031	0.027	0.030	0.033	0.030	0.031	0.025	0.026	0.027	0.026	0.032
EDR	All ADCs	0.024	0.025	0.026	0.026	0.027	0.020	0.022	0.028	0.021	0.019	0.025

VII. Issues for Consideration

ADCs in Meghalaya have low revenue base as assigned tax and non-tax revenue sources are limited. Further, the ADCs have not fully exploited the powers to raise their own revenue as evident from the low per capita own revenue of the councils. Factors such as the lack of political will to raise resources through imposition of taxes and other charges/fees, particularly from tribal population, are partly to blame for the inability of the councils to generate sufficient resources. We find high volatility in revenue receipts across the three ADCs indicating unpredictability and irregularity in revenue receipts of the councils.

The high dependency of the councils on share of royalty on minerals particularly JHADC is major cause of concern as any disruption on the flow of revenue from this source will severely affect the functioning of the councils. Such a situation has occurred in the past when the Supreme Court in 1996 had banned unregulated timber felling in the State thereby severely affecting the revenue earned by the councils from royalty from timber trade, which was then a major source of own revenue for the three councils. The 2014 ruling of the National Green Tribunal banning rat hole coal mining practice in the State has also affected the finances of all the three ADCs.

Another problem facing the ADCs in the state is the unwillingness of state government to devolve part of their own revenue with the councils. At present there is no provision in the Sixth Schedule for constitution of state finance commission. Further, although the sharing of mineral royalties and motor vehicle taxes between state government and the councils is on stipulated percentage, the transfer of revenue from the former to the latter is plagued by delay and lack of transparency on the part of the state government. While ADCs also continue to be heavily dependent on financial support from higher government, even here it is seen that the councils often complain that grants provided by union government are not being released timely by state government.

ADCs in Meghalaya have a very limited mandate in promoting development activities with its role limited to regulation of local tribal bodies and land ownership. We find that much of the own resources of the councils is spent on revenue expenditure with component on salaries and administrative expenses. High administrative expenditure has severely affected the financial health of most of the councils.

Lastly, the ADCs in the state are yet to move towards adopting uniform and transparent accounting structures that will allow for capturing the receipts and expenditure under proper heads which will in turn facilitate better control and decision making based on the financial information derived from such an accounting format. This along with timely auditing of its account will bring clarity, transparency and accountability in the finances of the council.

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Tripura: A Chronicle of Politicisation of the Refugees and Ethnic Tribals

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Abstract

The emergence of political consciousness and introduction of democratic institutions took long time in the Princely State of Tripura. After Partition, Tripura formally joined the Indian Union and the major crisis arose from the political and cultural hegemony of the Bengali refugees over the domicile tribals. The refugees had earned respectable spaces in the socio-cultural milieu of the state. They could situate them in a new political framework, which gave birth to a political structure different from other two major Bengali refugee absorbent states, West Bengal and Assam. The paper would try to locate the transformation process in the political order from the structure of a princely state to a democratic government within the Centre-State binaries. It seeks to explore the root causes of refugee - tribal agitations, strategies and changes. It attempts to find out how the huge refugee population itself became a decisive factor in the political arena of the post-partition Tripura.

I. Introduction

The end of colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent and birth of two nations, India and Pakistan, was accompanied by communal politics and riots, and consequently, significantly a large portion of the paranoid religious minorities in both the nations moved to the other as refugees. Absorption of the massive number of refugees had huge ramification in the receiving areas of both the nations. Besides resulting in demographic imbalance, it inescapably led to ethnic divide and social tension, competition for scarce resources as well as struggle for political hegemony. One of the classic examples of this is the present state of Tripura, which was a convenient site for the Indian State to accommodate a large chunk of the Bengali refugees from East Pakistan for the history shared in common by the colonial Princely State and East Bengal renamed as East Pakistan after the partition. Notwithstanding the common people of Tripura initially welcomed the people migrated from East Pakistan as they

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were all Bengali speaking people and had traditional socio-cultural links, the attitudes of the hosts changed with every additional wave of refugees migrated to the tiny political unit of the Indian State. Sentimentalism changed to apprehension, care changed to fear and amity transformed to hostility. With this backdrop, this paper tries to locate the transformation process in the political order, the process of transformation from the structure of the Princely State to a democratic government within the ambit of the Indian federal structure. It also seeks to explore the root causes of refugee and tribal agitations alongside other political discourses involving myriad strategies and changes including the political leaderships in Tripura. Attempt has also been made to find out how the refugee population became a decisive political factor in the electoral politics in the state marked by remarkable ethnic diversity. Certainly it demands a critical engagement especially with growing political apprehension and fear of the host society of being loser of political hegemony with the every wave of refugee moved in.

II. The Broad Political Scenario of Tripura during the Pre-Partition Period

Tripura, comprising of both hills and plain territory, was geographically situated in the peripheral quarters of Bengal, amidst the migration routes. It was beside the Ahom state and connected up till Arakan.¹ Thus, it had experienced some turbulence caused by the centre of the Mughal dynasty as well as crises due to foreign invasion from time to time since the fifteenth century. The original inhabitants of the hill portion, which was indeed the other side of the Chittagong Hill Tracts of the then East Bengal, were tribals. However, the tendency of in-migration and out-migration of the tribes from the mythical period proves its popular identity of a hospitable and accommodative state.² According to *Rajmala*, the court chronicle of the Tripura Maharajas, about 150 Hindu kings had ruled Tripura for an uninterrupted period of about 350 years from the legendary period.³ The strategic location of Tripura was such that it necessitated constant interaction between the Nawab rulers of adjacent Bengal and Maharajas of Tripura, which began almost simultaneously with the establishment of the Manikya dynasty (1280 AD).⁴ Thus, the Maharajas had to negotiate with the internal issues of crises and continue regular warfare against the external invaders, especially the Sultans of Bengal, essentially to keep control over the Chittagong-Sylhet region, the plain portion of Tripura.

As there were two separate divisions in the Princely State of Tripura, the community identities of the subjects were indeed diverse. The inhabitants of the plain Tripura territory or the Chakla Roshanabad were Bengalis, both Hindus and Muslims. When the Hindus mostly belonged to the educated professional classes, the Muslims were

¹ This area was described as 'Pratikara' in *Maharajoang* and also described as 'Khuratan' in *Rajoang*, both published from Arakan (Brohmadesh). 'Rajmala Barnito Amader Tripura' (Tripura Rajya and Tripura Jela) in *Amader Tripura* (in Bengali), Baishak, 1377 BS, p. 18

² O. S. Adhikari, *Four Immigrant Tribes of Tripura- Their Life and culture*, Directorate of Research, Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Tripura, Agartala, 1988, p. 10

³ Jitendra Chandra Pal, *Rajmalar Tripura: Kichhu Tothyo, Kichhu Bitarko* (in Bengali), Saikat, Agartala, 2003, pp. 15-17

⁴ R. C. Majumdar, *History and Culture of Indian People: The Delhi Sultanate*, vol. VI, p. 209

primarily farmers or sharecroppers. It was in the year 1658; Tripura went under the direct control of the Mughals.⁵ Although the Mughals could capture the territory popularly known as *Parbotyo Tripura* or Hill Tipperah, they were not familiar with the misty climate and humid environment there. It was, therefore, decided to shift the military base from Udaypur, the capital of the hill Tripura portion to plain Tripura, chiefly to make their soldiers comfortable.⁶ The occupied portion of plain Tripura entered into the Mughal rent roll as *Sarkar Udaipur*. They gave the state a status named *Udaypur Rajosyo Pargana*.⁷ The taxes had mainly to be collected from the plains, as the hill portion had little surplus production. In 1764, the British East India Company took control of whole of Bengal. Thus, some other parts of Bengal, which had been under the Mughal Empire was naturally taken over by the British administration too.⁸ Tripura became a British protectorate in 1809 and the Maharajas were recognised as sovereigns by the British in 1838. In that particular process, Tripura became a Princely State, and the British Government appointed an agent to assist the Maharaja in the administration in 1871.⁹

The Princely State, however, had to suffer severe crisis, especially, in every succession of the royal family members besides ravages caused by several Kuki invaders between 1826 and 1862.¹⁰ Hence, the monarchy had to negotiate with both internal and external threats constantly. The original inhabitants of Tripura were tribals, and the monarchy that dominated was based on the idea of divinity. The common illiterate tribals were comfortable with the existing socio-political arrangements of the monarchy. However, with gradual colonial interventions, the state machinery assumed a bureaucratic pattern and economy became monetized.¹¹ The changes led to emergence of a 'non-tribal middle class' which led the anti-monarchical and anti-imperialist movements within the state.¹² This educated Hindus were settled down in the state with the invitation from the monarchy, chiefly to work for the administration. Therefore, there was an expectation amongst them that the monarchy would be benevolent and enlightened to introduce structural reforms, but it received divergent reactions.¹³

⁵ Pannalal Roy, *Tripurar Raj Amole Praja Bidroho* (in Bengali), Tripura Bani Prakashani, Agartala, 2008, p. 16

⁶ Dipak Kumar Choudhury, *Political Agent o Deshio Rajyo, Sanghat Sahajogita Unnoyon: Tripura 1971-1890* (in Bengali), Progressive Publishers, Kolkata, p. 26

⁷ Pannalal Roy, *Tripurar Rajnoitik Itihas* (in Bengali), Naba Chandana Prakashani, Agartala, 2014, pp. 30-34

⁸ Dipak Kumar Chaudhuri (ed.), *Administration Report of the Political Agency, Hill Tipperah (1878-79 to 1889-1890)*, Vol. II, Tripura State Tribal Cultural Research Institute and Museum, Government of Tripura, Agartala, 1996, p. 1

⁹ Dinesh Chandra Saha, *Adhunik Tripura* (in Bengali), Writer's Publications, Agartala, 2015, p. 43

¹⁰ Jagadish Gan Choudhury, *A Constitutional History of Tripura*, Parul Prakashani, Agartala, 2004, pp. 12-14

¹¹ Malaya Banerjee, 'State Formation Process of Tripura: The Economic Roots', *Proceedings of North East India History Association (NEIHA)*, Eighteenth Session, Agartala, 1998, p. 337

¹² Samir Kumar Das, 'Wrestling with my Shadow': The State and Immigrant Muslims in Contemporary West Bengal' in Abhijit Dasgupta, Masahiko Tagawa and Abul Barkat (ed.), *Minorities and the State: Changing Social and Political Landscape of Bengal*, Sage, New Delhi, 2011, p.49

¹³ Ranjit Kr. Dey, *Socio- Political Movements in India: A Historical Study of Tripura*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1998, 151

The demand for responsible form of government in Tripura was first heard in late 1920s. The concretization of political movement towards this was developed in two stages. Organized political activities flourished during the nationalist struggle and it finally graduated to a certain type of resistance movement, chiefly against the oppressive aspects of the princely rule and its administration.¹⁴ Revolutionary organizations like Anushilan and Jugantar groups contributed in emergence of so-called organised political movements in Tripura. The Swadeshi Movement, followed by Khilafat and Non-cooperation added further political awareness and change in the ideology towards the nationalist movements.¹⁵ It facilitated emergence of few semi-political and kind of reformist organizations such as Chhartra Sangha or Bharati Sangha (1927) under the aegis of the Anushilan Samiti. Consolidation of a modern political structure and the role of government in that culture began from 1930s.¹⁶ The Act of 1935 had changed equations of Indian States with the Raj, made it the 'Crown Representative'.¹⁷

However, consolidation of more organised political movements in Tripura began with the formation of the Tripura Rajya Gana Parishad in 1935. That was the first declared political organization in Tripura. It pointed out categorically in a resolution that ideologically the organisation 'would follow the line of Congress'.¹⁸ Notwithstanding the organisation was pioneered by some of the tribal leaders such as Sachindra Lal Singha, Hariganga Basak, Sukhamoy Sengupta, Umesh Lal Singha, they could not popularize the organization among the common tribal people. In 1939, with '20-point Charter of Demand', they conveyed public resentment against all feudal privileges.¹⁹ The Parishad demanded land reforms. Another premier political organisation, Rajya Janamangal Samiti formed in 1939. It had roots in progressive-left associations. They worked as 'appropriate political platform' within heterogeneous groups. The Samiti was formed by young communists such as Biren Datta, Bansi Thakur, Pravat Chandra Roy, Sukumar Bhowmik and Kriti Singha. They raised slogan to create responsible government under the aegis of the Maharaja with '10-point political' and '16-point social and economic' demands.²⁰ They identified 'indifference and unsympathetic attitude of the State officials that contributed to' miseries of tribals and non-tribals, and emphasised the crises of illiteracy, indebt condition and over taxation. Their primary agenda was development of awareness amongst the tribals to uplift their material

¹⁴ Nalini Ranjan Roychoudhury, *Tripura Through the Ages: A Short History from the Earliest Times to 1947 A.D.*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1983, p. 69

¹⁵ Tapas Debnath, *Amar Shahar Agartala: Itihas, Andolan Nagarayan* (in Bengali), Book World, Agartala, 2010, pp. 62-63

¹⁶ Ramaprasad Dutta, *Agartalar Itibrittitya* (in Bengali), Pounomi Prakashan, Agartala, 2006, p. 16

¹⁷ K. B. Jamatia, *Modernity in Tradition: A Historical Study of the Jamatia Tribe of Tripura*, Akshar Publications, Agartala, 2007, p. 206

¹⁸ Tripur Chandra Sen, *Tripura in Transition (1923-1957 AD)*, First Edition, Published by the Author, Agartala, 1970, p. 22

¹⁹ Hariganga Basak, *Tripura Rajye Praja Andolaner Gorar Katha, Samaj* (Weekly Newspaper in Bengali), August 15, 1956

²⁰ Benimadhab Majumder, *The Legislative Opposition in Tripura*, Tripura State Tribal Cultural Research Institute and Museum, Government of Tripura, Agartala, 1997, p. 9

condition.²¹ They experimented with two political tactics. One, they were not against the Maharaja, two, their chief propaganda and attack was against the state officials.

The Tripura Rajya Jana Siksha Samiti was the first ethno-nationalist outfit in Tripura, with the mission of tribal emancipation. It was established in 1945 by eleven educated youths under the leadership of Biren Datta. The other members were Sudhanya Deb Burma, Dasarath Deb Burma, Hemanta Deb Burma, Aghore Deb Burma and Nilmoni Deb Burma.²² The veteran leaders of the Jana Mangal Samiti started working among the tribals in the hilly areas primarily to enlighten them for their freedom from the world of superstition and various mystic beliefs. The boarding (for tribal students) attached with the Umakanta Academy in Agartala and Puratan or Natun boarding in Khowai became centres of their ideological base. Their two principal objectives were eradication of illiteracy and superstition and struggle against poverty.²³ The Siksha Samiti tried to question tribal's absolute allegiance and faith in the institutionalised kingship. They organized them against social injustice and feudal oppression of the Maharajas.²⁴ The Siksha Samiti was firm on their demand of compulsory participation of the tribals in education to uplift their society from the 'curse of illiteracy and poverty that have descended on the tribal society of Tripura during the thirteen hundred and fifty years of princely regime'.²⁵ D.A.W. Brown, the then Education Minister of Tripura was a patron of mass education. He helped the Samiti to establish 400 schools, out of which the state recognized as many as 300 schools, primarily founded in secluded hilly areas.²⁶

The Jana Siksha Movement acted as window in the lives of both rural tribals and non-tribals. It made them a political category, struggling within neglected landscapes, it laid foundation of democratic movements. They got hold over hills and plains by such initiatives.²⁷ Tribals became enlightened and alert about unfair demands, customary exploitations imposed by the Maharaja and his administration.²⁸ Apart from the Bengalis, the Reangs rose to revolt in 1942-43 under the leadership of Ratanmani Noatia against the royal agents.²⁹ Though the Royal Forces suppressed it ruthlessly, it however betrayed unsympathetic attitude of the rulers towards tribals. Communal organizations like Anjuman Islamia (1945), Tripura Rajya Moslem Praja Majlish (1946) and Hindu Mahasabha also became operational in the pre-Partition phase. The Bengali Hindu Sammelani, another faction in Hindu communal line merged with the Tripura branch

²¹ Mahadev Chakravarti (ed.), *Biren Datta o Tar Rachana Sangraha* (in Bengali), Naba Chandana Prakashani, Agartala, 2011, p. 23

²² Agartala, 2008, p. 15

²³ Nilmani Deb Burman, *Gadyasangraha: Janasiksha Andolan o Anyanya Prabandha* (in Bengali), Bhasa, Agartala, 2005, pp. 10-11

²⁴ *Jwala*, Part- 2, Vol. 4

²⁵ R. K. Debbarma, *Heroes and Histories: Making of Rival Geographies of Tripura*, NMMML Occasional Paper, History and Society, No. 34, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2013, p. 14

²⁶ *Tripura Administrative Reports, 1937-1946*, File No V/10/2109, IOR

²⁷ *Iapri*, July 11, 1945

²⁸ Notification No 176-C, *Tripura District Gazetteers*. File No. B 52/ S.9/ A.3, Adm. Deptt. (Unpublished), 1945, TSA

²⁹ Jagatjyoti Roy, *Bidroho Bibortan o Tripura* (in Bengali), Tripura Darpan, Agartala, 1999, p. 34

of Mahasabha in 1946.³⁰ The Tripura Rajya Praja Mandal appealed to the Administration for treatment of the riot stricken refugees as guests. The government agreed to be generous by extending help and support to the distressed.³¹

The Praja Mandal had demanded 'responsible government through elections' and it might introduced a broad-based political platform. They urged for democratic system, offered strong resistance against pro-Pakistani conspirators and opposed anti-Bengali propaganda of the Seng-Krak, the militant wing of Bir Bikram Tripura Sangha. They began to incite the tribals, introduced the cult of 'clenched fist' against Bengalis.³² They started publishing a bulletin, *Tripura Rajyer Katha* edited by Biren Datta.³³ Maharaja Bir Bikram and the Administration were frightened by such developments. He premeditated tri-polar politics by launching an organization called Tripur Sangha with help of the tribal Sardars. It emphasized on the ethnic solidarity.³⁴ The Maharaja tried to divide the communities on material interests. The tenure of this organization was short lived. It was eventually wiped out in fourteen months after the sudden death of Maharaja Bir Bikram on May 17, 1947, just before the Partition.

III. The Post-Partition Political landscape: Politics and Policies around the Refugees

The Partition had major impact on Tripura. The earlier equations changed with amalgamation of Samities and political parties. With the decision of merger of Tripura with India in 1949, 'the second phase of the unfortunate fate' of the tribals started for 'living in land of Bengalis'.³⁵ Along with the change of demographic profiles, the question of 'right over land' became a debated issue for designing further settlement plans for the Hindu middle or lower middle classes. The Ceiling Act introduced after 1949, land ownership of the royal family was identified.³⁶ However, all the categories of surplus lands were naturally left out from settlement plans for the refugees. Consequently, the crisis coupled with encroachment of tribal lands and purchasing it at high price by the Bengalis, both in urban and rural areas, aggravated the situation. The Communists demanded for 'fundamental social transformation of the agrarian structure' for refugee rehabilitation.³⁷ The Central Relief and Rehabilitation Department decided to encroach the reserved tribal lands. Some tribal clans were forcibly evicted too. The tribals were not even aware of the capture of two major avenues of economy by the Bengali refugees, i.e. professional recruitments and hold over forestlands. The gravity of the crises went unidentified for long time. The tribals were confined within their closed society, with definite social values and their traditional beliefs.

³⁰ 'Tripura Bengali Hindu Sammelani', A Leaflet, 18 Chaitra 1356 T. E. (1946), Manimaya Deb Burma, 'Tripura Bengali Hindu Sammelani', *Dainik Sambad*, February 2, 1978

³¹ Biren Dutta, *Nirbachito Rachona* (in Bengali), Gana Sahitya Prakashan, Agartala, 1993, p. 45

³² Bijan Mahanta, *Tripura in the Light of Socio-Political Movements since 1945*, Progressive Publishers, Kolkata, 2004, pp. 31-32

³³ Biren Datta, 'Prajari Dabi' (in Bengali), *Dainik Sambad*, December 13, 1977

³⁴ Kamal Roy Choudhury, 'Jana Siksha Andolan' in *Gomati Quarterly* (in Bengali), Vol. 79, Agartala, 1978

³⁵ Sudhanya Deb Burma, *Hakuch Khurich* (in *Kak-barok*) *Paharer Kole* (Bengali translation), Akshar Publication, Agartala, 2004, pp. 165-166

³⁶ Pannalal Roy, *Tripurar Bharatbhukti o Chakla Roshanabad*, Tripura Darpan, Agartala, 2003, p. 70

³⁷ *Tripurar Katha* (in Bengali), No. 1, March 1951

Like West Bengal and Assam, the refugees were initially dependent on the Congress, as it had consented to Partition, and was, therefore, considered responsible for the emergence of a category called 'refugees'.³⁸ The ruling Congress government at the Centre and the state were desperate to keep their reputation. The Congress Udbastu Sahajya Samiti was created to look after issues on refugees. The veteran leftist leaders working in hills were determined to resist the *mahajan*-police-military nexus related to land issues, and repression on tribals. They sought to organise the tribal and non-tribals (refugees) to exercise 'democratic rights' in hills and plains of Tripura.³⁹ The Tripura Rajya Mukti Parishad came into being at this crucial juncture. Its success was derived from the trust acquired by activists of the Jana Siksha Samiti.⁴⁰ The Mukti Parishad organized a procession in Agartala on August 15, 1948 and carried out armed struggle against the Congress government. The state government declared Martial Law in entire hills to stamp out the opposition in 1949.⁴¹ The imposition of the military rule led to Golaghati carnage (1949) in Padmabil and Champa-haor. The death of 6 tribals made the domiciles apprehensive about the Bengalis, they lost faith in the Congress. In order to defy atrocities, a strong volunteer crop and military organ named the 'Shanti Sena Bahini' was formed.⁴² It kept close watch on the feudal oppression and social evil. Even anti-famine committee was established during the temporary periods of crisis.

The Tripura Rajya Mukti Parishad was renamed as Gana Mukti Parishad in 1950. It started mobilization to introduce democracy by conducting election and making ministers through the vote of the citizens. It started running parallel government in a portion of hills, inhabited by few lakhs of tribal *jhumias* and Bengali refugees. The Government had taken measures against 'anti-state' activities of the Communists, irrespective of the initiatives of the Gana Mukti Parishad for working uniformly on refugee and tribal fronts. But resentments among the communities started from early 1950s. The policy makers were concerned for the cause of the Bengali refugees.⁴³ While getting liquid cash was decisive for the poverty-ridden tribals, government distributed regular cash among the refugees. With dissolution of kingship, when the Princely State of Tripura had joined Indian Union in 1949, huge number of Bengali government servants lost their jobs. Some professionally qualified Bengali refugees made job market more vulnerable and competitive.

The Congress was working for the refugees essentially on vote-bank politics, while the Communists voiced for all the downtrodden classes including the refugees and tribals,

³⁸ Debaprasad Sengupta, *Tripurar Ganaandolan o Communist Partyr Itikatha* (in Bengali), Tripura Darpan, Agartala, 1991, pp. 24-25

³⁹ *Barta*, August 4, 1949

⁴⁰ *Tripurar Katha*, An Essay by Dasharath Deb Burma, 3rd Year, 2nd Issue, Agartala, May 25, 1953

⁴¹ Saroj Chanda (ed.), *Two Unpublished Documents of the Party in the Period of its Formation* (in Bengali), Tripura Darpan, Agartala, 1983, p. 11

⁴² BimanDhar, *Tripurae Communist Party: Prekhit Golaghati Bidroho* (in Bengali), Poulomi Prakashan, Agartala, 2012, p. Introduction, p.6

⁴³ Bhismodeb Bhattacharyya, *Sekaler Agartala* (in Bengali), Published by the Author, Agartala, 1989, p. 12

demanding for introduction of schemes for both refugees and tribals.⁴⁴In 1950, 'The condition of the refugees stationed at Agartala was turning from bad to worse. One refugee committed suicide on the 10th July 1950 in Durgabari Camp near the Maharaja Palace. It was learnt that the deceased could not secure food or money from the Relief Officer. Next day, another refugee was reported to have died as a result of starvation at Maharajganj Camp'.⁴⁵They realized the need to organize themselves under political parties, as the administration was not providing with adequate doles or getting essentials from the relief office. Organizations like Purbabanga Sankhalaghu Kalyan Samiti (left) and Congress Udbastu Sahajya Samiti had strong political affiliations. But, the Bastutyagi Janakalyan Samiti, Tripura Rajya Nath Samiti or Tripura Rudrapal Samity were just working for refugee causes. A branch of the East Bengal Relief Committee established in Agartala. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee first talked about amalgamation of these groups, advised to fight through a common political platform.⁴⁶

Accordingly, Tripura Central Relief and Rehabilitation Association was formed and it raised 18 demands, including voting rights of the migrants.⁴⁷ It organized rallies and introduced hunger strikes and *satyagraha* with demands of schemes for better living and speedy resettlement procedure. The Chief Minister Sachindralal Singh failed to foresee the danger of placing the land hungry peasants belonging to relatively advanced Bengalis in direct confrontation with backward *jhumias*.⁴⁸ The state government provided them with lands, along with other facilities like ration cards at Mandai, Takarjala, Jampujala, Khawai and Kalyanpur in West Tripura.⁴⁹ Most of the refugee colonies were built in tribal lands, surrounded by tribal villages, as per the recommendation from the state government. The government had taken projects to grow cash crops in the hilly regions⁵⁰ and consequently, the Tribals lost their natural rights over forests. After the formation of democratic government in Tripura, the administration headed by the Congress got involved in refugee rehabilitation on a war footing. They were extra cautious as the General Election of 1952 was ahead.⁵¹ However, the leftists were successful in achieving its primary goal in the first General Election of 1952. Biren Dutta and Dasharath Deb were elected as representatives' and the Members of Parliament, when they were in underground.⁵² A National Conference was held in 1952 when Nehru visited Tripura for discussing the problems of scheduled castes and tribes, after

⁴⁴ Suchintya Bhattachayya, *Genesis of Tribal Extremism in Tripura*, Gian Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991, pp. 130-131

⁴⁵ Report of the Assistant Central Intelligence Officer, Tripura State, to the Joint Secretary, Rehabilitation Department, Government of India. File No. 20-R/50 II (Secret), Rehabilitation Branch, Ministry of States, NAI

⁴⁶ *Janakalyan*, July 26, 1950

⁴⁷ *A Leaflet*, signed by Nibaran Chandra Ghosh, President, Tripura Central Refugee and Rehabilitation Organization, and Convener, All Tripura Refugee Convention, January 4, 1951

⁴⁸ File No. F. 21(19)- PD/56, Police Deptt. Annexure A, TSA

⁴⁹ Manas Paul, *The Eye Witness: Tales from Tripura's Ethnic Conflict*, Lancer, New Delhi-Frankfurt, 2009, p. 33

⁵⁰ File No. F. A, Year- 1950, Political Deptt. TSA

⁵¹ Suchintya Bhattachayya, *Genesis of Tribal Extremism in Tripura*, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 130-131

⁵² Dasharath Deb, *Mukti Parishader Itikatha*, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 17-18

the Congress was defeated in that Election.⁵³ Dasharath Deb emphatically stated ‘Some area or areas of Tripura shall have to be set aside for the tribal alone and no other persons belonging to non-tribal communities should be allowed to settle there’.⁵⁴ He advocated for an Advisory Board on behalf of the Gana Mukti Parishad for settlement of refugees in those areas, but with members of all political organizations for issuing an ordinance. The Parishad advised to approach different political organizations like Communist Party, Kisan Samitis, Ganatantrik Sangha and Praja Socialist Party to represent this Advisory Board.⁵⁵

The tribal experience of having refugees in their lands was naturally a bit complex. The whole idea of enduring peaceful life suddenly confronted with land-hungry Bengali refugees.⁵⁶ The Ministry of States stated about pitiable condition of tribals in South Charilam and Khas Brajapur, Bishalgarh in 1953 that ‘It will be noticed that there is some trouble over the requisition of cultivable land by Government for the purpose of rehabilitating the displaced persons, with the result that the rightful owners are being deprived of the land which is the only means of livelihood’.⁵⁷ The migration of refugees pushed the tribals in the edge. The price of daily necessities like salt and dried fish sky rocketed. The refugees were grabbing plain lands and targeting the hills. The hilly terrain, which was the tribal territory by birth, was the first choice of the rehabilitation department for providing lands to the refugees under various schemes proposed by the Centre.⁵⁸

The hilly areas were considered as the sole source of survival and economic base of the tribals. With the building up of refugee colonies, the concept of ‘private property’ first emerged in ‘Hill Tripura’.⁵⁹ It led to the curtailing of the complete freedom of choosing portions of hills for *jhum* cultivations by the tribals.⁶⁰ The scientific measures taken by the state government to protect the environment and logical restrictions imposed on the tribals to give up *jhum*, posed a challenge to tribal entity for the first time. The imposition of ban on *jhum* was the final blow on their life and culture. The tribals lost their identity and romanticism of life around it. They started agitating against tribal land transfer and insisted that the Congress Government not to allow any more migration

⁵³ Krishna Bandyopadhyay (ed.), *Abiram Raktapat Tripuranarir Sangram* (in Bengali), Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata, 2005, p. 3

⁵⁴ ‘Memorandum Submitted to the Eighth Finance Commission by Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council’, 1960, Agartala, p. 1

⁵⁵ File No. 22 (240)- PA/ 53, Political A Section, Ministry of States, NAI

⁵⁶ The government continuously held it up. File No. F. 8(15)-GA/53, Home- General Administration Department, TSA

⁵⁷ File No. 49 (2)- P.P & R (53), P.P.R Section, Ministry of States, NAI

⁵⁸ Bikach Kumar Choudhury, *Genesis of Chakma Movement (1772-1989): Historical Background*, Agartala, Tripura Darpan, 1991, p. 10

⁵⁹ Interview with Bodhrong Deb Burma, a *Kok-barok* teacher by profession, taken in Agartala on 30 December 2012

⁶⁰ Malabika Das Gupta, ‘The Impact of militancy on the Economy of the *Jhumias* of the Northeast: A Study of Tripura’ in Abu Naser Saied Ahmed (ed.), *National Security Issues: Northeast India Perspective*, Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 166-167

to Tripura from 1954.⁶¹The impact of such changes in demographic profile could be clearly visible in the city of Agartala. Anjali Barman, a refugee herself remarked, 'In early 1950s, Krishnanagar was full of houses owned by the tribals and later, it mostly occupied by the Bengalis'⁶²

The Gana Mukti Parishad had affirmed, 'in the present scramble of land, it is not possible for the tribals, particularly for tribal *jhumias* to secure land'.⁶³ So, in the areas inhabited by tribal people, all khas lands should be reserved for rehabilitation of tribals. The Communists had accordingly broadened their appeal, earned conviction of the masses by supporting rehabilitation of the *jhumias* along the line of the Bengali refugees, respectively.⁶⁴The Mukti Parishad demanded establishment of industry, commerce and agricultural cooperatives in Tripura in the conference of Sanjukta Bastuhara Parishad in 1953, for providing job to both the refugees and tribals.⁶⁵Gobind Ballav Panth, the Union Home Minister, stated in the Parliament in 1955 that the resettlement of refugees had reached a 'saturation point' and it would not be advisable to rehabilitate additional people in Tripura.⁶⁶⁶⁷The government of Tripura was firm to carry on the decision of the Centre and the Rehabilitation Department closed down its branch office in Agartala. They 'refused to accept the co-operation of Tripura Ganatantrik Samiti in providing refugee relief, inauguration of schools and industrial centers'.⁶⁸ The refugees started hunger strike in Durgabari under the leadership of Dasharath Deb, in which Bisymbor Nomo Das, a caste refugee died. The situation became so volatile that Indira Gandhi was compelled to visit Tripura for inspecting the condition of the refugees.⁶⁹

These agitations compelled the government to resettle the migrants at Nalkata in Kailashahar (North Tripura), Amtoli and Arundhatinagar (outskirts of Agartala). But, these incidents led the tribals to think that the refugees were the 'pet sons of the government' who were getting 'at least rupees one thousand a month'.⁷⁰ The demographic expansion and idyllic existence of tribals in a tradition-bound backward society were not the only factors responsible for their impoverishment. Exploitation by non- tribals and well off tribal families towards the poor tribals was significant. There was always a wide gap between what the tribal families were earning and how much they needed

⁶¹ Biman Dhar, *Onno Manus Onna Rajniti* (in Bengali), Tripura Darpan, Agartala, 2010, pp. 30-31

⁶² Such stories of exploitation of the uneducated and simple tribals can hear everywhere in Tripura. Quoted in Ritonkar Mukhopadhyay, 'OnyaAk Udbastu Upakhyan', in Sudipta Bandyapadhyay (ed.), *Charbaka* (in Bengali), Popular Culture- 3, Vol. 2, Issue. 3, 2015, p. 20

⁶³ Suchintya Bhattachayya, 'Genesis of Tribal Extremism', *Op. Cit.*, p. 131

⁶⁴ Narendra Chandra Debburma, Goutami Roy Chiran, Kumud Kundu Choudhry (ed.), *Tripurar Ganatantrik Andolonar Agrapathik: Prabhat Raer Rachana Sangraha o Smritikatha* (in Bengali), Agartala, 2002, p. 343

⁶⁵ BijanMahanta, 'Tripura in the Light of Socio-Political Movements', *Op. Cit.*, pp. 84-85

⁶⁶ Manas Paul, 'The Eye Witness', *Op. Cit.*, p. 30

⁶⁷ *Jagaran*, August 10, 1958

⁶⁸ File No. 22 (48)- PA/ 53, Political A Section, Ministry of States, NAI

⁶⁹ Dinesh Chandra Saha, *Tripurae Gana Andolonar Bichitra Dhara* (in Bengali), Writers Publication, Agartala, 2009, pp. 119-120

⁷⁰ Nripen Ckkrabarty, *Longtorai Amar Ghor* (in Bengali), Tripura Darpan, Agartala, 1996, pp. 6-7

to survive.⁷¹ Small sizes of their holdings, lack of irrigation and institutional credit facilities, paucity of non-farm job opportunities at the localities and unwillingness to adopt new means, ways of living increased their indebtedness. They had a tendency of taking money from moneylenders by mortgaging a piece of land and household. If the creditor did not possess anything, he had to render labour for the moneylender who would decide the duration of the period.⁷²

Some Bengali refugees started money lending business, land grabbing and practicing unfair means in trading with their tribal neighbours.⁷³ Thus, there was an unequal economic competition with the culturally advanced non-tribals, who later formed a middle class in Tripura. It increased their alienation from large tracts of land.⁷⁴ The government started conducting rehabilitation of the *jhumias* and refugees with equal precedence by then. But, crash programmes like allotting of lands; giving bullocks, milch cows, poultry birds, other subsidies were not feasible solutions for them. They had to be economically rehabilitated within their own ways of living, their geo-physical and psychic framework. The tribals were gladly accepted the majoritarian presence of the Bengali refugees in their land, they tolerated their dominance in cultural issues and in other privileged sectors, like education and administrative jobs in Tripura.

IV. Conflict of Interests between the Communities

As compulsions of electoral politics and party system, the indigenous tribals remained in the receiving end. However, they became more marginalized and their population was decreasing in every decade.⁷⁵ In 1921, percentage of total tribal population was 54.7, in 1941 it was 50.1, in 1961 it was 31.5 and in 1971 it was 28.9.⁷⁶ The official figures showed total 609,998 Bengalis migrated to Tripura in between 1947-1971, who had taken financial assistance from both the governments.⁷⁷ During the seventy-year period, 1901-1971, while the percentage increase in population for India as a whole was 129.6, the ratio for the north eastern India in general and Tripura in particular was 358.4 and 797.9 respectively.⁷⁸ The Townsman first encroached the villages and then the *jhum* lands of the hills.

Some extremist tribal organizations became vocal in those issues. From late 1950s, Tripuri identity politics took definite shape marked by ideological breaks from earlier

⁷¹ O. S. Adhikari, *The Problem of Indebtedness among the Tribals in Sadar Sub- Division of Tripura*, Directorate of Research, Department of Welfare for Schedule Tribes, Government of Tripura, Agartala, 1982, pp. 5-6

⁷² Interview with Nityananda Das, a school teacher by profession, taken on 29.12.2013 in Agartala, Tripura

⁷³ *Chiniha*, May 7, 1952

⁷⁴ B.P. Singh, 'North-East India: Demography, Culture and Identity Crisis' in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1987, p. 265

⁷⁵ *Boiri* (article in Bengali), Agartala, Sharodia Sankhya 1993, p. 6

⁷⁶ S. B. Saha, Socio-Economic Survey of the Noatia Tribes, Government of Tripura, Agartala, p. 3

⁷⁷ Subir Bhaumik, 'India's Northeast: Nobody's People in No-Man's Land' in Paula Banerjee, Sabyasachi Basu Roy Chaudhury, Samir Kumar Das (ed.), *Internal Displacement in South Asia: The Relevance of the UN's Guiding Principles*, Sage, New Delhi, 2005, p. 146

⁷⁸ J. P. Sinha, *Human Resources of North Eastern India*, 1982, pp. 59-60

discourses. Tripur Sangha Paharia Union, Adivasi Samiti and Tripura Rajya Adibasi Sangha started opposing Bengali dominance in the job market and state administration on ideological ground. In 1954, all these groups were merged to form Adivasi Sansad and represented modern political construction of Bengali as 'other' and 'outsider'.⁷⁹ A broad based common platform for the tribals of northeast India named Eastern Indian Tribal Union was established in 1957. They voiced that the refugee rehabilitation in Tripura has been standing in the way of tribal rehabilitation in the state, and hence no unqualified support to the refugee rehabilitation in Tripura was ensured from them.⁸⁰

Introduction of new acts and rules became necessary to check further alienation and displacement of tribals, as well as the effort to bring back illegally transferred lands. The Dhebar Commission Report of 1960 suggested formation of tribal development blocs in tribal compact areas as an 'experiment' and stated, 'The influx of displaced persons from Pakistan to Tripura has been enormous and has upset the local economy. It has greatly affected the tribals and has made the tribal problem acute. The right of the tribals in land should be safeguarded'.⁸¹ However, the Government of India enacted the Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act in 1960.⁸² The TLR & LR Act based on the primary understanding that unless the land ownership of the tribals ensured and protected by law, illegal transfer of their land to the non-tribals would not be stopped. Yet, alienation of indigenous population could not be checked effectively and permanently. The Act barred transfer of land from a tribal owner, under the section 187.⁸³ It was a bold step to protect tribal interests from government's front, yet 'benami' transfer and sale of lands continued.

With the enactment of Government of Union Territories Act, 1963, the Legislative Assembly was constituted in Tripura. It was empowered to make laws under section 18.⁸⁴ The Upajati Gana Mukti Parishad, which renamed again in 1964 from Gana Mukti Parishad, was the only party working to strengthen the tribal base and for their relevant rights.⁸⁵ This new identity politics was represented by three new political formations, the Tripura Upajati Jubo Samity (TUJS, a political party), the Tribal Student Formation (TSF, now Twipra Student Federation), and the Tripura National Volunteer (TNV, an underground group). Unlike previous narratives of Manikya rule as 'feudalistic', the past (prior to merger with India) was imagined as 'glorious'. TUJS was born with a bang in 1967 under the leadership of Sonacharan Debbarma.⁸⁶ TUJS was born apparently as a student organization, but it gradually entered into the political arena of

⁷⁹ Aribam Indubala Devi, *Amazing North East: Tripura*, Vij Books, New Delhi, 2010, p. 179

⁸⁰ Resolutions and Report of the 5th Central Conference of the GMP (unpublished in Bengali), 1960

⁸¹ N. C. Deb Barma, *History of the Land System & Land Management in Tripura (1872-2000 AD)*, Published by the Author, Agartala, 2005, p. 57

⁸² File No. 6/5/69 UTL, UTL Section, Ministry of Home Affairs, NAI

⁸³ The Rules were made under notification no. 74 (14)-Rev/ 60, dated the 13th April 1961, section 197. File No. 19/51/61- Judl. II, Judl. II Section, Ministry of Home Affairs, NAI

⁸⁴ File No. 6/5/69 UTL, UTL Section, Ministry of Home Affairs, NAI

⁸⁵ B.G. Verghese, *India's Northeast Resurgent: Ethnicity, Insurgency, Governance, Development*, Konark Publishing House, New Delhi, 1996, p. 169

⁸⁶ Manas Paul, 'The Eye Witness', *Op. Cit.*, p. 56

the state. It first carried out a long and sustained campaign, focused on decrease of tribal population from 70 to 30 percent.⁸⁷

The TUJS had support to the agenda of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] in the very first phase. Initially the party was also keen to portray the TUJS as its youth wing. But, looking at their further aims and ideas, Dasharath Deb felt such an organization might look 'communal', which would have negative impact on the 'democratic movement' initiated by the CPI(M).⁸⁸ The TUJS demanded active participation of tribals in the administration, self-management and adequate control over their own affairs under the Autonomous District Council (ADC) for the tribals, extension of the Inner Line Regulations and restoration of alienated tribal land under TLR & LR Act, 1960.⁸⁹ The Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) had always targeted the Bengali community, not the state. Prior to TNV, the *Seng-krak* (Clenched Fist) surfaced as tribal insurgent group in 1967. It always maintained close links with the Mizo National Front (MNF).⁹⁰

By 1969, TUJS floated a force of armed volunteers *Tripura Sena* and Bijoy Kumar Hrangkhawl was selected as the chief of this new outfit. Considering the sensitive nature of inter-community relations between Bengalis and tribals, particularly after the demographic change after the Liberation War of 1971, it demanded coverage of the Sixth Schedule, as it had enough potential to spark of the explosion. CPI(M)'s support to their demand evoked adverse reaction from the Bengalis. They perceived it as a threat to their land holdings and other rights. The *Amra Bangali*, a communal outfit of the non-tribals and political arm of the *Ananda Marg* had launched a counter campaign 'to protect the Bengalis' right opposing the ADC. The base of TUJS got stronger with their decision to contest in the Election of 1972.⁹¹ They demanded ADC for tribals under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution.⁹² Right from 1974, they demanded setting up of schools under the banner of Tripura Tribal Linguistic Enterprise. They demanded restoration of *Kokbarok* as one of the official languages, and introduction of *Kokbarok* as medium of instruction for tribal students in Roman scripts.

V. Conclusion

In the absence of expansion of non- agricultural job opportunities in Tripura, pressure on the limited land had increased. In 1971, the percentage of agricultural workers to total workers in the state was 74.4 percent. Hence, the non-agricultural employment opportunities required expanding as an alternative. Otherwise, demographic upsurge due to natural increase and influx of immigrants, would effect as overcrowding on land. The non-tribals always tried coming out from lower economic position. They

⁸⁷ Saroj Chanda, *Tripura Ugro Jatiyotabader Birudhye* (article in Bengali), Tripura Darpan, Sharodia Sankhya, 1988, p. 49

⁸⁸ B.G. Verghese, 'India's Northeast Resurgent' *Op. Cit.*, p. 172

⁸⁹ File No. 6/5/69 UTL, UTL Section, Ministry of Home Affairs, NAI

⁹⁰ N. K. Das, 'Identity Politics and Social Exclusion', *Op. Cit.*, p. 1

⁹¹ Manas Paul, 'The Eye Witness', *Op. Cit.*, p. 63

⁹² Suchintya Bhattachayya, 'Genesis of Tribal Extremism in Tripura', *Op. Cit.*, p. 134

indeed tried their luck in new ventures, in which tribals were reluctant. So, they became the natural victims of the demographic pressure on land.⁹³ According to the census of 1971, *Kokborak* was the mother tongue of 360,654 tribals, which was total 79.8 percent of the total tribal population consisted of eighteen tribes and sub-tribes of the state.⁹⁴

The emergence of Bangladesh in 1971 did not fetch any positive change in the fate of the indigenous ethnic communities of Chittagong Hill Tracts. From 1971, the Chakmas of CHT claimed separate homeland for them.⁹⁵ The government supported the ideology of Bengali nationalism rendered patronage and rapid growth of the 'outsider' Bengali settlement in CHT, especially during the reign of General Zia-ur-Rehman and General Ershad.⁹⁶ The Bengali Muslims were systematically depriving the Chakmas by transferring lands and submerging. The first phase of migration of these refugees had started from early 1970s, especially after the War of Liberation.⁹⁷ The Central government provided them with shelter in Tripura and arranged temporary relief, but question of rehabilitation was non-existent.⁹⁸

Despite the regular grants or aid from the Centre, the state started considering the Chakma refugees as their burden.⁹⁹ Their presence had created demographic problem and environmental concerns in South Tripura. The steady rise in birth rate within these camps threatened and strained the state resources.¹⁰⁰ The area surrounding the refugee camps underwent deforestation and the local people faced an acute shortage of natural resources like firewood, wild vegetables, bamboo shoots, and wild potatoes, which constituted primary source of their livelihood.¹⁰¹ Moreover, the Government of India had spent Rs. 13.5 million on the refugees, which became a reason of discontent among the local tribals, as they felt marginalized and harboured resentment for treating those tribal refugees as privileged. It generated conflicts of interest between the local and refugees. Another 55,000 Chakmas entered Tripura as refugees.¹⁰² TUJS based on Amarpur and Subroom sub-divisions, agitated regarding the issue of staying on of these Chakma refugees from the neighbouring CHT. They demanded that the Chakmas should be shifted to other states of India.

⁹³ *Religious Demography of India*, A. P. Joshi, M. D. Srinivas, J. K. Bajaj, Centre for Policy studies, Chennai, 2005, p. 39

⁹⁴ S.R. Bhattacharjee, *Tribal Insurgency in Tripura: A Study in Exploration of Causes*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1989, p. 31

⁹⁵ *The Chakma Profile*, Government of Tripura, Agartala, 1999, p. 18

⁹⁶ Chinmoy Mutsuddhi, *Ashanta Parbotya Chattagram O Ananya Prasanga* (in Bengali), Dhaka, Agami Prakashani, 1992, pp. 14-15

⁹⁷ Bikach Kumar Choudhury, *Genesis of Chakma Movement (1772-1989): Historical Background*, Agartala, Tripura Darpan, 1991, p. 10

⁹⁸ Chandan Nandy, 'Unwanted Migrants', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 28, No. 40, 1993, p. 2102

⁹⁹ *The Daiik Sambad* (a local Bengali daily), January 25, 1990

¹⁰⁰ Chandrika Basu Majumder, *Genesis of Chakma Movement in Chittagong Hill Tracts*, Kolkata, Progressive Publishers, 2003, p. 93

¹⁰¹ *Annual Report of Voluntary Health Association of Tripura*, Agartala, Tripura, 1996

¹⁰² Sajal Nag, 'Whose Nation is it Anyway: Nation Building and Displacement in Indian Sub-continent' in C. Joshua (ed.), *Dimensions of Displaced People in North-East India*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2002, p. 35

The entire decade of 1970s experienced a diverse identity politics in Tripura marked by radically polarized confrontations between the state and ethno-nationalist fronts. The communal conflicts and underlying threat perception of both tribal and non-tribal population reached its nadir in 1977 election results. With the CPI(M) led Left Front in power, demand for ADC got an impetus and created an environment of expectation among the tribals. They, however, urged 'expulsion of the foreigners (Bengalis) who had come to the state since October 15, 1949, the day Tripura joined the Indian Union' as a solution.¹⁰³ This demand for deportation of 'foreigners', implementation of Sixth Schedule (District Council) led to the ethnic riots of 1980 between Bengalis and domicile tribals. The communal riot split the state bureaucracy and police, also the Communist party along ethnic lines. Thus, as the politics continued to play on sharply ethnic lines, the communal divide was widening fast.

Like other major refugee absorbent states, the Bengali refugees never felt as 'rejected populace' or treated as 'uncalled-for immigrants' officially in Tripura. Therefore, they had not faced firm resentment for resettlement. Bimal Sinha in his novel *Titastheke Tripura* rather portrayed complexities in the mentalities of the refugees. They tried to settle down in similar geographical locations so that they could recreate the essence, which they left in their *desh*. The Koibortyas had chosen a riverbank for resettlement, whereas some purchased lands in the border villages of Charipara, Gojaria, Joypur, Shanmura, Lonkamura, Kalikapur. Their argument was, though they left the country, they would be in touch with the land from these areas. But, with the colossal effect of the Bengali immigration and strong impact of their culture, the tribals gradually forgot their own language and culture. In fact, the urban tribal population hardly could converse in *Kokborok* or *Tipra* language.

¹⁰³ Malabika Das Gupta, 'Refugee Influx' in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 21, No. 44/45, November 1-8, 1986, p. 1665

Conceptual Framework for Comprehending Crimes of 'Honour' in India: Empirical Evidences from Haryana

Neelam Jain*

Abstract

While examining the various nuances of the existing discourse on the crimes of 'honour' or 'honour crimes,' the study provides a comprehensive understanding of violence by throwing light on multiple actors, processes, forms and dimensions of such violence in India. It emphasises the need of examining structural and contextual nature of such violence; particularly the underlying calculus of political economy which explains the rationale behind growing anxieties to control female sexuality and, the power dynamics among various communities which are involved in such violence. Based on extensive and in-depth case studies of Haryana, such analyses unfold the complicity and contestation of community and state in claiming authenticity in controlling sexualities of its constituent members.

I. Introduction

Over the past few decades, there is a riveting ongoing debate on the issue of crimes of 'honour', which has been addressed by human rights activists, leaders of community organisations and religious institutions, academicians, policy makers and stakeholders of various international organisations. This form of violence is largely seen as yet another manifestation of patriarchal violence that stems from violation of 'customs', 'norms' or 'traditions' or 'honour' code of a particular community or locality. The discursive analysis of such violence has constantly evolved to include within its fold widening definition of the crime as well as different actors who are involved in the commitment of such crime.

The first part of this paper examines the existing discourse of crimes of 'honour' in the international context and in the particular case of India and argues how the existing discourse is not sufficient for comprehensive analysis of such violence in India. The

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second part of the paper proceeds to provide conceptual framework while drawing evidences from Haryana to comprehend the various nuances of the family and community violence against individuals for policing marriages.

II. Crimes of 'Honour' in the International Context

Though, there is no consensus among scholars about the meaning of the term crimes of 'honour', it is primarily seen as a manifestation of violence against women and largely discussed from the perspective of violation of human rights. The United Nations bodies concerned with the issue of human rights especially the *Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women* and the *Commission of Human Rights* have played a significant role in bringing the issue of crimes of 'honour' on the international stage and categorising it as a violation of human rights of women. The primary aim of such categorisation was to assign responsibility to the member states to address these issues within their respective territory though it was conceived to occur in the familial realm as a result of violation of customs or traditions or for 'inappropriate' sexual conduct by women. Though, most of the scholars perceive 'crimes of honour' or 'honour killings' as violence perpetrated by blood relatives, mainly male family members, for women's engagement in sexual practices before and outside marriage (Abu Odeh, 1997: 141; Khafagy, 2005:1), however, increasingly scholars have started recognising extended range of perpetrators including sexual intimates and husbands. Besides, over the time, the meaning of violation of 'family honour' or 'conjugal honour' has widened to include extensive range of acts like 'inappropriate' dressing, falling in love with 'inappropriate' person, rape, divorce and other forms of 'feminine' behavior informed by the community custom or tradition. Murder, assault, confinement or imprisonment of women and forced marriage are generally regarded as various forms of 'crimes of honour'. Despite such recognition of different forms and perpetrators of violence, the terms 'crime of honour' or 'honour killing' emphasise the motivation (claimed or presumed) or description articulated by the perpetrators behind the violence rather than highlighting the role of perpetrators or the various facets of violent act itself. This imparts a deep sense of uneasiness among feminists and right activists who have been waging a struggle to end such violence. As widely acknowledged by such groups, the idea of embodiment of the honour of men by women and supposed motivation for violation of such patriarchal code is purposefully designed to mask or justify such violence. Feminists have been continually evolving better terminologies to imbibe victim's perspective into this form of violence such as 'custodial violence' (Chakravarty, 2006:309) or femicide as continuum of sexual violence (Radford, 1992:4). The scholars discomfort also stems from the fact that the western agenda of elimination of violence associated such 'crimes of honour' with the 'traditional' or 'underdeveloped' societies of the east by identifying it as unique features of the Islamic or the Asian culture. Particularly, in the context of existence of such violence among the people of the Diaspora communities in the Western immigrant receiving countries like Netherland, Belgium, Sweden, France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Britain and Canada, the documentation and combating strategy of such violence has thrown light on various positions among scholars and policy makers including stigmatisation, culture blind

gender approach and contextual specificity, especially in regard to the role of community in perpetration of such violence.

The discursive analysis of the role of the state with regard to 'honour crimes' primarily underlines the legal aspects of such crimes by discussing the existing gender discriminatory aspects of criminal law, court practices and emphasising the need to evolve specific laws to address the crime. Scholars like Alison Symington highlight how the issue of dual citizenship creates both space and impediment in the cases of abduction and forced marriage of British -Asian woman (Symington, 2006). Such analysis of legal aspects also unfolds relationship and differences between 'crimes of honour' and 'crimes of passion'. The comparative analysis of legal provisions of different countries which provide scope of reduction of culpability in cases of loss of 'self control' following the 'sudden provocation' by the victims, points to the patriarchal logic of tolerance for murder of women in particular circumstances. Abu-Odeh compares the '*fit of fury*' mitigation in Arab Penal Codes in the cases of crimes of honour with the practices of US courts of the killing of women in the 'heat of passion' for sexual or intimate reasons to argue that how such defense provisions are further circumscribing the rights and security of lives of women. The difference between crimes of 'honour' and 'crimes of passion' is that in the first category blood relatives of a woman perpetrate violence against her and in the latter case sexual intimate or husband inflict violence. In most countries, where such legal provisions of partial defense of a murder in a 'sudden spurt of anger' and 'sexual provocation' exist, both the blood and conjugal relatives defend their case by pointing to such mitigating circumstance to get lesser punishment (Abu-Odeh, 1997 and 2000, Pervizat, 2006). Scholars also point to the impact of colonial laws in the post colonial countries like Pakistan and existence of legal pluralism within the state which complicates the issue of citizenship rights of women (Warraich, 2006).

III. 'Crimes of Honour' in India

In the Indian context, most of the scholarly analyses and media debate on the issue of crimes of 'honour' revolves around violence against women perpetrated by family and community members surrounding assertion of choice in selection of marriage or sexual partner. Mostly, such violence is explained in terms of violation of dominant customs and traditions of society. Along with the caste based violence, communal mobilisation has led both ideological and organizational moves to counter relationship between couples courting and marrying across communities. The families, communities and the state, steeped in a patriarchal mindset, often collaborate in regulating women's sexuality and reproduction related matters. This regulation incurs different kinds of violence and violation of rights of women not only in the time of collective violence like war and riots but also in the ordinary and everyday realm. Moral policing and organized violence against couples in the public places, on the eve of Valentines' Day, instigation of family members against imminent marriage of couples of different faith are such routine form of violence. Besides, organised campaigns like love jihad is not only directed at communalising love and marriages through propagating suspicion and hatred among

different religious communities but also seriously challenging the rights of individuals, particularly the freedom of woman to assert her sexuality and choice in those matters.

Scholars have analysed the phenomenon of community violence against couples by underlining the importance of maintenance of the boundaries of caste, class, religion and other structures. In this context, Uma Chakravarty argues that the idea that women are the sexual properties of their communities which mobilizes family and community to control women's sexuality, often by use of violence have been deeply internalised. She analyses both caste violence and violence perpetrated by the Hindu Right organisations who oppose relationship between couples marrying or courting across communities (Chakravarty, 2006). Besides, Manderson and Bennet have pointed out how the justification of violence against women and reinforcement of the hegemonic systems of gender inequality is linked to the locally constructed concept of honour, shame and sexual purity of women (Manderson & Bennet, 2003). In the context of violent acts against couples of India, it is argued that there is collaboration and continuum between family killings and killings by caste organizations. Kumkum Sangari explains these instances of violence as motivated by the desire of maintenance of social status, caste hierarchies, material inequalities and power of caste panchayats (Sangari, 2005). The understanding of community violence in policing marriages also necessitates the analysis of the role of the community panchayats which have been associated with such violence. There are few scholars who have written about the underlying reasons for continued influence of *Khap* panchayats in India and their role in policing marriages. For instance, Prem Chowdhry argues that domination of Jat community in Haryana explains the reason behind the continued power of the traditional panchayat of Jats. She explains that these traditional panchayats constituted essential part of socio-political life of village communities from the pre colonial period and comprised of elderly men of dominant caste groups. These panchayats have been claiming to work on the indigenous principle of justice where it seeks to balance the antagonistic forces by fixing a compromise. The community leaders perceive these traditional panchayats as '*parmeswar*' and the *panch* as the five gods. However, she argues that in postcolonial India, the community leaders are using the united power of traditional panchayats for repression of subordinate sections of society and policing contentious marriages (Chowdhry, 1997, 2011). The political system of *Khap* Baliyan has been analysed by M.C. Pradhan to argue that this *Khap* played a crucial role in raising a defensive army and collecting revenues until the suppression of this institution by British after 1857 revolt (Pradhan, 1966). Ranbir Singh traces the origin of *Khap* panchayats as a 'system maintenance mechanism' in the agrarian societies (Singh, 2010a: 17-18). Those panchayats which once represented all caste groups of a particular locality, now have reduced to a purely Jat institution. These panchayats played a positive role in imbining the feeling of fraternity among different caste groups as well resolving long standing family feuds in pre-colonial period. The reasons for continued power and relevance of *Khap* panchayat in post colonial India is explained in terms of existence of umbrella boy of Sarvakhap panchayat, persistence of kinship feeling among different clans of Jat community and use of these institutions for election purposes (Singh, 2010b). Jagmati Sangwan has analysed the massive consolidation of *Khap* panchayats in the recent

times as retaliation against the growing assertion of rights of women, *dalits* and other backward sections of Haryana (Sangwan, 2010). Though these Khap panchayats proclaim themselves as cultural representatives of Haryana, they selectively target couples and their families in the name of contested notion of traditions and customs of the village.

Along with the analysis of role of existing structures and Khap panchayat, the discourse on crimes of 'honour' have also addressed the role of state in dealing with such violence. Geeta Ramaseshan analyses the notion of 'honour' as reflected in the judicial pronouncements in the cases related to sexuality of women, such as rape, outraging the modesty of women of the Indian Supreme Court (Ramaseshan, 2012). She argues that the protectionist approach of the Court ends up in a situation where women survivor has to constantly prove her conduct in the prosecution. The Court upholds the view that perceives women as the proprietary rights of male members. Besides, she also explains the various ways in which Indian law is used to criminalise right to choice in marriages and relationships. State complicity in the violent acts by providing impunity to the perpetrators of violence against the choice marriage of a women and the adoption of many intimidating tactics is discussed to argue how the procedural law has been used by the state to deny women her constitutional rights. Notwithstanding the fact that various provisions of the personal laws recognise the importance of consent of both parties for validating a marriage, the various loopholes in the criminal law gives the state authority scope for interfering in choice of women at the behest of patriarchal family or community members [Association for Advocacy and Legal Initiatives, (AALI), 2012]. Pratiksha Baxi highlights the nature of custodial power over women by their male family members by analyzing the use of the writ of habeas corpus in the realm of love. The writ of habeas is routinely used by the parents who seek to 'recover' adult runaway daughters as well as husband in the cases where women is being detained by her natal family members or when the couples seek protection from potential arrest and detention under different constitutional provisions. The battle between the natal and affinal family for her custody in the Court renders wishes of women irrelevant most of the time (Baxi, 2006). Besides, scholars like Pratiksha Baxi, Shirin M Rai and Shahin Sardar Ali, through their comparative study of crimes of 'honour' in Pakistan and India point to the diverse legacies of the common law and explore the complex nature of interaction between modernity and tradition by identifying two axes of governance of politics and governance of communities (Baxi.et al, 2006). Parvez Mody points out various nuances of law from the perspective of couples who seek to legitimize their marriage in Courts (Mody, 2008). Thus, the above analysis reflects that the scholarship on such kind of violence have made important contributions in widening the definition of crime, however, the issue is addressed albeit in singular fashion either from the perspective of community or from the state.

The present study argues that the comprehensive understanding of crimes of 'honour' necessitates the study of interplay of different actors, forms, instrumentalities and dimensions of such violence. While focusing on the question of marriage, the study unfolds the complicity and contestation of community and state in perpetration of violence against individuals. The study argues that prevalent 'culturalist' and

'traditionalist' understanding which de-contextualises such violence is not sufficient to explain such community violence surrounding marriages. 'Tradition', 'culture', 'honour' always works as strategy for mobilisation or justification of violence and the community violence cannot be addressed without collectively explaining structural and contextual nature of such violence.

IV. Approach of the Study

This paper is based on data gathered from in-depth case analysis of twelve villages in select five districts of Haryana; Asanda, Dharana, Talao and Siwana of Jhajjar district, Maham Kheri of Rohtak district, Samaspur of Bhiwani district, Ludana and Singhwal of Jind district, Mataur, Karora, Jakhauli and Pabnawa of Kaithal district. The primary data is collected and organised from news reports of such instances from January 2001 to December 2013. The study starts by selecting cases of more explicit or visible form of violence which ranges from, murder, acts of infliction of forms to harm the bodily integrity of a person, expulsion from village and locality, social and economic boycott, humiliation in the form of enforcing shoes in the mouth, forced rituals of siblinghood or other kinds of visible humiliation. Such selection was due to the scarcity of primary documentation of cases which addresses whole spectrum of violence starting from the marriage without full consent of a couple. However, while addressing the role of the community violence, particularly, in the cases of violence against *dalits*, the study has addressed the issue of everyday confrontation and resistance between dominant landowning communities and *dalits* of a particular village.

V. Towards a Comprehensive Understanding of Violence

As dominant 'culturalist' or 'traditionalist' explanations of such violence tend to camouflage the structural underpinnings of violence, it is important to examine the underlying calculus of political economy and study the intersections of class, caste and gender. Such structural underpinning of violence is clearly evident in the specific case study of collective violence against couples or their families which involves intra-village/ intra-caste/ intra-gotra/ inter-caste marriages in Haryana. It explains the rationale behind growing anxieties to control female sexuality and, the power dynamics among various communities which are involved in violence. Context-specific analysis of such structural violence also throws light on the different instrumentalities of violence and the underlying reasons behind variance among community interventions in similar cases. Through the study of key actors, forms, processes and various dimensions of violence, the research throws light that the boundaries or community and state are not fixed; they intersect and gets redefined when attempts to claim authenticity in controlling sexualities of its constituent members. This has been explained by analysing different dimensions of contestation between state and community in the claims of such authenticity over the individuals.

Scholars like Prem Chowdhry have underlined the crucial connections between production and reproduction among the agrarian patrilineal communities of Haryana.

The widespread participation of family members, particularly women in agriculture and other productive work and prominence of land proprietorship necessitates the control of productive and reproductive labour of women. Reproduction is linked to the political economy of such communities, since the family or kinship structure is the primary owner of the productive resources. Such structural linkage between production and reproduction leads to the anxiety over control of sexualities of women which is idealised in the role of guardianship by the male members of family, community or caste (Chowdhry, 2012). Drawing upon such structural linkages between production and reproduction, this paper argues that dominant practices of caste endogamy and village exogamy are crucially connected with the question of inheritance. The observance of the principle of caste endogamy or marriage within the same caste group ensures that the property remains within the same caste group. Besides, the custom of village exogamy ensures that woman of a particular village is married off to a village, other than where her parental family resides. This prohibitory practice in marriage minimises the chances of her claim over the immovable property like land or the possibility of cultivating such land by male members of her husband's family. The post colonial legal enablement in terms of delegitimising such marriage prohibitions and granting equal rights to women, particularly daughters has created insecurities among the male members of these agrarian communities about fragmentation of property, particularly landed property. Though, mostly women of Haryana subscribe to the dominant practices of property inheritance flowing in the male descent line, however, the apprehension of inheritance claims, centers around such women who have demonstrated their assertiveness in choosing their partners.

Besides, constriction of marriage market and the male marriage squeeze explains the greater anxiety over controlling the woman of one's own caste and 'crisis of masculinity' in Haryana. The wide range of customary prohibitory practices of marriage, structural changes in the economy and geography, unemployment, adverse sex ratio all have led to the constriction of marriage market and masculine violence. This factor also explains the instances where the family members of the couple are complicit in the marriage which violates many prohibitory customary rules.

Coming to the specific category of cases of intra-caste marriages where violence is perpetrated by the dominant community against the couples and their families for 'arranging' a marriage which transgresses dominant and often contested norms, political economy of violence can be explained by exposing the underlying political and economic motives of leaders of the dominant community. In most such cases, the dominant community leaders arbitrarily redefine the traditions of the village and selectively apply it to the individual families. The leaders who mobilise the community support in the name of preservation of 'brotherhood' or 'village tradition' are mostly driven by political or economic motives. The field research shows that demonstration of leadership potential around such issues was aimed at earning good will of the dominant community members which might yield electoral dividends for such leaders in the future. Mostly, objections were raised when election was near despite the fact that marriage and the alleged breach of tradition had been in public knowledge for quite some time. In the

cases of Ludana and Samaspur, for instance, the main instigators who had raised the controversy around marriages in those villages later succeeded in getting elected as *Sarpanch* in the village panchayat in the election which happened few months after the controversy. Besides, the motive of confiscation of land and other property almost invariably drives the leaders to give harsh punishment like expulsion from village within a very short duration. Such short time limit for expulsion can be seen as device to debar the victim family to make any attempt to sell their property.

In the second category of cases, where violence is organised against *dalit* community by the dominant community of the village due to an inter caste marriage, the analysis needs to be contextualised by first understanding the overall changing dynamics of power and caste relations. The ongoing conflict among the dominant castes and *dalits* follow from such overall changing dynamics of caste and power relations. Such conflicts find expression in the form of everyday confrontation and specific cases of violence against entire *dalit* community following an inter-caste marriage or elopement. There are a number of issues over which everyday confrontation and resistance occurs between *dalits* and landowning communities e.g. wage for agricultural labor, use and illegal confiscation of common grazing land, or public demonstration of *dalit* community's identity in religious, cultural or public spaces. As such, inter-caste marriage and elopement should not be considered as an isolated instance of violence and needs to be contextualized in such overall conflict ridden caste relationship. In the cases where *dalit* boy is involved with girl of dominant community, the entire *dalit* community is targeted in spectacular manner. Such instances of inter-caste marriage, gives an opportunity to the locally and numerically dominant community to violently assert their dominance. Such instances are considered as most visible expression of *dalit* identity which seeks to challenge the established socio-economic superiority of locally dominant castes in question. However, it is noteworthy that inter-caste marriages are not uncommon in Haryana when it involves the men of dominant landowning communities. Particularly, in the prevalent context of scarcity of brides, the men of upper caste are seen to purchase wives of other castes from the other regions.

In the context of love/ choice marriages, where family members directly perpetrate violence against women and her lover/ husband, it can be argued that though violence is inflicted in the private realm, community always remain its symbolic audience. Most of the time, violence occurs only when the elopement/marriage of the girl comes into the public domain. Besides, the runaway status of daughter makes it difficult for parents to marry off the girl to other boy or marry off other girls of the family. In the dowry economy of Haryana, such girls become additional burden for parents.

This study at the community level unfolds different layers of players who are involved in the collective violence against the couples or/ and their family members. Participation of such different actors brings into the fore constant interplay of 'crisis of masculinity' in the 'private' and 'public' sphere and ensuing violence. In the case of Haryana, case studies show that there is a stratum among young men who are very active in raising propaganda about alleged 'breach of tradition' and use violence in implementing the

community decisions of breaking the marriage in the village. Adverse sex ratio and crisis in agriculture and other job opportunities, has increased the number of persons who remain unemployed or unmarried. Though some of them, resort to purchase brides of other regions, such alliances are looked down upon. The dominant patriarchal structure upholds the masculine role of men as provider of the family and protector of women. In such a construction, masculinity lies in having the ability of procreation and founding a family as well as supporting the family by engaging in labor or other activities in exchange of money. As such, for their inability to perform such masculine role, these young men are pushed to the margin of power in the family. This 'crisis of masculinity' faced in the private home is sought to be resurrected by asserting 'masculine power in the public' by such youth. Butler's idea that gender is a process, not an essence is pertinent here (Butler, 1990). Patriarchy operates with the constant performance of 'feminine' and 'masculine' roles which are contextually defined. Gender is socially constructed and a relational notion. As such, 'masculinity' has to be constructed against femininity and vice versa. Besides, such 'masculinity' has to be constantly validated by the other men who are assuming hegemonic status in the private and public sphere. In Haryana, this stratum of young men suffer from 'crisis of masculinity' not only in front of women, but in front of other men who are able to perform their masculine role by way of marriage and employment. As such, those men seek to redeem their masculinity by violently asserting their masculinity in the public sphere. Apart from resorting to violent practices of sexual assault of women of their own community and village, mostly such men engage in activities of community panchayats. As evident from this study's field research, these men are in the forefront of violently imposing rituals on the women for transforming their marital status with their husbands to that of siblinghood. In the case of inter-caste marriages, young men of the community threaten the *dalit* girls with revenge rape or actually indulge in their sexual assault in many cases.

Apart from this young stratum, there are two other layers of actors who are active in intervening on issues of marriage in the community gatherings and actual decision making. These community panchayats are attended by elderly men of dominant community under the leadership of politically influential persons of that community.

The post colonial legal and political structure particularly statutory panchayat system has changed the power dynamic with regard to age, gender and caste composition of power holding group to some extent. Earlier, affairs of panchayat and community were largely regarded as exclusive preserve of elderly men of dominant landowning caste or community. In the contemporary times, there can be seen resentment among these traditional power holders that such a statutory panchayat system is responsible for their diminishing authority. In a bid to redeem their lost authority and power, actual or assumed, these elderly men of dominant community engage in decision making of these community panchayats by raising issues such as marriages. The politically influential person/s among these elderly men of dominant community or other local politician/s assume the leadership position in organising such community gathering and deciding on marriage matters. They are motivated to play a leading role in such situations

to earn the good will of the masses of dominant community and establish their leadership credentials. Though, different layers of actors are motivated by different reasons to participate in such community panchayats, however, mobilisation for such community deliberations are made in the name of preservation of 'tradition' and 'brotherhood' of village and community.

Much alike the different layers of actors involved in the collective violence against the couple and their family members in the public realm, this also holds true for those actors like the family members who are involved in perpetrating direct violence against their daughter/ sister and her partner/ husband in the case of choice/ love marriages. Though, such violence occurs in the private realm, it is meant to be a public act with community as its symbolic audience. It is observed that such private violence largely stems from actual or imminent 'crisis of masculinity' in the public sphere.

In the dominant patriarchal structure of Haryana as indeed elsewhere, the ability to control the sexualities of female members as well as their protection is intrinsically related to the masculinity of male members of the family. When women assert her choice in the selection of partner and leave her family, such men are assumed to have lost the masculine control over their womenfolk. Community members participate largely in enhancing the feeling of loss of control and power. For male family members, increasingly it becomes difficult to make any assertion in front of other dominant men of community as they keep ridiculing such men by pointing out their inability in performance of their 'masculinity' in front of women of their own family. This actual and imminent crisis of masculinity in public sphere is sought to be redeemed by perpetrating masculine violence in the private sphere. Physical elimination of women of their own family by the male members can be explained in terms of such 'crisis of masculinity' in the public sphere. As reflected in the opinion of male members interviewed for this research, they want to eliminate the source of their vulnerability and assert in front of community by resorting to violent aggression: "Yes, she was wrong and I have killed her. Now everything is over". The role of the larger community in the private act of violence can be explained by the fact that male members only resort to violence when pressurised by the community members or when the matter came into public domain be it in the panchayats or the courts.

In the case of Haryana, the study has found that possession and dispossession of land is a crucial determinant of dominant status of a particular caste group in a locality. Dispossession of land leads to dependence in terms of livelihood as daily wage laborer in the land of members of dominant landowning community. For this reason, landless *dalits* are in subordinate position to the landowning castes in whose agricultural field they work. Among the different sections of the dominant caste, there is also status hierarchy which follow from the ownership of landed and other property and political power.

The study also points to the contestation of state and community when they claim authenticity in controlling the sexualities of its constituent members. Such contestations

have also thrown light on the different notions of 'justice' and limitation and strength of community and state intervention in matters of marriage and control of sexualities of individuals. Besides, it also unfolds the changing positions of state and community in cases of violence against marriages.

The study underlines the community perception of the desirability and capability of state intervention in such matters. State is largely perceived as a site not well equipped to intervene in the 'familial' or 'private' matters. State intervention is sought as last resort in the internal matters of community or village as reflected in the opinion of dominant leadership. Most of the Khap leaders argue that real justice lies not in terms of punishment of guilty as embedded in state conception of justice which is endorsed by the state institutions. Rather, they perceive justice in the form of balancing antagonistic forces and effecting compromise. When individuals/ family members who are victimised of family/ community violence resort to the intervention of state for affecting justice to them, such intervention incurs great deal of community displeasure. As such, state intervention in delegitimising the decision of the community panchayats, is a public demonstration of diminishing power of community members against the state.

As reflected in the cases of intra-caste violence, the intervention of the court and consequent action of police led to revising of earlier stern stand of *Khap* panchayats. When there is no intervention of the state, the community members spell stern punishment like social and economic boycott of victim family or expulsion from the village within a very short duration. However, after the state intervention, the community attempts to reassert its power and authority by softening its punishment in a wider community forum. In the cases where family members are convicted for their violence against their daughters and her partner under the pressure of community, it is found that the earlier open claim of involvement in such matters by the villagers/ community members become timid.

The higher authority of the state is circumscribed in the actions of the state itself. At times the state subscribes to the community claims for authenticity in matters of 'familial' and 'private' realm. As reflected in the popular opinion of community members, the state can shield the couple and family members only for a limited period for violation the dictates of the dominant community. Ultimately, such couple and family members have to confront the community. Such conceptualisation of community authority over the state often legitimises settlement of the matter by community members itself. State mechanism also works for such 'community justice' in the settlement of marriage and family members in the village. Such 'justice' is done only in the return of withdrawing the case against the leaders who inflicted violence against victim couple and their family members. Such attitude of the state authorities in protecting the culprits in the name of settlement of victim family can be regarded as one of the reasons for continued dominance of *Khap* panchayats.

Thus, this paper has explored how the structural analysis of the violence is necessary for comprehensive understanding of the growing anxiety and violence against couples.

Besides, it is also explained how the state ambiguously attempts to legitimise or contest communitarian control and authenticity in the control of sexualities of its citizens. In regards to such control, this paper tried to throw light on the aspect that boundaries of state and community are not monolithic; they intersect and get redefined in the everyday practices.

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Labour Market Conditions of Natural Rubber Plantations in Tripura: An Inquiry

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Abstract

Natural Rubber (NR) now occupies a significant place in employment generation and contribution to the state GDP of Tripura. Introduced as a mode of afforestation drive in the early 1960s, the NR based model of rehabilitation for tribal shifting cultivators has been a success story of governance for quite some time. The success of the sector can be attributed to the well-coordinated efforts of the various augmenting agencies like Rubber Board, Tripura Forest Development and Plantation Corporation Limited (TFDPC) and Tripura Rehabilitation Plantation Corporation Limited (TRPC) which have shown remarkable results in the socio-economic welfare of the targeted beneficiaries. NR being a labour dependent system, the sector is instrumental in employment generation in the state. This paper is an attempt to examine the labour market and employment conditions looking at the trend of wages for the rubber tappers working in both public as well as private rubber plantations for the period 2000-01 to 2013-14. Cuddy Della Vale index has been used for examining the stability of wages. The paper finds that the real wages of the tappers are lesser than that of the agricultural and unskilled labourers. Still, the rubber plantation sector attracts the labour force primarily because of the opportunity for long term engagement during a year. However, in recent years, approach of the rubber growers to cut down the costs of tapping has not only reduced the optimum absorption of the labour force also the quantity and quality of output.

I. Introduction

The government of Tripura considers natural rubber plantations as a successful model of rehabilitation for the landless tribal shifting cultivators (Bahuguna, 2006; GoT, 2015). In past 50 years the state has emerged as the second largest rubber growing region of

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India. Initiated as a part of afforestation drive by the state forest department in 1963, this vital ingredient for the modern civilisation has been identified as one of the most potent force for Tripura's development. Scarcity of land in the traditional rubber zone of Kerala, the Rubber Board of India in the pursuit of new areas for expansion has adopted specialised schemes like Accelerated Rubber Development for the North East (Viswanathan and Bhowmik, 2016). The National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning had identified that 650,000 ha of rubber plantations can be raised in the states of north-east region of India of which 100,000 ha in Tripura (Bhowmik, 2006). The outcome is that the state of Tripura has 70295.7 ha of rubber plantations, 37,345.8 ha of tappable area and 44,740.2 tonnes of production in 2014-15 (GoT, 2015). Natural rubber accounts for almost 3 to 3.5 percent of the GSDP of Tripura (Bhowmik and Viswanathan, 2015). Rubber plantations and its bearings on the social and economic front in the state of Tripura is a matter of enquiry because of the exemplary role of public sector initiatives particularly through extension services. The well-coordinated efforts of the various rubber augmenting agencies like Rubber Board, Tripura Forest Development and Plantation Corporation Limited (TFDPC) and Tripura Rehabilitation Plantation Corporation Limited (TRPC) have shown remarkable results in the socio-economic welfare of the targeted beneficiaries, particularly the scheduled tribes (Dey, 2009; Joseph, George and Dey, 2012). The economic viability of rubber plantations in Tripura has been attested by studies (Bhowmik, 2006; Ghoshal, 2014; Dey et al, 2014). Along with favourable agro-climatic conditions natural rubber requires an uninterrupted supply of skilled workers for economic viability and 70 per cent of the lifetime expenditure of rubber plantations are on labour (Burger.et.al, 1995; Remesh, 2010) and thus the sector is instrumental in employment generation, which is of utmost importance in the backward and less developed nations.

The rubber plantation sector of Tripura has developed at the behest of the state agencies as a rehabilitation model for shifting cultivators, where the beneficiaries (the smallholders¹) work as the owner-operator of the plantation unit and family labour is the traditional norm. More than 20,000 hectares of rubber plantations in the state have been developed as part of rehabilitation programmes (Viswanathan and Bhowmik, 2016). The government farms, which are owned and managed by the TFDPC, appoint hired labour for plantation activities. Market dynamics in later periods also led to the growth of rubber plantations under private ownership, which often depends on hired labour. Labourers in the rubber farms of Tripura have traditionally been wage labourers with no claim to the output (Bhowmik and Chouhan, 2013).

Labour relations in the rubber smallholdings of Tripura are broadly classified under the framework of the *Principal-Agent* relationship which is often characterised by the personalisation of the contracts. The success of the growers (the principals) in the form of higher production, profit and income are dependent on the quantity and quality of

¹ Land size classifications of Rubber Plantations- less than 2 ha: small holdings; 2 to 4 hectares: semi-medium holdings; 4-10 hectares: medium holdings; 10-20 hectares: large holdings; above 20 hectares: estates; India has around 1.25 million small holdings, which account for 90 percent of the total area (Burger, et al, 1995; www.rubberboard.org.in)

the effort put in by the labourer/tapper (the agents). Poor standards of work will leave a lasting impact as the tree is injured from improper tapping and is likely to have lesser yield. Moreover, the smaller size of the holdings do not offer any economic viability to employ supervisors, while the odd or flexible work hours of the tappers often prevent personal supervision. Thus the dependence of the growers on the agents is immense. The principal attempts to get the best agent for himself and thus is expected to offer extra-contractual benefits to retain the efficient workers. On the other hand, the agents are aware of the benefits of being a rubber tapper which provides them work throughout the year along with some extra-contractual benefits. Therefore, both, the grower and the tapper devise or develop personal ties. Further, compliance of the contractual terms and conditions assist both the players in building their reputation and reduce transaction costs. Moreover, the spatial settings often keep both the actors within a common social framework, not going for any form of deceit (Remesh, 2010; Viswanathan, 2013; Bhowmik and Viswanathan, 2015).

This paper is an attempt to augment the understanding on labour market conditions in rubber plantations and stems with two objectives-

1. To examine the trend and nature of wages of the rubber tappers
2. To study the employment conditions of the workers involved

II. Data and Approach

The stated objectives has been addressed on the basis of a field survey conducted in the most prominent rubber growing region of the state, the erstwhile West Tripura and South Tripura districts, using a structured questionnaire. Interactions with the workers in private plantations were held Belbari and Fatikcherra areas of West Tripura; and Dhuptali and Khupilong areas of Gomati (curved out from South Tripura). Further, the character of the private sector workers have been compared with that of public sector workers obtained from two centres of plantations in Pathaliaghat, Sepahijala district (curved out from West Tripura) and Takmacherra (in South Tripura district). The field survey was conducted in the months of January and February, 2015. It may be noted that TFDPC, is the largest NR growing unit of the country with more than 11000 hectares of plantation (Bhowmik and Chouhan, 2013).

Data on wage of tappers are also collected for the period 2000-2013 from TFDPC offices and the record books of private rubber growers. In regard to wages of agricultural and rural unskilled labourer, secondary data from RBI is used for the given period.

To estimate the trends of wages of tappers (public and private), agricultural and rural unskilled labourers, exponential growth rate formula of $Y = ab^t$ (Chandy et. al, 2010) has been used. Further, to deal with inflation, the real values of the variables were calculated using GSDP deflator of the state. The study includes only the wages of rubber tappers. Cuddy Della Vale Index (CDI) has been used for estimating the stability of wages of the tappers, agricultural and rural unskilled labour. Since in the case of

time series variables, estimation of variability use of the usual coefficient of variation over estimates the result, CDI corrects this over estimation. The formula is given as, $CDI = CV * (1 - AdR^2)^{1/2}$, where, CDI = Instability index (per cent); CV = Coefficient of variation (per cent); and Ad-R² = Coefficient of determination from a time trend regression adjusted by the number of degrees of freedom (Chandy et. al, 2010, Chandy & George, 2012). Further, for the sake of simplicity, the value of CDI has been divided into three groups, which represent the different range of instability.

- o Low instability = between 0 to 15
- o Medium instability = greater than 15 and lower than 30
- o High instability = greater than 30 (Sihmar, 2014)

Insights drawn from literatures

Labour issues in rubber plantations have been an area of interest for scholars; however, the focus of the existing studies has mostly been on the traditional rubber growing zone of India. Study (Viswanathan et al. 2003) on rubber smallholdings of Kerala, indicates that tapping task in a unit gets reduced with diminishing size of operational holding and thus forces the tapper to attach himself with more than one grower. The earning of the workers in the rubber plantations are low earning compared to other comparable activities, which has led to withdrawal of skilled and experienced workers from the market. Moreover, volatility of natural rubber prices forces the growers to resort to several costs saving measures like- less use of fertilizers, curtailment in weeding practices and reduced use of hired labour. Study shows that farmers who use only hired labour did reduce tapping days by 8.6 percent; in contrast the farmers who use only family labour have raised annual average tapping days by 0.9 percent (Mohanakumar and Chandy, 2005). The decline in hired labour not just leads to withdrawal of master tappers from the labour market, rather leaves the tasks to be performed by the lesser skilled. Labour contracts are mostly informal and personalised in nature and generally for one year and without any legal bindings. Weekly advances are the most common means of wage payment and the amount of wages/ advances are often associated with tapping task, level of skill, experience, years of service, and reputation in the locality (Remesh, 2010). Rajasenan (2010) observes that implementation of poverty alleviation and employment guarantee programmes like MGNREGS have led to worker scarcity in plantations and low wages have made the sector unattractive for the younger generation. The growth rates in wages are much lower than that of farm income (Chandy et. al, 2010) and the share of tapping wage in total farm income has reduced in the post reform period among the rubber small holdings (Chandy and George, 2012). Further the issues in shortage of tapping labour have also aggravated due to limited policy options and limited funds that has made the welfare schemes of the Rubber Board less attractive to the labourers (George, 2012).

On the other hand, the studies on the rubber plantations in Tripura are more centred on general economic underpinnings like production, productivity and profitability (Bhowmik, 2006; Bhowmik, 2009; Sharma et al, 2011; Ghoshal, 2014; Dey et al, 2014). However, there are reports of labour shortage in certain plantations due to the opportunities offered under MGNREGS (Sharma, et.al, 2011). The increasing area under

rubber plantations in Tripura calls for more labour engagement. The Public sector rubber farm, TFDPC employs more than 6000 labourers across the state but the labour market is characterised by informality of contracts. Incomes of the workers are low though employment opportunities are often for larger part of the year (Bhowmik and Chouhan, 2013). In recent years, a new type of labour relations is emerging in some parts of the state with the labourer, instead of being paid wages is being remunerated with a share of the output. This phenomenon is akin to the system of share cropping in traditional agriculture. As per this, rubber tappers and the owners generally share the output, be it latex or sheets (Bhowmik and Viswanathan, 2015). However, with newer areas of plantations being mostly under private occupation, the labour market is undergoing a transition and this paper tries to examine the differences among the workers of the public and the private sector.

III: Labour Market Conditions: As Revealed by Data

This section has two parts. The first part deals with the issue of wages, while the second part focuses on the employment conditions. From Table 1, we find that the average daily wages of the agricultural labourer have been the highest for seven of the thirteen years under consideration, of which six years, i.e. 2002-03 to 2007-08 were in succession. The wages of the unskilled labourer have been higher for five years, while the wages of rubber tappers have been higher only in 2010-11 and 2011-12. Among the rubber tappers also, it is seen that the public sector wage had been traditionally higher, however, the trend reversed since 2011-12 and continued for the last three years under consideration. Significant increase in the real wages of the private rubber tappers in 2011-12 can be considered as a fall out of the huge increase in NR prices².

Table 1: Trend in real wages of rubber tappers in public and private sector, agricultural labour and unskilled labour in Tripura (Rs. per day)

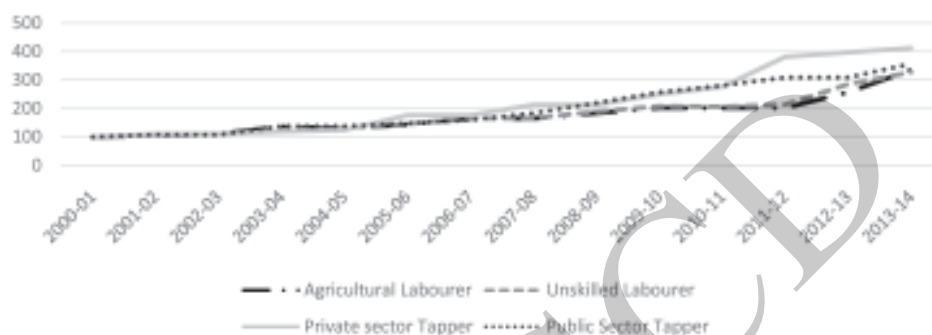
Year	Private sector	Public sector	Agricultural labourer	Unskilled labourer
2000-01	23.41	25.88	33.37	33.38
2001-02	25.91	27.76	35.92	35.94
2002-03	25.54	27.37	36.66	36.49
2003-04	26.21	33.78	43.33	39.18
2004-05	47.00	58.00	70.45	70.39
2005-06	65.11	60.25	76.13	76.67
2006-07	61.94	61.94	82.43	82.78
2007-08	71.86	68.31	79.84	79.85
2008-09	69.3	78.71	85.31	87.37
2009-10	76.01	86.41	87.87	90.09
2010-11	78.35	88.05	81.8	83.46
2011-12	101.3	90.82	76.59	80.74
2012-13	98.34	84.67	90.64	100.53
2013-14	109.7	104.81	127.06	123.96

Source: Computed from information collected at TFDPC Centres, Private Rubber Growers & RBI

² The average annual price (nominal) of Ribbed Smoked sheets, the most common form of Natural Rubber, increased from Rs. 66.99/kg to Rs. 208.05/kg in 2011-12. In subsequent years, price declined and in 2014-15, it was Rs. 132.57/kg (<http://rubberboard.org.in/YearlyPricesPage.asp>; accessed on 31/3/2017)

Figure 1 illustrates the index of wages of the four categories of labourers under consideration. The real wage of the rubber tappers have increased by more than four-fold during the period. The increase has been the most for the private sector tapper, while the increase has been least among the unskilled labourers.

Figure-1: Index of real wages of rubber tappers in public and private sector, agricultural labour and unskilled labour in Tripura



Source: computed from Table-1

Table 2: Real wage growth rate of rubber tappers in public and private sector, agricultural labour and unskilled labour in Tripura

Category	AGR	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Significance F
Private sector Tapper	13.48	0.90	0.89	108.48	0.00
Public sector Tapper	11.82	0.89	0.88	93.92	0.00
Agricultural labourer	9.20	0.80	0.78	47.23	0.00
Unskilled labourer	9.77	0.82	0.80	54.55	0.00

Source: computed from table-1

Table 2 shows the trend of growth rate of real wages for the two categories of tappers, agricultural and unskilled labourers in Tripura. It can be seen that wages for private sector tapper has recorded the highest growth rate followed by that in public sector. The growth rates have been the least for the agricultural labourers. The C-D Valle instability index (Table 3) shows that of the four categories of workers, the degree of instability has been low for all, except that of agriculture labourer. The index value is least for the public sector tappers. It may be noted that the nominal wage rate of the TFDPC farms are revised occasionally and are part of an administrative effort, which are generally slow and steady, unlike that of private farms, where market forces have greater intensity. Wage rates in the private sector are more influenced by the local market conditions and immediate demand and supply conditions of the labour market. On the other hand, engagement with TFDPC is comparatively long term and is on the basis of the institutional dynamics, where the process of attachment is more structured.

Table-3 C-D Valle instability index

Variables	C-D Index	Degree
Private sector Tapper	11.49	Low
Public sector Tapper	10.14	Low
Agricultural labourer	16.73	Medium
Unskilled labourer	14.91	Low

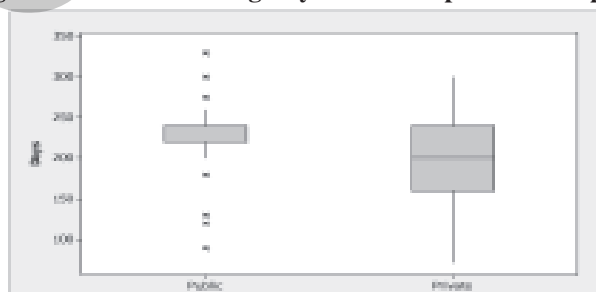
Source: computed from table-1

The rubber plantation workers generally have employment for the entire year except for the annual resting period, which is generally February-March, when rubber tree alike other deciduous trees shed their leaves and are considered to be unfit for tapping. Some days are also lost due to rain. Table 4 shows that majority of the workers (55.4 per cent) get an annual engagement between 181 to 240 days in rubber plantations. The engagement is higher in public sector units as only 10 per cent of the workers have received less than 180 days of employment against more than 37 per cent of their private sector compatriots as the nature of employment is mostly seasonal for the later as part of cost reduction mechanism. The average number of days employed annually varied between the two categories significantly ($T=2.56^{**}$). Figure 2 showing the spread of the annual working days of the two types of plantations suggest that the existence of both upper and lower outliers for the public sector farms.

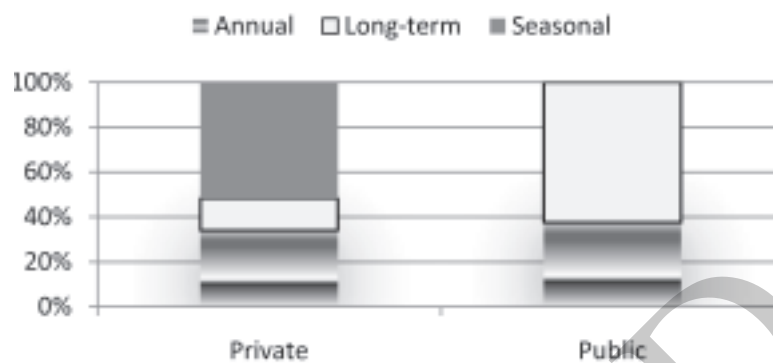
Table 4: Annual employment in rubber plantations

Working days	Private sector	Public sector	Aggregate
≤120	3(6.98)	2(7.5)	5(6.02)
121-180	13(30.23)	2(2.5)	15(18.07)
181-240	19(44.18)	27(67.5)	46(55.42)
241-300	8(18.60)	8(17.5)	16(19.28)
≥301		1(2.5)	1(1.20)
Total	43(100)	40(100)	83(100)
Mean	202.81	228.95	215.41
Max	300	330	330
Min	72	90	72

Notes: Information Not available from 13 respondents; Figures in parentheses indicate percentage
Source: Field Survey, 2015

Figure 2: Annual working days of the respondents in plantations

Source: Computed from data derived from Field Survey, 2015

Figure 3: Duration of contracts

Source: Field Survey, 2015

From Figure 3 we observe that there are three types of contract as opined by the respondents- long-term, annual and seasonal. Long-term contract means that the worker will do his assigned duty- be it only tapping or tapping and associated processing in the farm until further order from the employer. Annual contract, as the name suggests is subject to renewal every year and the workers are often assigned to perform the maintenance job at times of tapping break. The workers belonging to the first category are also assigned activities related to maintenance of the plantation. On the other hand, seasonal employment refers only for the tapping period with breaks during the lean period. Seasonal contracts are in vogue only in the private plantations and such workers generally do not perform other maintenance activities like fertiliser application. As the data indicate the private plantations go for a more flexible mode of seasonal labour recruitment.

In this context, it may be noted that the contracts are extremely informal and are mostly oral in nature. None of the workers in the private sector plantations have any written appointment, while the workers with more than 240 days of employment in TFDPC plantations are, given a Leave Card which enables them to enjoy casual leave, maternity leave and paid holidays (if a worker worked on the immediate day before and after the national holidays) along with Sick Leave. Sick leave wages are two-thirds of the approved daily wage rate and can be availed to a maximum of 14 days per annum on submission of medical certificates. The workers are however free to work with multiple growers if there are opportunities. However, some of the private sector workers admitted that they abstain from work occasionally to avail opportunities to work as helper in construction activities which would yield them better return at the end of the day. This is certainly reflective of the distress faced by the rubber plantation workers.

Field survey found that in public sector plantations all the workers are engaged on piece-rate³ basis. In private plantations time-rate⁴ occupies the dominant share (54 per cent), followed by piece rate and product-share⁵ systems. In other words, time Based wage is more common among private plantations, while piece rate wage payment is the norm in the public farms. The tappers in the TFDPC plantations, across the state, are paid Rs. 167 / day for a tapping block of 300 trees, which comes to around Rs. 0.55 per tree. The current daily wage rate in rubber plantations of private sector varies between Rs. 157 / day to Rs 200 / day across various plantation pockets. Most of the workers in Fatikcherra receive Rs 157/ day for a tapping task of 270 trees. On the other hand, workers of Belbari and Khupilong receive Rs. 160/day and Rs. 200/ day for their combined work of tapping and processing. The tapping task for both the region is 250 trees, though there are few variations in the exact number of trees tapped among the sample workers of a particular region also. Monthly wage payment is the most common form in the private plantations, while fortnightly payments are more common in TFDPC plantations. However, there are a few cases of weekly payment of wages in the private plantations along with a single instance of the worker being paid daily.

It may be noted that there are no wage differentials owing to age, gender, and experience. Moreover, there are no differences in wages between a trained and untrained tapper⁶. However, with new plantations maturing every year, better tappers do not find it tough to get work under a different employer. It is interesting to note here that most of the plantations set up after the boom in NR sector in 2006-07 have started maturing, but with depressed prices, many growers have reduced tapping days as cost saving response. Thus, the skilled worker even though could have better bargaining power, is yet to realise it. The rising wages is certainly a reflection of the increased prices from 2009 to 2012. We find that, 50 per cent of the private plantation workers opine that the wage rate is fixed by the employers, while 19 per cent told that Rubber Board officials & Rubber Producer Societies⁷ members take the lead in wage fixation (figure 4). About 10 per cent workers report their wages being fixed as per their demand based on the prevailing rates in the nearby places. On the other hand, 21 per cent of the private workers and all the sample workers in public sector credit the trade union for fixing the rates. In this context, it should be noted that the workers in the public sector farms are members of the Tripura Rubber Sramik Union affiliated to Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU). These workers stated that it is not just the wage determination, getting a contractual appointment is possible only through the intervention of the Trade Union. The Trade Unions are vocal and active mostly at the state level because wage rates in

³ Piece rate is based on a stipulated task for deriving the wage

⁴ Time rate means a worker gets a fixed amount of money for providing his labour for a specific duration

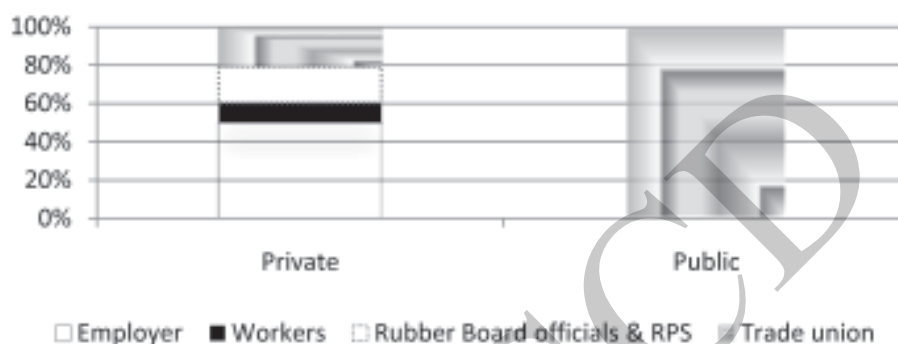
⁵ Similar to share cropping, seen in Belbari region

⁶ Distinction between trained and untrained tapper is made on the basis of formal training received from Rubber Board or any other Rubber promoting agencies. It is generally seen that trained tappers finish their task quickly, however, that is not true always. Untrained tapper often finishes of their task in haste and injures the trees.

⁷ Rubber Producer Societies are mostly groups of small rubber growers who often club together for the processing and marketing of Natural Rubber. Rubber Board encourages formation of RPS as part of their extension activities

TFDPC are uniform across the state. However, the role of the trade union is limited in private plantations. The respondent workers were open in saying that they seek membership of the trade unions not just for their wages but for a greater gain. The lure of various government schemes motivate them to be members of the trade unions affiliated to the ruling party.

Figure 4: Mechanism for wage fixation



Source: Field Survey, 2013; 2015

Table 5 shows the extent of additional benefits enjoyed by the tappers. It should be noted that, there are provisions of incentives, rainy day allowance, and bonus in the public farms, as per the regulations of the PLA, 1951, some of which are also offered by the private employers. The public sector plantation workers certainly enjoy more benefits as compared to the private plantation workers. It was found that 80 per cent of the workers in the TFDPC farms receive bonus and incentives. Sick leave, rainy day allowance and paid holidays are also availed by large sector of workers compared to private sectors along with the other non-pecuniary benefits (Table 7).

Table 5: Extra-contractual benefits received from employers (in Percentage)

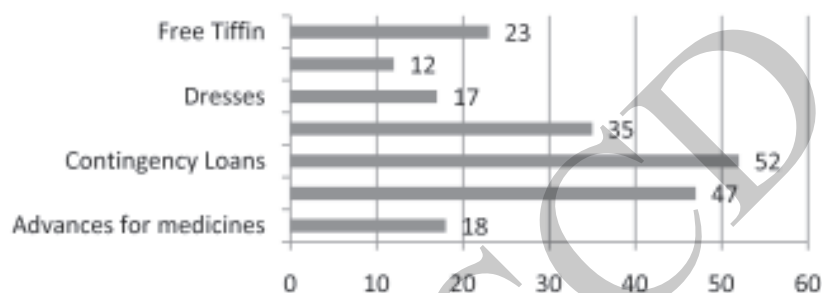
Benefits	Private sector	Public sector
Bonus	35.71	80
Incentives	3.57	80
Sick Leave	7.14	52.5
Rainy day Allowance	30.36	70
Paid Holiday	23.21	62.5
Sweater/Jumper	5.36	82.5
Hunting Shoes	5.36	82.5
Chupis ⁸		82.5
Latex Carrying Extra Wage		15

Source: Field Survey, 2013; 2015

⁸ A type of local hat

Overall, as anticipated material benefits in private plantations are negligible. Nevertheless, it was found that most of the workers of the private farms get supplementary benefits from their employers in the form of contingency loans, consumption loans, medical advances, grants and alike, which often keeps them tied to their respective employers. A system of indebtedness of the agent to the principal has been an observed phenomenon in the plantations of Kerala (Remesh, 2010). The situation in Tripura is no different. This system is often synonymous with the process of labour retention to extract work.

Fig 5: Supplementary benefits for private sector workers (in percentage)



Source: Field Survey, 2014-15

The average annual income for a worker from rubber plantations in Tripura is estimated at Rs. 40,200/. Table 6 shows distribution of workers by income category. There is no significant differences of average income of the workers in the private and public sector plantations (T Stat- 1.65, $p > 0.1$) mainly because of the higher wage for the time-bound workers in the private plantations as compared to the TFDPC farms receiving regulatory supports.

Table 6: Annual income of workers (in %) in rubber plantations

Rs/Annum	Private sector	Public sector	Aggregate
<24001	7.1	7.5	7.3
24001-30000	5.4		3.1
30001-36000	16.1	15	15.6
36001-42000	28.6	67.4	44.8
42001-48000	16.1	5	11.5
48001-54000	17.9	2.5	11.5
>54000	8.9	2.5	6.3
N	56	40	96
Mean	41598.2	38234.7	40200
Minimum	13500	15030	13500
Maximum	70000	55110	70000

Source: Field Survey, 2014-15; figures are in percentage

The paltry⁹ income earned therefore reflects the miserable living conditions of the workers, which often force them to look for additional sources of income. All the households reported availing MGNREGS works whenever available. Moreover, the working conditions in the plantations appear to be very unimpressive. Only 53 per cent of the workers had opined favourably regarding the availability of drinking water in the plantations while accesses to sanitation facilities were reported by only 41 per cent of the workers. In this context, an attempt was made to examine the extent of coverage of the various labour welfare schemes of the Rubber Board among the respondents. The response has not been very encouraging. Only 3 workers from the private sector reported of getting housing subsidy from Rubber Board, while there was none to avail the educational stipend, merit award, medical attendance and sanitary subsidy. Workers reported being included in the recently promoted Life Insurance Policy by Rubber Board for labourers in collaboration with Life Insurance Corporation of India. On inquiry, it was found that one of the reasons for the low coverage was the numerous illegal plantations that has come up which are not accounted in the Rubber Board as a result, the workers of such plantations are bereft of availing the schemes for their welfare offered by the Rubber Board.

Section IV: Summary and Conclusion

Importance of the rubber plantation sector of Tripura on labour absorption and contribution to the state GDP is bound to rise with newer areas of plantations, mostly in private initiatives turning mature for tapping. It may be noted that the labourers find work in rubber sector as a long-term survival strategy since most of them do not have alternative sustainable avenues for livelihood. Many of the workers engaged in smallholding plantations are available for additional work, which are extremely necessary for augmenting the nominal¹⁰ income generated from the sector (Bhowmik and Viswanathan, 2015).

As indicated earlier, average real wage of agricultural workers is higher in Tripura and even the wage received by the unskilled workers have been higher than the wages received by the rubber tappers. Yet there is no dearth of people willing to get engaged in rubber tapping because of the fact that rubber plantations provide job opportunities almost throughout the year and jobs in other sectors being seasonal. It should be remembered that the average employment in rubber plantations is much higher than any other alternative cropping system of the state. Moreover, with limited and near absence of any manufacturing or service sector employment opportunities in the rural areas, rubber plantations are the most attractive form of livelihood to most of the rural landless people. An interesting observation is that the wages of the rubber tappers in both private as well as public plantations have increased at a higher rate compared to the other two segments of workers in the present century. A major cause for such

⁹ Per capita income of Tripura in 2014-14: Rs. 71666 (Current Prices) [<http://ecostat.tripura.gov.in/At-A-Glance-2015-16.pdf>]

¹⁰ Per capita income of Tripura at Constant prices for 2014-15: Rs. 59810.00 [<http://ecostat.tripura.gov.in/At-A-Glance-2015-16.pdf>]

development is the slump in the sector during the early 2000s and the subsequent boom of the natural rubber sector since 2006-07, which often is an outcome of the vagaries of the international rubber market (Bhowmik, 2008). The wages of the tappers reached a historic low in 2000-01. The boom in price of natural rubber had generated a renewed interest in the sector, leading to some outcomes in the labour market as is evident in the movement of wages, though rate of growth of wages have been lower than that in farm income (Chouhan and Bhowmik, 2017). It is also interesting to note that the growth rate of wages of public sector plantations has been lower than that of the private plantations. One of the reasons for such a scenario is the additional facilities received by the TFDPC tappers under the ambit of Plantation Labour Act, 1951, which can be considered as wages in kind. Despite all the uncertainties, rubber plantations have emerged as a major avenue of livelihood in rural Tripura attracting the unemployed as there is lack of opportunities in the industrial sector.

A visible characteristic in the rubber smallholdings is that there is no wage differential for skilled tapper. However, this should not be confused with the generalised fact that to get the stipulated wage as per the assigned task a unskilled worker need to work for longer hours. The unskilled workers may not necessarily work for longer works for getting the stipulated wage; rather, he might work for the same time length, but his productive efficiency is less and his efforts are often injurious to the plantations. Lack of alternative often binds the tappers to the farms as well as of possibility of availing certain supplementary benefits of contingencies and consumption loans. Data also indicate that global trade of natural rubber influences the domestic market and thus influence the wages of tappers (Bhowmik, 2008). Field interaction revealed that the growers often take recourse of alternate day tapping to reduce operational cost. The end result of such approach is reduction in annual employment in the rubber plantations, which create more distress for the workers.

Wish of the private sector tappers is to get included under the regulatory frame of PLA, 1951. On the other hand, workers of TFDPC farms expect that in the long-run their status will be raised as full time employees of the corporation. Inadequate tapping task and dependence on multiple growers is a major area of concerns in the rubber plantations labour market of the country in general, however, in Tripura, such a situation is yet to emerge substantially. It is a challenging task on the front of the state to ensure an environment for optimum labour requirement and supply of efficient labour force. It is also important for the state to have an assessment on the labour requirement as more and more rubber plantations of Tripura are reaching the stage for tapping, which requires sustained flow of rubber tappers or else the potential of the sector can never be realised and this perceived engine of growth will slow down.

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Potato Productivity and its Determinants: A Case Study in Sonitpur District, Assam

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Rimjim Bordoloi

Abstract

In the predominantly agriculture based economy of Assam, Potato in recent years has emerged as an important commercial crop. This paper examines the determinants of potato productivity from a case study conducted in Sonitpur district of the state. Understanding on the determinants is important as farm productivity helps to augment income of the farm households as well as employment opportunity. The results show that in the study area net income of the farmers is positively related to productivity of the crop and thus indicates the importance of raising productivity. The relationship between inputs and output is estimated by applying Cobb-Douglas production function. The results show positive influence of certain inputs in case of this crop. Certain issues which need attention are inadequate availability of HYV seeds, high costs of inputs, lack of credit and storage facilities.

I. Introduction

Potato is one of the important crops which contribute to food and nutritional security. This tuber crop also has industrial and medicinal uses. As potato has high demand and market in developing countries like India, cultivation of this crop plays an important role to ensure returns to the cash starved rural households. This crop is not indigenous to India, but penetrated as a consequence of the colonial expansion of European countries. It was introduced in the country by early 17th century probably by British missionaries or Portuguese traders.

Potato now has emerged as the foremost important crop in India after rice, wheat and maize; and the country has emerged as the second largest producer of potato in the world. In 2010-11, India produced 42.34 million tonnes from 1.86 million hectares of cultivation with an average yield of 22720 kg/ha. In India, during 2005-06 the share

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of area under potato was 0.75 per cent of the gross cropped areas which rose to 0.79 per cent in 2010-11 (Economic Survey, 2011-12). Potato is an important crop in the north eastern region of India too. Agro-climatically the region is highly suitable for the cultivation of *tuber crops* (potato, sweet potato, carrot etc.) and the people in the hill areas of the region are accustomed of growing these crops. Tuber crops are not only cultivated in the hilly areas of the region but also in the plains of Assam and Tripura. These crops do not require much attention and no serious disease or insect attack are observed. These crops often get preference as risk aversion crops in this difficult region having shortage of food grains supply. Among the tuber crops, potato is grown in all the states of the region. The northeast region accounts for 6.6 per cent of the total area under potato in the country.¹

Among the states of the north east region, Assam with a share of 4.7 per cent area and 1.6 per cent of total production in India occupies prominence. In Assam, total production of potato was 975.27 thousand tonnes and area under it was 99.77 thousand hectares with a yield of 9770 kg/ha in 2012-13 (GoA, 2013-14). The average yield of potato in the state however is very low compared to average of the country (22724kg/ha during 2010-11), and demands an improvement. NITI *Ayog* also identifies increasing agricultural productivity as one of the ways to improve the income and living conditions of farm households (Chandrasekhar and Mehrotra, 2016). As there are not ample literature to study the developments of this crop in the state, this paper is an attempt to understand the nature of potato cultivation, trend in productivity and impact on farm income and employment opportunities taking few production pockets of Sonitpur district of Assam as an area of study.

Sonitpur district now occupies a prominent space in potato production in Assam with 6.8 per cent share of total potato production during 2012-13. Newspaper reportage² indicates how little known places of the district have come to prominence with emergence of hundreds of potato farmers. For example in a small place called Gingia, near Biswanath Chariali town, farmers are now cultivating potatoes on plots which ranges from 2 to more than 50 hectares.

II. Approach of the Paper

Data for this paper are derived from a primary survey. In addition to the primary data, secondary data from various government sources are used to supplement the analyses. A questionnaire was designed to collect information on area sown, output, inputs used, cost of inputs, quantity sold and prices fetched. The field data was collected through a multi-stage random sampling. In the first stage, four development blocks namely, Sakomotha, Baghmara, Biswanath and Naduar of Sonitpur district were selected on the basis of distance from the district headquarter. From each block two villages were selected purposefully on the basis of distance from the block headquarters, with one

¹ MoSPI, Government of India, 2009-10.

² Potato cultivation ushering green revolution, The Assam Tribune, April 11, 2013

village located near the block headquarters and the other at a distance. In each village 15 farmers were randomly selected for interaction.

The Cobb-Douglas production function is applied to estimate the elasticity of output with respect to the inputs. The Cobb-Douglas type production function has been widely used in analysis of agricultural production for its simplicity and reliability (Dutta, 2003).

III. Cropping Pattern and Potato Production in Assam

An analysis of cropping pattern in the State revealed that since the turn of the century the pattern has not changed significantly. In 2001-02, food grains accounted for 79.4 per cent of the cropped area which marginally declined to 77.9 per cent in 2013-14. This was mainly due to fall in area under rice and wheat by more than 1 percentage point. The area under rice fell from 73.3 per cent in 2001-02 to 72.0 per cent in 2013-14. During the same period area under wheat fell from 2.08 per cent to 0.89 per cent. But the share of area under maize and pulses increased marginally during this period (Table 1).

Table 1: Changes in cropping pattern in Assam (Area is in %)

Crops	2001-02	2013-14
Rice	73.32	72.03
Wheat	2.08	0.89
Maize	0.58	0.69
Pulses	3.41	4.32
Total Food grains	79.39	77.93
Oilseeds	9.25	9.35
Potato	2.31	2.82
Onion	0.20	0.20
Fruits & vegetables	4.88	5.90
Other crops	3.96	3.80
Total Non-Food grains	20.61	22.07

Source: Statistical Handbooks Assam (2004; 2015)

During the same period, the area under non-food crops increased marginally from 20.6 per cent to 22.1 per cent. This was on account of increase in the share of area under fruits and vegetables by more than 1 percentage point and increase in area under potato. The share of area under potato increased from 2.3 per cent in 2001-02 to 2.8 per cent in 2013-14. While the share of area under oilseeds marginally improved, the share of area under onion remained stagnant. The share of area under other cash crops declined marginally. An analysis of cropping pattern indicates that over the years it is changing gradually in favour of cash crops.

Assam accounted for 2.02 per cent of total food grains production in the country during 2011-12. Among the food grains, the state contributed 4.84 per cent of rice

production in the country (GoA, 2013-14). During the same year, the state accounted for 1.65 per cent of potato production in the country. The share of rice and potato in total production of the country shows importance of the state in terms of agricultural production. However, the poor productivity of the crops in the state is an area of concern³. For instance, yield of rice in Assam was 1780 kg/ha in 2011-12, lower than the country average of 2393 kg/ha. The yield of wheat was 1147 kg/ha which was much lower than the country average of 3177 kg/ha (Basic Statistics of North Eastern Region, 2015). All these imply that that state requires attention to raise agriculture productivity. This paper tries to understand the determinants of agriculture productivity taking potato as a case.

Growth of area, production and yield of Potato

An analysis of growth of area, production and yield shows that area under potato cultivation in Assam has increased from 81 thousand hectares in 2000-01 to 105 thousand hectares in 2012-13. The compound annual rate of growth (CAGR) of area was 2 per cent during the period 2000-01 to 2012-13. During the period 2000-01 to 2006-07, however there was fall in area under potato. The CARG of area during this period was (-) 1.4 per cent; but during the period 2007-08 to 2012-13 the area under potato registered a high CAGR of 6.9 per cent (table 2).

Table 2: Trend and growth of area, production and yield of potato in Assam

Year	Area	Production	Yield
2000-01	81	677	8254
2001-02	80	621	7752
2002-03	75	590	7815
2003-04	78	543	6972
2004-05	73	589	8058
2005-06	70	354	5079
2006-07	78	505	6493
2007-08	75	521	6926
2008-09	78	516	6585
2009-10	83	600	7263
2010-11	85	658	7735
2011-12	98	683	6978
2012-13	105	806	7675
CARG (2000-01 to 2012-13)	2.00	1.3	-0.4
CARG (2000-01 to 2006-07)	-1.4	-6.9	-5.4
CARG (2007-08 to 2012-13)	6.9	9.2	2.3

Note: Area in '000 Hectare, Production in '000 Tonnes & Yield in Kg/Hectare

Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam (2001-02 to 2013-14)

³ There could be several explanations for poor agriculture productivity in Assam. Apart from the institutional factors of assurance of good quality seeds, provisioning of irrigation etc., repeated waves of floods and subsequent externalities of erosion and sand deposition are also the causes.

During the period 2000-01 to 2012-13 total production of potato increased from 677 thousand tonnes to 806 thousand tonnes. The CARG of potato production during this period was 1.3 per cent. The potato production during the period 2000-01 to 2006-07, however declined sharply with an annual decline of (-) 6.7 per cent; but, during the period 2007-08 to 2012-13 production of potato in the state increased sharply at an annual rate of 9.2 per cent⁴. It was observed that during the period 2000-01 to 2012-13 productivity of potato in the state declined from 8254 kg/ha in 2000-01 to 7675 kg/ha hectare in 2012-13 at an annual rate of (-0.4 percent). This fall in productivity during the period 2000-01 to 2006-07, however was much sharper at (-) 5.4 per cent. Later in the period 2007-08 to 2012-13, potato productivity increased significantly with CARG of 2.3 per cent.

The decline in productivity of potato during the entire period is a cause of concern and calls for attention. There is need to identify the causes and make necessary efforts to improve productivity and ensure improve well-being of the farmers.

IV. Input Use, Costs and Returns

An attempt was made to measure the quantity of various inputs used in production of potato and estimate the costs and returns assuming the role of inputs in raising productivity of the crop. The principle inputs used in potato production in the study area are; seeds (HYV as well as local variety), chemical fertilisers, organic manure (cow dung and oil cake), labour, machinery (tractor and sprayer) and irrigation (pump sets with diesel). The farmers are using both HYV (*Punjab Pokhraj*, *Punjab jyoti*, *Mohendra Jyoti*, *Super S1*) as well as local seeds. But because of high cost of HYV seeds, farmers also found using local variety of seeds⁵. Field visit revealed high difference of average prices of HYV (Rs. 62/kg) and local seeds (Rs. 20/kg). Regarding fertiliser, farmers were found to be using mainly Di Amino Phosphate (DAP)⁶. Along with DAP they were using Urea, Potash and Super in limited quantity. The price of DAP was Rs. 27/ kg, Urea Rs. 9/ kg, Potash Rs. 18/kg and Super Phosphate at Rs. 9/kg. Farmers were found to be using enough quantity of locally available cow dung and oil cake. The estimated quantity of seed, fertiliser and manure used per hectare is presented in table 3.

⁴ The potato production in Assam declined during the period 2001-06 due to fall in both area and yield. The fall as informed during the field visit was due to non-availability of quality seed and lack of scientific knowledge to cultivate potato. After 2006 the situation has changed because of incorporation of technology and state support on various fronts. This issue require a detailed study.

⁵ During the field visit it was found that most of the farmer in Biswanath and Sakomatha block were using HYV seed and farmers in other two blocks were using more of local variety as majority of farmers were small and marginal and could not afford HYV seed.

⁶ DAP is considered to be a balanced fertiliser. DAP or diammonium phosphate is a widely applied phosphorous fertiliser, and its use has been dramatically increasing.

Table 3: Quantity of seed, fertiliser and manure used by the farmers

Block	Seed (in kg/hectare)	Fertiliser kg/hectare	Manure in kg/hectare
Baghmara	2050	400	673
Biswanath	1950	300	2730
Naduar	2038	320	1417
Sakomotha	2100	240	2247

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Relatively lesser quantity of seed was used per hectare in Biswanath block. This is because to the fact that farmers in this block used HYV seed in greater proportion than other blocks. The quantity of HYV seed required in a given area is reported to be less than the local variety. Use of chemical fertiliser used per hectare was the highest in Baghmara block (400 kg per hectare) and lowest in Sakomotha block (240 kg per hectare) and it appeared that low use is complemented by use of organic manure. Overall it appears that use of locally available organic manure is the priority among the farmers. Field survey revealed that the high use of manure in Biswanath and Sakomotha blocks was mainly due to the availability factor; this was not the case in other two blocks. On the other hand there was less variation in the use of chemical fertiliser in the study blocks. Here emerge two issues. One, along with the availability factor of manure, there is need to test the conditions of soil to assess the quantum of manure or fertiliser required to be supplemented. Two, variation in potato productivity would indicate that there is need to assess the soil conditions and accordingly make provision to nourish the soil. In case there is no significant difference in productivity, looking at the variations on the quantum of chemical fertiliser and organic manure applied, it would imply that farmers in the study area are rational in application. This however is not the case as it appears from the field data that high potato productivity in Biswanath and Sakomotha is largely correlated to use of manure in higher quantum; and in Baghmara and Naduar block limited use of fertiliser and manure has affected potato productivity. Moreover, one area requires exploration to what extent price of fertilisers and capability factor of the farmers inhabit application.

Potato crop is affected by fungal disease called 'blight'. It is also affected by various insects. Farmers in the study area use primarily Indofil M-45 and Cutter Pillar to control diseases and infections. The price of Indofil M-45 was Rs. 440 per kg and the price of Cutter pillar was Rs. 800 per litre. The quantity of chemical used per hectare is given in the table 4.

Table 4: Quantity of chemical used per hectare by the farmers

Block	Indofil M-45 (in kg/hectare)	Cutter Pillar(in litre/hectare)
Baghmara	5.33	1.94
Biswanath	6.93	1.97
Naduar	4.64	1.85
Sakomotha	8.83	7.33

Source: Field Survey, 2015

The table 4 shows that there are variations in use of Indofil M-45 used per hectare in the study blocks. Field interaction revealed the variations is due to capability factor to purchase the chemicals as well as limited availability. Other inputs used in potato production were labour, machinery and irrigation. Labour use in potato production has been measured in terms of number of labour days. Machinery used has also been measured in terms of number of days used. Irrigation used was measured in terms of hours the pumps run for providing water. The level of use of these inputs is presented in the table 5.

Table 5: Labour, machinery and irrigation used by the farmers

Blocks	Labour (in days/hectare)	Machinery (in days/hectare)	Irrigation (in hours/hectare)
Baghmara	150	10	20
Biswanath	147	11	19.5
Naduar	168	13	18
Sakomotha	140	10	18

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Labour use data indicate that cultivation in one hectare provide opportunity for one person to get engaged for half of the year. Man days spent in other inputs indicate that potato cultivation in the study area is labour intensive. It is however noticed that intensity of labour use (Table 5) and productivity of potato (Table 6) have no association in the study area. All the surveyed households were found using privately procured boring and electric pumps to supply water in their fields. Irrigation is necessary as potato in the area is grown only during the winter.

Table 6: Yield rate of potato in the surveyed farms

Blocks	Yield (in kg/hectare)
Biswanath	25600
Sakomotha	20150
Baghmara	19700
Naduar	18775

Source: Field Survey, 2015

The survey found that yield of potato in the study area is much higher than the state average and comparable to the country average. The high yield rate of potato in Biswanath and Sakomotha blocks can be attributed to extensive use of organic manure. On the other hand, in case of non-availability of organic manure in adequate quantity, the farmers supplement the requirements with chemical fertiliser. However, the price of chemical fertiliser price acts as an impediment, as reported by the farm households. The size class of operational holdings of the sample potato farmers indicate that that most of the farmers in Biswanath and Sukomotha blocks have medium (4 to 10 ha of size) and large holdings (more than 10 ha). In Biswanath block two third of the farmers have medium and large holdings and in Sakomotha block 60 per cent of the farmers have medium and large holdings. On the other hand in Bagmara and Naduar blocks 43

and 37 per cent farmers respectively have medium and large holdings. It appears that larger size of holdings help the farmers to intensify inputs use and obtain high yield. The yield rate of potato was found to increase with increase in the size of holdings (Table 7).

Table 7: Yield rate of potato by size of holdings

Size of holdings (in Hectares)	Yield (in Kg/hectare)
Small (1-2 hectares)	19800
Semi-medium (2-4 hectares)	20113
Medium (4-10 hectares)	20781
Large (10 and above hectares)	21053

Source: Field Survey, 2015

The farmers in the study area produce potato primarily for market and sell through middlemen at wholesale price. It was estimated that about 95 per cent of produce goes to the market. The average price of potato received by the farmers varied from Rs. 9.5 in Naduar block to Rs. 7.6 in Sakomotha block during the time of field survey⁷ (Table 8).

Table 8: Gross revenue per hectare

Blocks	Average price per kg (in Rs)	Quantity sold per hectare (in kg)	Revenue per hectare (in Rs)
Biswanath	7.91	23177	183326
Naduar	9.53	18156	173029
Baghmara	8.07	19267	155483
Sakomotha	7.63	19648	149913

Source: Field Survey, 2015

The gross revenue per hectare is dependent on yield rate and price⁸. The cost of production per hectare of potato helps to estimate the net revenue. Table 9 indicate that there is less variation in input costs across the study blocks, but there is productivity led variations in net revenue. We also find indication that higher yield is associated with use of fertiliser and manure.

⁷ Price of potato varied from block to block mainly because of different harvesting time. In Naduar and Bagmara blocks potato was harvested early in the month of October and November. So they get high price due to limited supply in the market during that period. In Biswanath block potato is harvested late so they get lesser price.

⁸ Price of potato varied from block to block mainly because of different harvesting time. In Naduar and Bagmara blocks potato was harvested early in the month of October and November. So they get high price due to limited supply in the market. In Biswanath block potato is harvested late so they get lesser price.

Table 9: Net revenue per hectare

Blocks	Total revenue per hectare (in Rs.)	Total cost per hectare (in Rs.)	Net Revenue per hectare (in Rs.)
Biswanath	183326	130155	53171
Naduar	173029	120838	52191
Baghmara	155483	117835	37648
Sakomotha	149913	114222	35691
All Total	165438	120763	44675

Source: Field Survey, 2015

The table 9 reveals that net return per hectare of potato cultivation varies with the yield (the case of Biswanath block) and the price received at market (Naduar block). The costs of production on the other hand vary with the amount of inputs used. Overall it reveals that to enhance the income of the farmers there is need to raise the yield and have a system to ensure remunerative price for the crop⁹.

V. Determinants of Potato Productivity

An analysis of determinants of potato productivity is important to understand relative importance of various inputs. The farmers in study area use seeds, organic manure, chemical fertilisers, labour, machineries as inputs to produce potato. This analysis however uses only the variables indicated in Table 10 to understand the determinants.

Specification of the model

The Cobb- Douglas type production function is used to estimate the relationship output and inputs used. The function is specified as below:

$$Y = A.F^{b_1}.M^{b_2}.MU^{b_3}.SC^{b_4}.FS^{b_5}$$

Where,

Y = Output per hectare (kg), F = chemical fertiliser per hectare (in kg), M = manure per hectare (in kg), MU = machinery use per hectare (in days), SC = seed cost per hectare (in Rupees) and FS = farm size (in hectare). 'A' stands for technological parameters.

The Log-Linear form of the above function may be written as:

$$\log Y = a + b_1 \log F + b_2 \log M + b_3 \log MU + b_4 \log SC + b_5 \log FS + \mu \quad \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

⁹ There are four regulated markets for agriculture procurement in the district. A review of data on arrival of crops in these regulated markets would reveal that though prices appear to be remunerative (for example potato price reached a maxima of Rs. 1600/ quintal on 12 December 2016 and a minimum of Rs. 800/ quintal during the period November 1, 2016 to January 15, 2017; the quantum of potato arrived were meagre at 15 quintal and 8 quintal on respective dates. This was a case of regulated market of Dhekiajuli (Data derived from agmark.gov.in) There is scope to look at this issue in detail.

Here, μ denotes the disturbance term that is assumed to follow the classical assumptions of OLS estimation. The intercept term captures the effect of excluded variables. The regression coefficients represent output elasticity with respect to the explanatory variables.

Results and Discussion

Initially, the regression was run with seven variables. But correlation between the variables labour and machinery was found to be positive and significant. Similarly, there was a positive correlation between chemical cost and fertilisers. Hence, to avoid multicollinearity, variables labour and chemical cost were removed and finally five explanatory variables were considered for the analysis. The result of the regression analysis in equation 1 is presented in table 10.

Table 10: Regression result for determinants of potato productivity

Dependent Variable: Log of output (Y) per hectare				
Independent Variables	Co-efficient	SE	t-value	p-value
Log Fertiliser (F)	0.35	0.122	2.905***	0.004
Log Manure (M)	0.23	0.038	6.059***	0.00
Log Machinery Use (MU)	0.29	0.124	2.405**	0.018
Log Seed Cost (SC)	0.076	0.051	1.503	0.136
Log Farm Size (FS)	0.037	0.039	0.952	0.343
Constant	3.89	1.134	3.434	0.001
R-Square	0.35			
Adjusted R Square	0.32			

Note: *** and ** indicate significant at 1 and 5 per cent level respectively.

The results show that the coefficients of manure and fertiliser are positive and significant level. However the output was found to be more elastic to fertiliser than manure. The coefficient of machinery is also positive and significant. The coefficients of seed cost and farm size are also positive but not statistically significant at any critical level. Thus, it is seen that, among the five explanatory variables output is more elastic to fertiliser followed by manure and machinery use. The relationship between farm size and productivity in case of potato was positive but not significant. Hence, positive relationship between farm size and productivity could not be confirmed. The sum of the coefficient in Cobb-Douglas production function indicates returns to scale. The sum of the coefficient was found to be 0.98 which indicated decreasing returns to scale in potato production.

Thus, it can be concluded that potato production is highly elastic to inputs like fertiliser, manure and machinery. Application of seeds and farm size though were not found to be significant at any critical level its' positive co-efficient indicates that it has a direct relation with level of output of potato. It can be suggested to encourage judicious use of chemical fertilisers and organic manure along with HYV seed to raise productivity of potato.

VI. Conclusion

An assessment on the condition of the soil and subsequent requirement of inputs for nourishment appear as prime tasks to sustain agriculture productivity in the flood ravaged state of Assam. In this state food and nutritional security to a large extent is being ensured by cultivation of *Rabi* crops. In this context access and provisioning of organic manure and fertiliser, quality seeds and irrigation are appearing as prime contributing factors of productivity. The access factor of inputs also leads to the discussion on agriculture credit and, input and farm subsidy to attain larger goal of sustainable rural livelihood.

As revealed from the field survey there is production boom in the study pockets. Here the concerns are to prevent post-harvest losses, ensure storage facilities¹⁰ so that remunerative price for the farmers can be ensured. One positive indication inferred from the field survey is preference for the use of organic manure over chemical fertiliser. This is to an extent being ensured by the availability factor at village level. Concern is also there to address the negative externalities of chemicals in rural areas. Steps are also needed for ensuring a direct link between farmers and remunerative markets to sustain the enthusiasm of the farmers.

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¹⁰ Assam State Agriculture Marketing Board now has 5 operational cold storages (none in Sonitpur district) with altogether 6500 MT capacity. It is reported that disruption of power supply hits these existing cold storage facilities. There are two more under construction with a proposed provisioning of 10000 MT. Moreover, in the state there about 60 private cold storages with a capacity of 100,000 MT in the state, largely caters to store 20-25 lakh MT of potato imported to Assam annually (The Telegraph, April 13, 2015). In the study locality of Gingia, near Biswanath there is a cold storage primarily for potato; but reportedly inadequate to cater the needs.

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Book Review**Of Urban Street Vendors and their Struggles****Babu P Remesh***

Informal Markets, Livelihood and Politics: Street Vendors in Urban India (2017), Debdulal Saha, Routledge, Abington and New York; pp: XX + 217; Price: Rs. 795/

As rightly pointed out by (Late) Prof. Sharit Bhowmik in his Foreword, the book under review is one of the first comprehensive research studies on street vending in India. It provides a holistic understanding of all major aspects concerning urban street vending, including market structures, profile of workers, livelihood struggles, governance, and policy issues. The discussions and analyses in this book are presented in the broader context of informal economy and, thus, it also provides insightful discussions and raises important theoretical questions on informal labour markets.

Apart from the introduction, the contents in the book are schemed into six chapters. At the outset, the broader context of burgeoning informalisation in India is discussed, highlighting the increased prominence of self-employment. It is shown that, over time, given the dwindling employment opportunities in farm, non-farm and formal segments of the economy, street vending has become a major self-employment option for a growing majority of urban poor. Subsequently, a detailed conceptualisation of informal economy is attempted. Various dimensions of the informal sector (such as economic, social, gender, legal, institutional and cultural) are explained in the introductory section, besides detailing out the types and composition of informal workers. Based on available secondary data, especially the latest rounds of NSSO, the section also offers a brief account on the informal workers in India. Eventually, the discussion moves to the central-theme of urban street vending, stating major concerns addressed in the study. All these provide an adequate preamble and contextualisation to the empirical research reported in this volume.

The current scenario of street vending in India is elaborated in detail, in the first four chapters of this book, based on a rich body of primary data gathered from 10 urban centres, covering a total of 2000 street vendors. Chapter 1 begins with discussing the profile of street vendors addressing the central questions such as 'who are they?' 'where do they come from?' and 'what are their socio-economic and demographic backgrounds?'. Accordingly, it provides disaggregate analyses on a range of aspects

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concerning the respondents of the study, including: gender composition, religion, social-group, marital status, age, migration particulars, income details, literacy levels and household information. Essentially, it is established that the socio-demographic profile of the workers is very crucial in determining the type and nature of street vending urban centres.

Chapter 2 discusses various categories of urban street vending and explains the structures and characteristics of the occupation. The chapter also highlights the determinants that facilitate and sustain urban street vending as a livelihood option. It is shown that a plethora of 'push' and 'pull' factors influence the choice of urban street vending as a livelihood strategy, where social contacts and social networking assume crucial roles. The chapter also explains about a range of other aspects such as upward mobility in the occupation, backward and forward linkages, sources of credit and so on. A brief discussion of customer views on street vending is also included in this chapter. The descriptions in the chapter are supplemented with short notes on all the 10 urban markets and brief case studies, explaining various aspects of the street vending such as conditions of work, survival strategies, informal systems of credit and trust-based relationships at the workplace. The thick analyses provided help the reader to understand the hard realities and complexities of street vending and the multiple layers of insecurities experienced by the urban street vendors. It is shown that the occupation is much more than a mere source of income to the vendors, as it considerably alters their positions, spaces and relative power relations within the society.

Chapter 3 delves more deeply into the issues and anxieties of vendors apropos occupying public space as their workplace. 'How the use of public space for vending purposes affects the dignity of workers?' is a central question addressed here. With the aid of rich empirical evidences, it is shown that street vendors are continuously under the threat of eviction. Given this situation, they become victims of a nexus of bribe collectors, rent seekers and extorters including municipal authorities, police and some 'influential vendors'.

Livelihood insecurities, uncertainties and vulnerabilities experienced by the vendors are explained in Chapter 4. It is shown that a multitude of factors including competition at the marketplace, prolonged working hours and borrowings from money lenders with high rate of interests intensify the daily-struggles of the vendors. The chapter also illuminates the crucial role of social relations and mutual support systems, which often help the vendors to cop up with adverse situations. Given the poor quality of governance structures, street vending is mostly operated through illegal arrangements, where payment of bribes to local authorities and police becomes a survival strategy. Based on the primary data, it is reported that, nearly 5-10 per cent of total income of the vendors is extorted through rent seeking.

Chapter 5 is exclusively on trade unions and collective bargaining. Detailed discussions on grass root organisations such as SEWA, NASVI and Nidan make the chapter very informative. The analyses here provide deep insights into the question of freedom of

association of street vendors, underlining the constraints as well as facilitating factors in the organising path for street vendors. The last chapter's focus is on legislating street vending. Accordingly, it begins with a discussion on legal recognition and regulation of street vending, duly linking it to various milestones in the policy-front such as National Policy on Urban Street Vendors in 2004 and Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014. The contested nature of the issue of legalising street vending is clearly explained in the discussion. On the one hand, it is argued that legal recognition will reduce the insecurities and harassment faced by the street-vendors. At the same time, it is also viewed that it will further ruin the trade by bringing in more rigidity, rent-seeking and malpractices. The latter part of the chapter offers a brief assessment of urban street vending in India from the perspective of 'decent work' framework of ILO. Accordingly, the chapter keeps a balance between national and international policy frameworks while conceptualising legality and dignity of work of urban street vendors.

On the whole, the book offers a very rich reading-experience on urban street vendors, as it touches upon all the major dimensions of the occupation, including living and working conditions, governance structures, politics of survival, issues of regulation, livelihood strategies, questions of collectivisation and policy aspects. It testifies the researcher's hard work, for a fairly long period. The approach followed by the researcher is truly interdisciplinary and the analyses in the volume exhibit commendable skills in combining both secondary as well as primary data and in blending both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

While appreciating the utility and relevance of the volume, it is also important to highlight certain deficiencies, noticed during the review. It is felt that the book would have contained some details on the sampling procedure. The readers would certainly like to be informed as to how the 10 urban centres are identified and the sample sizes of 200 workers are arrived at in each of the study areas.

Notwithstanding the above mentioned issue, there is no doubt that the book is a welcome addition to the extant literature on informal sector and urban street vending in India. The book is of extreme relevance to the researchers and students in Development Studies, Urban Sociology, Public Policy, Informal Sector and Labour Studies. It is also equally useful for policy planners and law makers, as it provides empirically-embedded analyses on crucial issues concerning regulation/legalisation of street vending and on protection of livelihoods of street vendors.

Book Review**Reading Discontent in Contemporary Feminism**

Arunima Deka*

Feminisms of Discontent- Global Contestations (2015), Ashleigh Barnes (Ed.), Oxford University Press, New Delhi, pp xxii + 252, Rs 850.

Feminisms of Discontent presents work of some of the foremost feminist scholars who wish to revisit the idea of discontent within feminist thought. This book deals with a wide range of issues like that of sexuality, queer politics, neoliberal governmentality, ideas of equality, freedom etc and is divided into two parts. The book centrally engages with key themes like 'subordination', 'dominance', 'governance', 'carceral' feminism among others. The introduction sets the tone of the book with an attempt to question the trap of sex/gender binary found in feminist literature all over the world and to move beyond. In exploring the various sources of discontent within feminist project, the editor cautions us not to cast discontent as a 'negative phenomenon' (p. xxi) rather points that it helps us to remain forever engaged.

Brenda Crossman starts her essay by making a claim that 'feminism is in need of a makeover' and need to move from 'criticism' as a 'fault finding exercise' to 'critique' which she opines is more 'self- reflexive' (p. 3, 4). Taking the case of Julian Assange and the case of sexual assault on two women, Crossman attempts to analyse the response of feminists, more importantly that of Naomi Wolfe to this case to build her argument about how power may be implicated. She points out that feminist critique must recognise the other dimensions of such cases and have to 'explore the contested meanings of such allegations' and under what conditions such meaning are always produced, where there is a need to look into 'entire apparatus of sexual assault legislation' through the lens of 'governance feminism' (pp. 16-17).

Ratna Kapur discusses in her chapter the tensions embedded in feminists' engagement with law in India. She discusses the challenge confronting feminism in taking up issues of equality and also violence against women. She points out how trends of 'dominance feminism' hugely impacted feminists in India in projecting their claims as distinguished 'Indian' from western feminism and also overwhelmingly focused on a politics of 'victimisation' (p. 24). The need to continuously prove their 'nationalist credentials' and to distinctly project 'Indian womanhood' as the ideal persisted amongst the Indian feminists (p. 25), which in turn made a huge impact on the discourse of rape law itself. Further elaborating on the challenges confronting contemporary feminism, Kapur takes up cases of 'sexual subalterns' (p. 28) gays, lesbians and sex workers, and also the problems of appropriating gender agenda by the Hindu Right which in turn have led to estrangement

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of Muslim women from the movement itself. She examines the 'Slutwalk' campaign around the world to once again question the politics of 'dominance feminism', and how is campaign, according to her, provided a platform to discuss issues of 'autonomy, sexual integration and pleasure' (p. 36). She reads Slutwalk as a form of feminism 'lite' (p. 35) not intended to bring about huge transformation but which can provide newer ways to look into female subjectivity

Kerry Rittich explores the politics of 'gender equality' and points out how the concept has been now appropriated and 'institutionalised' as a part of contemporary liberal democratic practices. However, despite being part of these project, feminists themselves need to inquire into issues of related importance like how these projects 'interact with formal rights and entitlements, alter established conceptions of gender equality, (p. 47) etc. Rittich further delves into the binary of public private and also the divide between women's human rights and economic interests to make her point of increased socio economic inequalities and insecurities, and also changes in the terms of engaging with the state for protection. The politicisation of the concept of gender equality has turned it into a 'subject of negotiation and calculation: what it is good for, how much and for whom' (p. 60) the author very correctly points out. She points to the diverse way in which the concept is adopted and also designed, promoted and measured, turning it into a 'contested subject' (p. 59). As a viable alternative, the author suggests considering 'myriad social and economic projects that have implications for women's rights' (p. 63).

Margaret Thornton points out the tension between freedom and equality within neoliberal thought and how wider acceptance of neoliberalism itself has augmented gender inequality and also privileged freedom over equality. The spread of agenda of a neoliberal state and globalisation has left very little alternative before feminist groups who have all throughout relied on state for seeking protection and reforms. Thornton also reflects on the irony of feminist theorists' aversion to the notion of equality itself, some marking themselves more towards a pro market stand, which is nothing less than 'feminist melancholia' (p. 89).

Lakshmi Arya problematises questions of freedom and normativity and attempts to find out whether they have relevance in non-western cultures. She explores questions of adultery, marriage, fidelity using archival sources, ethnographies and individual memoirs of late 19th and 20th century Mysore, where these practices were found to go beyond the limits of given normativity and universal. 'The adulterous woman does not exist as she does in Western feminism' (p. 116), Arya points out. And, therefore the emancipatory route proposed by West might not be applicable in Indian context.

The second section of the book explores feminism and other identity categories, starting with Ashleigh Barnes' critique of the normative framework for defining identity of 'child' as found in UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and questions what power configurations are at work to construct such identity. Barnes aptly brings out the North South divide in framing such definition of a 'universal child', and not just provide critique for exclusion of the 'non-western child' (pp. 126-127) but also questions its applicability 'within the West' itself (p. 131). Barnes further explains the exclusionary nature of the CRC definition by taking up cases of children whose parents have problems of substance abuse, to contest the given notion of childhood as a period of 'happiness, love and

understanding' (p. 129). By critiquing the normative framework of these definitions, Barnes aptly exposes the politics of such constructions.

Vasuki Nesiiah uses a feminist critique to investigate the identity category called 'victims' of human rights catastrophe within the area of transnational justice, where this category has gained a lot of importance. She argues that within this framework of transnational justice, 'victims' become visible through 'interplay between icons and measures' (p. 154), their 'victimhood' is venerated as sacred on one hand, and on the other their narratives are incorporated into databases and other measurement practices. She points out how truth commissions reflects this duality by constructing an iconic category of victims and also by breaking down their testimonies into quantifiable database mostly guided by donors interest to develop best practice knowledge to aid in making future recommendations. Marking a distinct departure, Maneesha Deckha talks of critical animal studies in her chapter. Both western feminist thought and also post colonial feminist literature has based themselves on a masculinist, human/non human binary. Rather, she points out the need to adopt a 'posthumanist' approach to explore relationship of power embedded in such binary and in the 'idea of species difference' (p. 179). Deckha contends very aptly how human-animal binary goes on to create other differences and hierarchies too, and urges post colonial feminism to adopt post human sensibility of critical animal studies.

The final two chapters of the volume explore queer politics as a way of locating some discontents that figures within feminist discourse. Aziza Ahmed, while critically looking at the photos of female soldiers torturing male Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison, puts to question the limitations of dominance and cultural feminism perspective, and also thereby the 'erasure of Muslim men as victims of war on terror' WOT (p. 195). She critiques the trends of feminism which focuses only on women as victims, which in turn don't allow a Muslim prisoner to be seen as abused. As an alternative to this analytical framework, she proposes queer theory to examine relationships of race, sexuality and gender. She points out how queer theory as an analytical tool can help us looking at the 'blind spots' of feminism (p. 211) and move away from the 'male/female subordination dynamic' (p. 210) to understand the harm done to men too by the WOT. Arvind Narrain starts his chapter by raising pertinent question of queer politics and its larger connection to democratic politics itself. He asks the question whether queer politics is merely about rights of queer citizens? As an answer to this question, he points out that queer politics should not merely demand for equal rights for LGBT persons, rather questions notions of purity, caste, gender, sexuality and other hegemonic structures of society (p. 218).

The volume is an important contribution in reading these discontents with the current socio political positioning of a neoliberal state and provides us clearer clues to the future political projects of feminists' engagements. The essays in the volume attest to the importance of interventions made by feminist scholars to look at the discontents with some of the dominant feminist theoretical positions by calling into question how race, sexuality, religion, class, region also plays an important role in framing positions. It attempts at unpacking the crisis in feminism today in addressing the predicament of moving beyond just male - female binary. The title itself suggests contested meaning of feminism and helps us locate other peripheral identities of race, and sexuality to understand the dynamics of gender and power better.