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About *Intellectual Resonance* ***DCAC Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies***

The DCAC Research Journal *Intellectual Resonance* is an annual interdisciplinary, double-blind peer-reviewed/refereed journal that provides Faculty and Research Scholars an academic space to submit their unpublished research papers, book reviews, and research essays for publication. The Journal caters to the disciplines of Humanities and Social Sciences and is published in English. The Journal was started in 2013, with ISSN: 2321-2594. The Journal has an Editorial Advisory Board comprising scholars from Indian and Foreign Universities and Institutions. The Editorial Board comprises Prof. Rajiv Chopra, Principal DCAC, as the Editor-in-Chief and Dr. Animesh Mohapatra, Associate Professor, English Department, as Editor, along with a few other faculty members of the College as Members. The interdisciplinary foci of the Journal enable dialogues and convergences across disciplinary domains ranging from Literature, Cinema, Finance, Public Policy, Media and Cultural Studies, Communication Studies, History, Marketing, and allied subjects to name just a few. This diversity and range provide the readers and researchers a vibrant and rigorous academic opportunity for fostering critical thinking and participate in creating new areas of interdisciplinary research and knowledge dissemination.

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Editorial

We have immense pleasure in presenting to our readers volume 7 of *Intellectual Resonance*, a double-blind peer-reviewed/refereed research journal published annually by Delhi College of Arts & Commerce, University of Delhi. Adopting a multidisciplinary perspective, the journal invites contributors to engage in exploring interlinkages among diverse domains of knowledge such as commerce, economics, liberal arts and mass communications. The papers published here have been subjected to a rigorous double-blind peer-review process. It is gratifying to note that a substantial number of papers were received, and our diligent referees and editorial board members made every effort to ensure that this volume of the journal contributes significantly to our understanding of society, economy and culture.

The present volume comprises ten papers, one research note and two book reviews. The five papers reflecting on literature and culture address key questions concerning gerontology, climate change, traditional Indian games as a source of wellness, the political uses of soft power, and social realism in early English novels. The papers dealing with contemporary economy and operations of the financial system provide refreshingly new points of view on accessing renewable energy sources in schools, CSR initiatives in Uttar Pradesh, investors' perception of the stock market in Sikkim, and the performance of Indian textile industry in relation to the export and import of eleven items. The inclusion of a bibliometric analysis, one research note and two book reviews add variety and value to the journal.

We believe that the papers, the research note and the book reviews featured in the current volume of *Intellectual Resonance* will deepen our understanding of vitally important issues concerning contemporary culture, Indian economy and operations of financial institutions.

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Reclaiming Identity and Challenging Ageism: A Study of Aging in Geetanjali Shree's *Tomb of Sand*

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Abstract

Aging, an inevitable facet of human existence, has historically been viewed through a lens of decline and marginalization, especially for women. Cultural and societal narratives have often relegated the elderly, particularly women, to roles of insignificance, reducing them to household possessions and social ornaments. However, recent advancements in cultural and literary gerontology have begun to challenge these perspectives, offering more nuanced and inclusive views on aging. This study delves into Geetanjali Shree's *Tomb of Sand*, a groundbreaking narrative that redefines the concept of aging through its protagonist, Ma, an eighty-year-old widow who embarks on a journey of self-discovery and empowerment. The paper attempts to challenge the ageist stereotypes perpetuated by modernization and popular culture, which often prioritize youth and productivity over the wisdom and experiences of the elderly. By examining Ma's journey, this study emphasizes the importance of creating an inclusive society that values the elderly's contributions, enabling them to reconstruct their identities with dignity and pride. The paper further explores how humanistic gerontology principles integrate literary and cultural analyses to present aging as a multifaceted experience shaped by gender, race, and societal norms. It argues for a collective effort to shift cultural narratives, fostering a world where the elderly are celebrated and their identities respected. This positive reframing of aging highlights the potential for personal and societal transformation, advocating for a more equitable representation of aging in literature and society.

Keywords: ageism, cultural gerontology, modernization, self-discovery, intersectionality.

Aging is an inevitable part of life, and since ancient times people have sought a fountain of life, elixirs, and herbal powders to extend

the strength and vitality of young age. Grand narratives like religion and culture have instilled the idea that youth is equal to desirability, adventure, and longevity of beauty, and on the other hand old age or aging is associated with reverence, wisdom, and experience. But in mainstream society and popular culture, they are not evenly represented rather, the former is considered better than the latter. Especially with the advancement of modernization and industrialization in the West during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and with the onset of the Eugenics movement and industrialization along with expressions like ‘survival of the fittest (Spenser 1864)’ propagated the idea that one’s worth is determined by the ability to sell labour and producers of the market goods are the only valuable members of our society.

This perspective has historical roots that extend to the 18th century when Enlightenment ideals and utilitarian philosophies reshaped societal structures. Thinkers like Jeremy Bentham emphasized human value in terms of productivity and utility, sidelining those deemed non-contributory, such as children, the elderly, and the disabled. The Poor Laws in England institutionalized this marginalization by treating dependency as a societal burden, reflecting an economic and moral judgment. Simultaneously, the burgeoning medical sciences began pathologizing deviations from normative physical and mental standards, further stigmatizing aging and illness (Butler, 2008). Mary Wollstonecraft, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1793), critiqued the gendered bias in these discourses, which often portrayed aging women as biologically inferior to men, an attitude that reinforced the cultural and literary depictions of the elderly as frail, burdensome, or malevolent (Wollstonecraft, 2001). These historical frameworks established a legacy of ageism that persists, underscoring the necessity of reevaluating these narratives within modern contexts.

The Workhouse Test Act, though not a specific piece of legislation, refers to a principle central to the implementation of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 in England and Wales. This policy aimed to instil discipline among the poor and discourage dependency, reflecting the Victorian belief that poverty was often a result of moral failings or laziness. Families entering workhouses were frequently separated, and the living environment was austere, reinforcing the punitive nature of the system. Workhouses treated older people as a homogenous group

without recognizing their specific vulnerabilities or contributions. The assumption that all recipients of aid were morally deficient dehumanized elderly individuals, reinforcing stereotypes of older adults as burdensome or unproductive. However, the workhouse test faced widespread criticism for its inhumanity, with many individuals preferring extreme poverty over entering such institutions. Over time, public outcry and shifting societal attitudes led to significant reforms and the eventual decline of the workhouse system, which remains a symbol of institutionalized poverty in 19th-century Britain (Englander, 1998; Rose, 1971).

Recently, the advent of voices from below that provided the platform for underprivileged and ignored members of society paved the path for several new disciplines of inquiry and investigation such as subaltern studies, disability studies, critical race theory, etc. One such study that has emerged that conceptualizes age studies in a sociocultural apparatus is called cultural gerontology, which is a branch of humanistic gerontology. Humanistic gerontology centers around the interventions of branches of humanities such as literature, history, philosophy, arts, theatre, and ethics by observing aging and old age facets:

Historically, our Western culture has tended to focus on aging almost exclusively in terms of physical deterioration, but, as noted, gerontologists are becoming increasingly aware of the many spectrums of age: chronological age (the numerical total of years lived), biological age (the strength, health [...] of the body [...]), social age (the culturally constructed, often prescriptive behaviors linked to a chronological numeral), and individual age (our self-image, which is often at variance with all the other markers of age). (Deats and Lenker Introduction 9)

The field of discipline of old age was observed in context with human body only. From the seventeenth century onwards, and more especially since the late nineteenth century, various biomedical disciplines—such as anatomy, physiology, and cellular biology—have sought to decipher the basic operational mechanisms of the body (Hartung and Kunow 17). Upon closer look, inquiring about the experiences of aging only from a chronological time is skewed, unjust, and superficial. The experience of aging is shaped by multiple factors such as gender, race, class, literacy, nationality, culture, and tradition. Thus, there are several expressions and expectations unique to one's identity in a society, such as 'biological clock is ticking' is used specifically for women

and is a euphemism for her declining egg count as she grows old. For teenagers, everybody else is old, and throughout life, the biological clock ticks in a different rhythm for women than for men, so that the conjuncture of life and time is fluid and highly relativistic. Such discriminatory attitude towards growing old comes under the experiences of ageism.

Ageism is discrimination, prejudice, or stereotyping based on a person's age. It can manifest in various forms, such as discriminatory practices in employment, biased attitudes in healthcare, and negative portrayals in media and culture. Ageism affects both younger and older individuals, although it is most commonly associated with discrimination against older adults. The term "ageism" was coined by Dr Robert N. Butler in 1969. Butler, a prominent gerontologist and psychiatrist, introduced the term to describe systematic stereotyping and discrimination against people because they are old, similar to how racism and sexism refer to discrimination based on race and gender, respectively.

The intersection of life and time is fluid and highly relativistic. The concept of being 'old' and the experience of aging for those labelled as 'old' are influenced not only by biological factors such as illness or pain but also by cultural frameworks that are perceived to encapsulate the essence of aging. In *Stories of Ageing*, Mike Hepworth says that ageing is at the same time both a collective human condition and an individualized subjective experience. Literary gerontology, one of the dimensions of cultural gerontology, integrates literary work into aging studies and has helped link the objective aspect of old age with the subjective experience of aging. Under literary gerontology, discussions on age and gender have majorly been the analyses of literary responses to female aging.

"We think we age by nature; we are insistently and precociously being aged by culture" (Gullette qt. in Mellencamp 314). It is important to reflect on aging from the lens of markers of culture like cinema, art, and literature. The cultural construct of a particular time and space reflects the expression and attitude towards the marginal. There is thus a historically relatively invariable "double standard of aging," detected by Mary Wollstonecraft in the eighteenth century when she argues against the naturalizing effect of the two-sex model on the aging body which depicts women as aging biologically earlier than

men (187). Although literature positions the aged folks at the sight of valour and respect, their narratives rarely take center stage. The recorded literature is largely built upon the abstract concept of truth and beauty. A few instances like when William Shakespeare said in his Sonnet 73

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang (1988)

here he is discussing various stages of life and comparing himself to a tree in late autumn signifying the waning of vitality, fragility, and vulnerability of old age. In several instances, old age refers to a cold winter or autumn conveying a sense of melancholia and an inevitable approach to death.

Furthermore, many metaphors have been used by famous literary writers to convey a sense of distress, vulnerability, and nostalgia while talking about the passing of youth and the onset of old age. Couplets like “I grow old ... I grow old ... / I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled (Elliot 1917)” depict the inconsequentiality, frailty, and anxiety of growing old. A similar sentiment is echoed in a poem by Philip Larkin where he said “Old age is a kind of deformity / A permanent, incurable disease (1974)” here aging is associated with a disfigurement that happens to appearance and ability with a sense of mental distortion. Old is presented as an irreversible and undesirable change with declining health and overall functionality of the human body.

There is also a sense of duality associated with the figure of the old man therefore, his positioning in classical texts is a subject of great debate. On one hand, he is often portrayed as insignificant, and trivial and is observed as a figure diminished from his ascended stature as the lines of W. B. Yeats’s “Sailing to Byzantium” says “An aged man is but a paltry thing, / A tattered coat upon a stick (1928)” that highlights a loss of sense of purpose along with physical decaying of body. Whereas, poets like Dylan Thomas present the archetypical old man as a man of resilience, valour, and courage and urge him to not surrender to the death as ultimate fate as he said... “Do not go gentle into that good night, / Old age should burn and rave at close of day; / Rage, rage against the dying of the light (1953).”

In 1990, Barbara F. Waxman's *From the Hearth to the Open Road: A Feminist Study of Aging in Contemporary Literature* played a pivotal role in situating gender politics and its interplay with experiences of aging. From novels to autobiographies, she critiques the themes and narrative techniques that depict aging. She anticipates that these works will leverage literary techniques, including innovative forms of life writing, thematic exploration, character development, nonlinear narratives, multiple voices, and rich imagery related to the aging body, mind, and spirit to reshape our understanding of the elderly (14). Additionally, Waxman applies Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia—the presence of multiple, sometimes conflicting voices in a text—to reveal the complexity and diverse perspectives within these autobiographies. This approach allows readers to understand the varied challenges and adjustments associated with aging, such as intergenerational conflicts, distinctions between different stages of old age, and the unique experiences shaped by gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, health, and memory (Mangum 394). Later theorists like Anne M Wyatt Brown and Janice Rossen brought their insights into ageism are further shaped by analyses of oppression from feminist, racial, sociological, and cultural-historical perspectives.

On investigating the phenomenon of aging, it is found to be a particularly vulnerable state for women for several reasons, such as regressive social codes, patriarchy, and lack of space and opportunities. It compromises their ability to procreate, and most elderly women in third-world countries are found to be financially dependent on the male folk of the family. The aging process takes a toll on the expectation of the physical beauty of females, and they are restricted from several routine acts in the name of 'age-appropriate behaviour.' They are constantly censored to stop them from transgressing the boundary of age and gender. As Debra Webb said men got better with age, like wine. On the other hand, women were like cheese—aged was good to a degree, then came the mold and the inevitable casting aside. The fear of appearing old became even more entrenched in women and thus in the year 1889, the first product to cover the appearance of wrinkles created and opened the floodgate of countless such products till today. It often intensifies the experience of cognitive and physical disability. Though aging puts forth a serious challenge to one's overall ability at max it should be seen on the spectrum of debility rather than a new kind of disability. Our mainstream society is constantly

bombarded with signs of anti-aging; popular culture ranging from literature, cinema, media, etc. propagates the idea of beauty and virality with youthfulness; and often one's ability to negotiate one's position in civil society is directly proportional to her physical appearance, agility, and vitality.

The figure of an old woman is portrayed either as a saint-like figure or as a cunning 'hag.' They are subjected to asexualize or hypersexualize and have been described as "...she was a lecherous old lady, fond of young men (Chaucer)." The word hideous is particularly used by several writers in English literary canon to describe the figure of the old woman because she is seen as someone stripped down from the stature of youth, beauty, and ability therefore quotes like "The old witch, with her hideous features and her evil heart (Grimm and Grimm)." Additionally, a sense of darkness is also assumed to be surrounded by aging women and therefore, often refer as witches. The notion of 'femme-fatale' does not apply to them anymore because of the decline of physical 'beauty' and agility, so to position them as a threat to society they are associated with black magic or dark art. Nathaniel Hawthorne's line "Old Mother Rigby was a thorough a witch as ever dealt in art (1882)"

The pressure and manic obsession on women to look young can be traced back to Victorian England, as the Victorian philosophers were inspired by classical thinking, and promoted the theory that women age faster than men also popular literature promoted the notion that appearing old is undesirable. Authors like Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, and Henry James portrayed women in their 40s and 50s as miserable 'hags' who were physically decaying. Tennessee Williams in his famous work *The Glass Menagerie* described Amanda Wingfield as "that hideous old woman, bloated with her lies and whiskey."

In contemporary times, First World countries do not solely depend on institutions like families to take care of the elders as the concept of shelter homes, community centers or old age homes is very much part of the civil infrastructures. Additionally, it is unlikely to secure wealth or pass down one's property entirely to the younger generation of the family. Also, it is quite common to take up new adventures, partners, hobbies, job opportunities, etc. past 40s and 50s which is highly unlikely in India. The treatment of elderly people in the Indian subcontinent is

vastly different from the West. Here institutions like family and marriage are still the dominant factors of one's life and the notion of respecting elders is a deeply entrenched practice of the Indian subcontinent, so much so that calling one's elder by their first name is considered demeaning and ill-mannered.

Modernization has been a profoundly influential concept, creating significant disparities between society and aging. The treatment of elderly people especially in countries like Japan with its rapidly aging population has developed a range of policies, such as the Long-Term Care Insurance system introduced in 2000, which aims to provide elderly people with accessible care while fostering dignity and independence (Matsumoto, 2018). However, despite these efforts, Japan faces challenges related to the growing demand for eldercare services, leading to concerns about social isolation and inadequate support for the elderly in rural areas (Takagi & Hoshino, 2019). This can be seen as a reflection of both positive advancements in care for the elderly and the continuing struggle to address deeply ingrained ageist attitudes and systemic issues affecting older adults worldwide. It has ultimately disintegrated the extended, or joint, family structure, becoming a central theme in Indian gerontology. Lawrence Cohen remarks on Indian social gerontology, stating that "the sole criterion for assessing the well-being of old people is an important feature of post-independence Indian literature on old age" (Raja xviii).

Before modernization, it is presumed that societies worldwide, particularly in India, effectively cared for all family members from birth to death. However, modernization has led to the breakdown of family structures, even in traditionally strong societies like India. Additionally, the financial independence of the youth has fostered greater self-reliance, suggesting that economic power has contributed to a decline in values, especially concerning respect for the elderly. Consequently, social gerontology studies have inspired writers to address aging issues, giving rise to the new field of literary gerontology. Until the nineteenth century, literature rarely mentioned the "aged poor," focusing instead on the privileged elderly. Moreover, literature often portrays aged women as less concerned than aged men.

In Indian English literature, the portrayal of old women remained fairly homogeneous as they were mostly saintly, wise, and rooted, reflecting

on the past with a sense of nostalgia. She is like a ‘banyan tree’ and ‘her roots are deep (Markandaya 1954)’ and ‘her face was a map of wrinkles and stories untold (Ghosh)’ or ‘she was a wizened little old lady, bent double with age, her eyes sparkling with an ageless wit and humor (Narayan 1943).’ In a large part of South Asia, this age is considered to prepare oneself for retirement and a gradual withdrawal from family duties, jobs, romance, society, or trying something new. They are largely expected to submit to spiritual or religious practices, hand over the wealth to the younger generation, and live a fairly complacent life. Therefore, Geetanjali Shree’s *Tomb of Sand* feels like a breath of fresh air that unfolds new possibilities and opportunities for Ma that transcend the boundary of gender, age, and traditions.

An old widowed woman as a protagonist is a rare sight to behold because, at this stage of life, they are treated as largely inconsequential though such a character has lived a long life her story is not considered worth narrative especially if the new chapters begin at the age of eighty. Shree’s novel was originally written in Hindi and later translated by Daisy Rockwell; she also won the prestigious Booker Prize in the year 2022. The novel touches upon the themes of family, gender roles and tension, tradition and modernity, partition, and politics. The story is set in northern India and is about an eighty-year-old woman, who is in deep depression at her husband’s death. She is referred to as Ma/ Amma. She has a son named Bade and a daughter referred to as Beti. There are several other characters but besides Beti, Ma’s transgender companion Rosie plays a pivotal role in Ma’s life in navigating widowhood, aging, and loneliness.

Old age with a connotation of retreat is expected, felt, and widely expected. From this perspective, the later stages of life are envisioned as a ‘waiting room’ where individuals pass their time until they die. This waiting room is predominantly occupied by women. The connection between old age and death is rooted in an ontogenetic master narrative of the human genome, which is fundamentally “chronocentric” (Fry 276). The novel opens with Ma lying in her bed with her back turned to the doorway, in a state of such deep retreat that her family despairs at being able to engage with her. She observed a position like a Buddha statue, almost submerging into a wall, and just kept getting closer and closer to the wall, and her back became a wall itself (17). This wall perhaps has various barriers and divisions—both physical and

metaphorical—that she faces and must overcome. It represents the separation between the past and present, different cultures, and personal identities also it is a symbol of social constraints and expectations especially those placed on women and the elderly.

But slowly the sands of Ma's self-imposed 'tomb' shift as she emerges already changed, perceiving herself for a while as Kalpataru, as she said "I am the Wishing Tree. I am the Kalpataru" (145). She is suddenly found missing, and the Buddha statue along with her and Ma now decides to pursue a path quite different from the life she had led so far, which had been characterized by the conventional domestic roles that define the lives of women. Now this widowed mother who is ideally expected to live at her son's house, decided to shift her daughter's place. This caused much consternation and unhappiness on the part of her son and daughter-in-law but she remained firm at her stand.

Beti, Ma's headstrong daughter lived her life on her incomprehensible terms, leaving home, living with an unmarried partner, and writing all about 'women's consciousness, sexuality, the female orgasm (62).' Beti's elder brother felt that her choices were odd and too progressive for the time but came on board when she started getting invitations from Rashtrapati Bhawan. Despite always being critiqued she lived as she pleased and gradually her odd choices met with 'right' accomplishments

The compassion entered even more troubled waters when the poor thing bought a fancy flat in a fancy neighbourhood, and a TV, microwave, and a car too. They learned she was always on her way to or back from the airport—traveling all over the world. There were irritable whispers in the house about how things are done with sleight of hand nowadays, whether right or wrong, just to earn money and a name, if you're good at networking, and if you're a woman, and young, then, then...well (63).

Amma or Ma always had a soft corner for Beti and she understood her daughter's need to spread her wings. Sadly, Beti's relationship with her brother deteriorated with time. When Ma shifted to her place, it caused trouble in Beti's personal life as "Beti became the mother and made Ma the daughter (241)." Moreover, Ma's actions challenge and ultimately reshape the family dynamics, especially with her children, as they are forced to confront their prejudices and assumptions about aging, independence, and identity. For instance, Ma's relationship with

her daughter, Beti, evolves as Beti begins to understand and respect her mother's need for autonomy and self-expression. Additionally, Ma becomes involved in various social causes and activism, using her experiences and newfound freedom to contribute meaningfully to her community. Her engagement in activism is exemplified by her efforts to support marginalized groups, asserting her presence in the public sphere and making a tangible difference.

In *Tomb of Sand* by Geetanjali Shree, the character of Ma embarks on a series of transformative adventures after becoming widowed. Everyone believed that "at eighty, Ma had turned selfish (529)" because she started living on her terms unbothered about her 'duty' as a mother or her 'conduct' as an old woman, and let her suppressed desires get new wings. As though she'd removed all her layers, one by one, wife mother aunt this that, now at last she was simply herself, laid bare, apart, her own, untouched by the thoughts and concerns of any other. She abandoned her Kanjivaram and Patola saree to adorn new fancy gowns arranged by her new transgender friend Rosie.

At the beginning of the novel Shree uses an interesting analogy to describe her "She's being turned into pakoras. Moistened, ground, grated, cut into pieces, reclining in boiling oil eek eek flip flop sliding into bellies and disintegrating" (60). This can be interpreted as Ma is no longer an entity of her own but something that has gone through a tedious process of life and is now only good for others. Later when Ma turned selfish and decided to rebuild herself once again, and this time for no one else but herself as she discovered new friendships and new worlds, proving that it's never too late to start anew. Ma's new friendships, notably with members of the transgender community, broaden her perspective and enrich her understanding of life beyond conventional norms.

One of the most significant journeys she undertakes is her decision to revisit Pakistan, a land tied to her past and the trauma of Partition. This journey symbolizes Ma's confrontation with her history and unresolved emotions, marking a pivotal step in reclaiming her identity and agency. During her travels, Ma reconnects with Anwar, an old lover from her youth. This reconnection allows her to rediscover aspects of herself that had been suppressed by years of societal and familial expectations. Ma's journey was not just about revisiting her past, but

about reclaiming her identity and finding peace with herself. She visited her home in Pakistan, met her old connections, and reclaimed a new identity. After partition and coming to India, she was called Chandraprabha Devi but now at eighty, she wants her old identity back as she reclaimed loudly “I am Chanda, Ma says to him loudly. C-h-a-n-d-a. Chanda (628).

Through these adventures, Ma not only redefines her own life but also impacts the lives of those around her, demonstrating a powerful narrative of empowerment and transformation in the later stages of life. She showed that age is just a number and that the spirit can remain youthful and adventurous no matter how old you are. Ma’s story is a testament to the strength of the human spirit and the power of self-discovery. Her journey illustrates the themes of resilience, self-discovery, and the breaking of societal barriers, highlighting the profound changes that can occur at any stage of life.

This highlights the challenging reality that the reconstruction of personal identity for older individuals, especially women, is difficult in a society that often dismisses them as mere household possessions, social ornaments, or objects of sexual convenience. However, it also underscores the transformative potential of an environment that values and respects the elderly. By fostering a world that celebrates the wisdom, experience, and contributions of older women, we can create a more inclusive society where personal identity and dignity are preserved and enhanced, regardless of age. This positive shift requires a collective effort to challenge and change the pervasive cultural narratives that marginalize the elderly, thereby empowering them to reclaim and reconstruct their identities with pride and respect. As Beti once said this to Ma “Live, Ma, live to your heart’s content! (Shree 32)

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Unpacking Uncertain Futures: A Critical Reading of Select Australian Children's Fiction

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Abstract

Ellen Van Nerveen's essay titled "The country is like a body" points out that the term "climate change" neither evokes clear mental images of the threat that humanity may encounter in either immediate or distant futures nor furthers our understanding regarding the impact it has on our everyday lives, interactions or about the people who have intricate connections with nature like our indigenous populations. Changing temperatures and rising sea levels, the two most overused images circulated to uncritically engage with the dangers posed by "global warming," have played an important role in limiting our imagination on the issue. Apart from taking immediate measures to combat and using terms like "climate emergency" in the age of post-truth to convey the sense of the mess we are actually in, it is also equally important to educate, inform and make children aware of various facets of dangers that are unimaginatively harped on in popular discourses. There is an immediate and desperate need to broaden the canvas of children's imagination regarding the "uncertain futures" so that they are sensitised to the implications of "climate emergency". The paper would discuss how Children's Fiction from Australia in recent times draws young readers' attention towards dystopian landscapes created by the absence of non-human entities like bees or rivers that are extremely crucial for our existence but are ignored due to our anthropocentric understanding of the world we inhabit. My paper would particularly focus on Alison Croggon's *The*

River and the Book (2015) and Bren MacDibble's *How to Bee* (2018) and discuss how these texts draw young readers attention towards details that are otherwise rarely acknowledged in popular climate change narratives.

Keywords: Australian Children's Fiction, Post-truth, Cli-fi, Uncertain Futures, Extractivism

How much is she worth?
 You went an put a number on her
 How much does she deserve?
 You went and put a number and now there's

Smoke already in our lungs
 And the season's just begun
 There is smoke already in our lunge
 It's just begun

Why do we wait til it's too late?
 How can you say that it's a lie today?
 She's in pain and you went away
 Letting it lay
 Meanwhile we are all ablaze

We are all ablaze

...

Why do we wait til it's too late?
 How can you say that it's a lie today?
 She's in pain and you went away
 Letting it lay
 Meanwhile we are all ablaze
 We are all ablaze

—*Ablaze* by Tartie

The song *Ablaze* released on Feb 2nd, 2020 by Australian songwriter and performer Tartie, addresses the state of climate emergency we are in, and, is an earnest attempt to draw the attention of the world, especially our leaders towards the unprecedented bushfires that ravaged the island continent in 2019. In the past few years, bushfires/wildfires, floods,

droughts, rising sea levels, heat waves, torrential rains, cyclones, extreme weather conditions, etc., have emerged as a recurring menace around the globe and perhaps it would be foolish to use redundant adjectives like 'unprecedented' to describe these scenarios because climate catastrophes have become a part and parcel of our everyday lives. It is not a matter of mere coincidence that in December 2019, Australia witnessed the worst drought as well as the hottest day ever with fifty degree centigrade recorded temperatures and that very year uncontrollable bushfires ravaged the country. But in the age of post-truth; climate skeptics and denialists on the basis of manufactured studies, selective and biased evidence have vehemently disagreed that these phenomena are the resultant effects of climate change. But at the same time irrefutable scientific evidence linking recurring environmental disasters to climate change make it is impossible to overlook the fact that, bushfires, largely a controllable natural phenomenon, like most ecological disasters of the present are becoming fiercer with every passing year because of reckless human behavior, raising temperatures and intensified climatic conditions. If in the age of post-truth "objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (Oxford English Dictionary) then we cannot prepare ourselves for the uncertain future that awaits us. If we, the masses, do not open our eyes and acknowledge that we are indeed dealing with a state of climate emergency then we are doomed as a species. Ellen Van Nerveen's essay titled "The country is like a body" that addresses the issue of climate change rightly argues that the term "climate change" neither evokes clear mental images of the threat that humanity may encounter in either immediate or distant futures, nor carries any hint or furthers our understanding regarding the impact it would have on our everyday lives, interactions or the people who have intricate connections with nature like our indigenous people. Changing temperatures and rising sea levels are two most overused images circulated to uncritically engage with the dangers posed by "global warming" that have played an important role in limiting our imagination on the issue. Lack of understanding as well as uncritical engagement with the current state of affairs regarding climate change often confuses ordinary people and at times also inadvertently desensitizes them. The best example perhaps is the intentional conflation of difference between weather and climate by right wing politicians like Donald Trump who are the mouthpieces of climate denial. Climatologists working on post-truth and climate change like Michael Mann have pointed out,

by particularly referring to powerful networks like Fox in USA that media outlets have contributed to climate change denialism rather than acting towards bringing a positive change. In recent times, the misguided euphoria of climate change reversal propagated by select media outlets during the first phase of lockdown imposed by countries because of Corona virus across the globe is yet again another example of how incomplete information misleads people who are craving for “good news” and are looking for excuses to continue with their usual lifestyle choices without “guilt” or “interruptions” resting in self imposed ignorance that “nature has the power to heal itself”. The examples cited above are bitter reminders of the cardinal unnegotiable truth of our times i.e., we are in a state of climate emergency. But more often than, this ‘truth’ is being constantly undermined in popular discourses because in the present scenario the barrier between knowledge and information has completely collapsed thanks to the ever expanding reach of “mediascapes” and “disinformation”.

Therefore, my paper would argue that if the age of post-truth thrives on the politics of emotion then rather than fighting back with the sword of rationality that holds little or no power; cli-fi, especially written for children and young adults can possibly play a crucial role in challenging the mirage created by propaganda and untruths by opening the mind of young adults to crises our world is battling and may encounter in future. Apart from taking immediate measures to combat and using terms like “climate emergency” to convey the sense of the mess we are actually in, it is also equally important to educate, inform and make children, the future citizens of our world: aware about various facets of “dangers” or “change” we keep unimaginatively talking about. There is an immediate and desperate need to broaden the canvas of children’s imagination regarding the “uncertain futures” so that they understand what they may have to deal with in future if “climate emergency” is left unaddressed in the present. Shaping personal belief and acquainting children with discourses related to environmental degradation by “catching them when they are young” and cultivating emotions to fight climate emergency can be one of the ways to escape the catch 22 situation created by the warring rationalities. After all, “fiction enables us not merely imagine things but to do so collectively”. (Harari, 2014, p. 388) and as Christopher Schaberg in “The Work of Literature in the Age of Post-Truth” points out that literature, an “interpretation” of the world, helps us to go through structures of

feelings that otherwise one may not have encountered in real lives. Through a critical reading of Alison Croggon's *The River and the Book* (2015) and Bren MacDibble's *How to Bee* (2018) my paper would elaborate how the select writers draw young readers attention towards intricate nuances of our world that is ridden by inequalities and suffering the burnt of ecological crises as well as the changes we might have to live through, that otherwise do not feature in popular climate emergency narratives. By encouraging young readers to engage with works that can shape their ideological position regarding climate emergency and helping them see the tragic outcomes as well as enabling a nuanced understanding; we, adults may redeem ourselves from the reluctant position of climate quietists as we strengthen children's understanding of climate emergency through fictional narratives and shape them as climate warriors. Before I start with a detailed analysis of the text I would once again hark back to the song cited in the opening lines. Tartie's song is an important citation because it not only points a finger at our extractivist tendencies i.e, looking at earth from the lens of anthropocentrism and our reckless indulgence in the 'modern' habit of putting a number on everything/calculating the planet's worth based on how we can control and extract its bounties but also reminds us how cruelly we are subjecting our priceless nurturer to a terrible fate by objectifying her. The song tolls a warning bell that cautions us about our uncertain futures: a time when our lungs would be filled by smoke and we would be unable to breathe freely if we while away our debating if climate change is real. It also questions our reluctance in addressing the situation of climate emergency, while we perhaps still have time on our side but particularly raises question on the Australian Prime Minister's ill timed family vacation to Hawaii when the country was facing devastation because of bushfires. Tartie, basically is questioning our misplaced priorities of our leaders as she highlights a particular person's absence as the disaster unfolded in Australia. Most countries at present are doing little to reduce carbon emission and greenhouse gases even after signing the Paris Climate Change Agreement in 2015. Sadly, till date, no country has taken adequate steps in meeting the standards of emissions nor has the approach to mitigate climate related disasters has witnessed major transformation in recent years. Pouring out money as aid and coming up with band aid solutions while the disaster is unfolding or it is over has is the popular remedy of our present times.

Bruno Latour in *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climate Regime* rightly points out that terms like ‘ecological crisis’ or ‘environmental crisis’ do not signify the material reality we are living in as the word ‘crisis’ carries an underlying meaning that “this too shall pass” whereas terms like “environment” and “ecology” that humans will remain unaffected. He suggests the phrase “a profound mutation in our relation to the world” to describe the situation we in. Both the novels in discussion precisely lay bare some facets of this “mutation in our relation to the world”. Croggon’s narrative is an isomorphic, fantastical retelling of a narrative from our times where an extractivist authoritarian regime is working hand in gloves with a corporate to produce profitable goods while it disenfranchises people enmasse. Environmental degradation in the story is the resultant effect of grand developmental projects that yield profits for select few but are the mainly responsible for the dispossession of common folks. The effects of the steady depletion of the life giving river’s water levels on self sustaining communities living on its bank, lays bare the brutal operations of state power and short-sightedness of policymakers. Sim, the narrator, in the opening pages of the narrative recalls the times when the river flowed in its most glorious avatar and natures bounties satiated the needs of her people kept them happy:

When I was a child I never went hungry. Each year we harvested a crop of barley, and my father grew cabbages, radishes, turnips, peas, beets and beans, and we had a small orchard of apple and walnut trees, with a mulberry tree to sweeten our table and mountain pepper to spice our dishes. There was meat and milk and, of course fish. (Croggon, 2015, p.14)

The river that is both the god and the road for the people who live on the plains of Pambar; in the good old days swelled and spilled its black silt in the summers that fertilized the harvest. But no one, actually, can put a finger on the date when the river started failing because the process was gradual. There were signs of course, but again, no one could read them. Gradually, with the shrinking levels of water the people became poorer but they adjusted to the new conditions hoping that the river would go back to its old form one day. But this misplaced hope dwindled as the river shrank with every passing day and a family of three strangers who lived in a community upriver arrived in a distressed state one fine day. The man Kular Minuar who

arrives with his son Inhiral Minaur and dead wife Ilino Av'hardar narrates the tale of his dispossession to Sim's family that sheltered him. He tells them that under the cruel rule of King Tarik, a big company occupied the empty spaces of the Upper Pembar Plains and decided to grow the profitable crop cotton because it was easy to access river from there. The company got white-skinned outsiders as workers who were managed by people wearing clean, grey uniforms and carrying whips and guns. As most of the river water was directed towards the cotton fields the water levels depleted but the real disaster hit the community when mysterious disease struck the community and crops and animals started dying. The villagers eventually understood that these happenings were occurring because the water drained by the company into the river was poisoned as it carried the remnants of the pesticide used to treat the cotton crop. This discovery led to a series of face offs between the people/farmers and the company's soldiers and eventually these encounters turned bloody. In one such encounter Kular's wife was shot and they tried to escape the Tarnish soldiers and a place that denied them access to water. To quote Kular, "If we have no water, we cannot live...They don't care if we starve. They don't care if they poison the water. And they are killing the River. Soon it will die, and so will we." (Croggon, 2015, p. 53) The fate of Kular's community in Croggon's narrative is not very different from that of many agrarian communities of the developing world that are forced to embrace the monoculture of the "dirty crop" cotton under the industrial agriculture model as pointed out by Vandana Shiva and other environmental activists. The case of Aral Sea in Central Asia is one such example that perfectly fits the scenario depicted in the narrative. Such systems of industrial agriculture wreck havoc on multiple levels: they cause environmental devastation, create monocultures and lead to forced labour to name a few. The structures of violence that mar the lives of ordinary farmers in developing countries may vary from the depiction of the fictional tale but are no less damaging in real life because if access to water is interrupted then a community's social, societal, economic, health, livelihood and food security is directly threatened. In both cases, that is fictional and real, the damage is inflicted by 'outsider' neocapitalist forces that are technologically advanced and hence set the rules of the game. Vandana Shiva in the essay titled *The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply* points out that after the trade liberalization of agriculture in India in 1991 under World Bank/ International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural adjustment plan

cotton cultivation displaced food crops and “increased by 1.7 million hectares”. Not only corporate hybrid seeds replaced local varieties but because this new variety was vulnerable to pests and required more pesticides that ordinary farmer could not afford the government that was under pressure to cultivate cash crops allowed private corporations to acquire hundreds of acres of land. Shiva’s argument that the industrial agriculture failed to produce more food and destroyed sources of food...stolen food from other species to bring larger quantities of specific commodities to the market, using huge quantities of fossil fuels and water and toxic chemicals in the process” (Shiva, 2014, p. 69)

that will lead to the extinction of humankind is elaborated in an easy to understand manner in Croggon’s novel. MacDribble’s fictional world on the other hand appears to optimistic where children thrive in the pre-lapsarian setting of the ideal farm life that is seemingly untouched by the trappings of the capitalism but the actuality is far from true. The foreman, the benign patriarch of the farm leads a cushiony life when compared with the rest of the inhabitants of the farm. The children study and toil hard through out the day to earn their daily bread. They on one hand cannot be categorized as forced labour but on the other hand they do not have the right over the fruit they work so hard to grow because,

All the good fruit goes to the Urbs in the city, but they wont take fruit with marks on it...Apples cost loads, so none of the farm kids ever had a whole apple to ourselves (MacDibble, 2017, pp. 36-37)

The best yield is packaged and sent to the Urbs for consumption while the unwanted, damaged goods are distributed amongst the children of the farm. The food choices of the children who live on the farm are dictated by the foreman or the manager of the farm who in turn works for a big corporate.

Croggon’s and MacDibble’s protagonists Sim and Peony are new age females: clear headed, rational, determined girls belonging to the proletariat class whose concerns are remarkably different from the teenagers of our world. Sim leaves the comforts of her community life to embark on a journey to the city, to find and bring back the Book, the ‘history’, the oracle and soul of her community that is stolen away by a sly visitor, Jane Watson, whereas Peony, who aspires to be a bee in a fruit farm located in the suburbs is kidnapped by her own mother so that she can work for money in the city as a maid.

Peony lives in a farm community set in the future where bees are on the brink of extinction and swift-footed children are employed by the foreman to pollinate the flowers of fruit trees like apple and apricot. Her Gramps moved to the farm with P's mother Rosie when she was little, before the famine. Tired of living on the streets and hungry Gramps moved to the farm that promised him food and shelter along with many others like them. Peony's mother now lives and works in the city and occasionally visits her father and two children namely Magnolia or Mags and Peony or P. Gramps, Magnolia and Peony love their life in the farm and have no complains. They lead a contended life, living in a small shed made from boxes and with their payment in the form of food supplies. Peony innocent remarks in the opening chapters of *How to Bee* that the "bees went away coz they looked liked pests" as she confesses her desire to be the Bee to the readers. She says: "Before the famine, farmers didn't have enough farm kids to catch the pests so they sprayed poison on the pests, but the poison didn't know which was bees and which was pests" (MacDibble, 2017, p. 22). This confession hints at the nefarious effects of agrochemicals used to safeguard crops in order to maximize their yield. Like P points out, chemicals do not have the ability to differentiate between harmful pests and insects that crucial for agriculture and more often than not cause more harm than benefits. Peony's family of MacDibble's *How to Bee* (2018) and Kular's family of Croggon's *The River and the Book* (2015) are environmental refugees; displaced from their original homes because of irreparable ecological changes caused by the anthropocentric desire to control and reign in the forces of nature. The crises of both the fictional world as well as of the real world hint at the fact that neither do we possess the ability to command or control forces of nature nor do we have capability to foresee the damage we are causing as we tread the sinister road of ungirdled development.

Peony the younger sister, aspires to be the Bee because her promotion from the post of the pest would mean that they would paid little more than what they were earning and she could take better care of disabled Magnolia and the ageing Grandpa. But her mother's aspirations are at loggerheads with the rest of the family. Rosie wants to make some cold hard cash because she doesn't want to live in the shed forever, she wants a home in the city and save some money for hard times. But P like Sim sees herself as an integral part of the world she inhabits not merely as an individual like Rosie or Jane Watson of, *The River*

and the Book for whom self assertion and personal need satisfaction are of utmost importance. Unlike the mature women of the narratives in discussion the young protagonists battle the challenges of the world in transition by adhering to the core values of group orientation, duty consciousness, forgiveness, friendship, sympathy and justice. Sim, an Effenda, or a Keeper of the Book, embarks on a quest to retrieve the stolen cultural repository of the indigenous knowledge systems because without the Book her community's links with the past and future would forever be severed. Without the Book, Sim feels that she has no job or place in the village. Afterall, what can be the role of the Keeper of the Book if the Book itself is lost? Similarly, despite P's intense desire to escape the City and the land of the Urbs, she does not go back to the farm till Esmeralda overcomes the fear of the outside world, burglars and bad people. She stays back for her friend like Sim who stays back for the Book, undermining hardships and overcoming the road blocks that come in her way in the city.

Both the girls strive hard to keep the promises they make and the processes they undergo in the course of their journeys help them to develop into mature individuals who overcome set expectations, prejudices and petty misconceptions they construed as sheltered children. In the course of Sim's search for Jane Watson she learns to forgive her bitter enemy's i.e., Jane Watson's betrayal of trust and the act of theft committed by the latter. Watson's character based on the stereotype of a learned yet conceited left-wing activist, a self-proclaimed messiah of the oppressed people who refuses to operate beyond the boundaries of her logic is irredeemable. She is incapable of understanding the dreadful wrong committed by stealing the priceless possession of Sim's community i.e., the Book. But Sim on the other hand, the simpleton, poor peasant girl is able to understand and forgive Watson's ill thought move. Sim's knowledge and understanding that she derives from her experience is far more superior and powerful than that of Watson's who is seemingly well known, erudite and educated but whose vision is restricted by the blinders of egotism. Peony too in the final section of the novel is heartbroken by her mom's ultimate act of abandonment but her recalcitrance pays. She does not nurse any grudges against her mother and is happy that she is back to the place that she truly belongs to. She realizes that her expectations of a happy family life do not match with that of her mother. Rosie strives hard yet fails to fit into the definition of the happy family constructed by society but her chosen

man is self-centered, violent and demanding who takes away her money and wants to control her. The relationship is doomed from the start but Rosie refuses to see the truth till the end. It is only when she is about to die that she asks her boyfriend to handover their new born child to her family in the farm. Sim and Peony play the role of mother and in their respective social set ups both inside and outside their homes. They take care of their surroundings, siblings, friends as well as pets and are the keepers of the traditions and practices of their respective communities. While the centre of all Peony's decisions are the bees, the farm and her sister Mags, Sim's primary priority is the Book when she lives in the village and Mely, the cat when she lives in the city. The girls emerge as able nurturers and protectors towards the end of the narratives because they value their surroundings and respect people for who they are. Peony and Esmeralda belong to polar opposite worlds but it does not take Peony long to understand that Esmeralda, the spoilt child is not very different from her sister Mags and has to battle personal demons everyday. The class barrier is overcome by genuine empathy and kindness that Esmeralda and Peony have for each other. The worlds the young heroines of the texts in reference inhabit are not free from greed or the desire for excesses but their careful and well thought out choices ensure the well being of their families and communities. Reason and good thought guide the meticulous actions of the protagonists who may not be able to reverse the changes caused by ecological changes but definitely take a step in the right direction. They constantly challenge the discourses of a world that is becoming increasingly corrupt and ruthless; operating under the capitalistic logic of accumulation, competition, mindless consumerism, that frames the "other" as the "enemy" and present an alternative mode of 'being' and 'becoming'. The narratives thus beautifully highlight how the "climate question is at the heart of all geopolitical issues and that it is directly tied to questions of injustice and inequality." (Latour 2018 15) and the need for a planetarity approach to solve the crisis at hand.

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Social Realism in English Novels from Defoe to Fielding

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Abstract

This essay critically explores the development of social realism in English novels through the works of Daniel Defoe (1660-1731), Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), and Henry Fielding (1707-1754). It examines the socio-cultural and political context of the time and how these factors shaped the narrative form and content of the works of these authors. Through a close reading of Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722), Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), and Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742), the essay will analyze the conventions employed to create a realistic representation of 18th-century British society. It will further elucidate how authors such as Defoe and Fielding used literature to reflect and comment on the rapidly changing world around them. The purpose of the essay is also to examine the motivations behind these realist approaches as well as the impact they had on the novel form. It highlights the importance of realism in allowing novels to reflect the society around them and how this kind of writing became an important tool in delineating the struggles of the lower classes.

Keywords: Defoe, Realism, Fielding, Social Approaches, Novel.

Introduction

The early eighteenth-century English novels present a form of social lives that continues to hold archival value. This essay will argue about the social reality of early eighteenth-century Britain through close reading of three novels: *Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders and Company* by Daniel Defoe, *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* by Samuel Richardson, and *History of Adventures of Joseph Andrews* by Henry Fielding. With these three texts, the essay will try to explore aspects of social elements such as crime, morality, ethics, sentimentalism, the

decadence of feudalism, the uplift of bourgeois society, and the role of commerce in gender roles. The paper also intends to engage with the characterization of the female ‘criminal’ and explore the socio-economic conditions affecting these women.

In the Introduction to *Aristocratic Government and Society in Eighteenth-Century England*, Daniel A. Baugh writes: “Whether a historian’s concern is with the origins of the industrial revolution, of modern politics, or the United States of America, eighteenth-century England cannot be ignored. It is a convenient starting point for modern history and a stable platform for launching the story of the revolutionary age. But for this very reason, eighteenth-century England is often misrepresented and misunderstood.” (Baugh, 1975, p. 1)

This book attempts to prove that early eighteenth-century England preserved its traditions and symbols of a pre-industrial revolution era. In other words, this fact is incontrovertible that “early eighteenth-century Britain retained a traditional social culture” (Baugh, 1975, p. 1). Compared to other European nations, this country was modern, only Dutch provinces were superior to England when it came to modernization. In this Introduction, a picture emerges that early eighteenth-century Britain was a powerful contender in the field of commerce and trade: “Its maritime and commercial supremacy and its financial institutions were the envy of Europe. Their strength was reflected in the surging growth of London and was linked to the countryside.” (Baugh, 1975, p. 1).

Crime in London

London was the focal point of commerce and trade in Britain. The city was controlling every action related to economic benefit. This financial competition was pervading British society. As already mentioned, other European powers were given tough competition by Britain in the field of commerce and trade, and England was emerging as a supreme power in the whole of Europe. It is ironic that there existed internal financial competition in Britain. This competition became the prominent cause of inequality which birthed several social evils.

This inequality divided British society into two classes- the rich and poor. The exploitation and injustice drove the oppressed labor class towards different kinds of crime to attain luxuries and economic profit.

Gambling was a prominent source of entertainment among the poor. According to Douglas Hay, it was the first time in British history that society faced a number of problems created by a criminal class. Gamesters were the main perpetrators of crime. They always tried to plunder on the highway or in the sea. Beattie (1974) presents glimpses of the late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century crime in his essay *The Pattern of Crime in England, 1660-1800*. This essay apprises us of the fact that death was the common punishment for criminals in Britain. Beattie's essay is a part of his larger work *Crime and the Courts in England, 1660 – 1800* where he uses court records and writes in great detail about the different kinds of crime that were being committed, and how socio-economic changes affected them. His work also discusses the gendered nature of crime and how London was a major center of criminal activity due to its dense population and growing economic inequalities. In their literary works, Defoe and Fielding have discussed in detail the relationship between criminals and society while also focusing on 'criminal' women. The gendered nature of crime as discussed by Beattie finds its representation in these novels in the form of female criminals who commit crimes out of economic and social necessity.

In early eighteenth-century Britain, women did not have any rights in the field of politics. They were also not self-reliant in the economic sphere. They could attain financial security through matrimonial alliances. It is also discernible that, as wives, they had limited rights. Moral and ethical norms were also extremely rigid or unbending. Men could indulge in adultery and premarital relations but for women, this kind of behavior was labeled as 'criminal', even though it is undeniable that these norms were intermittently violated by female aristocrats. In the domestic domain, the division of labor was governed by patriarchal norms. The condition of lower-class women was more precarious. They were dominated both by the opposite sex and the higher class causing them to face double-discrimination. It was not uncommon for servant girls to be exploited by their masters.

Sometimes their circumstances also drove them towards evil deeds in the form of pickpocketing, thievery, murder, and prostitution. Bernard Capp (2003) in the Introduction to *When Gossips Meet* discusses one incident which occurred in May 1698. Two women named Margaret Kingston and Katherine Aldridge faced trial at the Old Bailey for the

murder of Anne Barker. During this trial, they informed the court that she was a pickpocket and she was pickpocketing Kingston's husband. They claimed that by killing her they were taking revenge for the crime committed against Kingston's husband. In this incident, a chain of criminal women pickpockets, and murderers lies exposed where the crime has been committed by a criminal woman against a criminal woman.

Of 'Criminal' women and class inequalities

To some extent, Defoe highlights the 'criminal woman' in his novel *Moll Flanders*, and in *Roxana* too. *Moll Flanders* discusses multiple social issues of early eighteenth-century Britain. Defoe belonged to the lower middle class. His father was a butcher, but Defoe became a tradesman by profession. He himself got imprisoned twice, and in prison he became familiar with the social underworld. Defoe was a keen social observer and is quoted as saying, "Men rob for Bread, Women Whore for Bread: Necessity is the Parent of Crime" (Sutherland, 1992, p. 48, as cited in Defoe, 1711). This novel talks about the upheavals faced by the female protagonist, who has been a wife, then a whore, mistress, and also a criminal during the last stage of her life.

Moll Flanders' life has been underestimated by society since her birth. As Virginia Woolf writes in her essay on Defoe, "From her very birth or with half a year's respite at most, Moll Flanders, the most notable, of them, is goaded by 'that worst of devils poverty', forced to earn her living as soon as she can sew, driven from place to place, making no demands upon her creator for the subtle domestic atmosphere which he was unable to supply, but drawing upon him for all he knew of strange people and customs" (Woolf, 1925, *The Common Reader*). With the help of a magistrate, she reaches one nurse's home where she learns basic manners and tickets and also gets the opportunity to educate herself. In her childhood, being an orphan from a poor class, she was persuaded to earn money for herself. This persuasion indicates that her condition is more precarious than a servant girl. Although she refuses to work as a servant and chooses to pursue her interest in education, she becomes the victim of social norms and faces several kinds of problems not uncommon to other women from her class. In her youth, she falls into the trap of a manipulative man, the elder brother of Robert, who sexually exploits her, and pays her occasionally. David Daiches (1968) in *Critical History of English Literature Volume*

3 writes that Moll Flanders feels financially secure by submitting to Robert's elder brother. However, many would find this statement problematic. It is undeniable that Robert's elder brother is a fraud and cheat. Moll Flanders is unable to understand because she is naive, innocent, and emotionally attached to him. She rejects his advice to marry Robert. During the conversation between Flanders and her fraud lover, her emotions come to light. It is also conspicuous that Robert's love for her is real. This complicates the relationship between the two brothers and Moll Flanders. Moll Flanders wants to marry Robert's elder brother but Robert wants to marry Moll Flanders. The need for financial security and pressure from Robert's family causes Moll to marry Robert. Defoe's views on marriage is based on a utopian ideology. According to him, life would be miserable in such a matrimonial alliance, where there is no love. Women had to be very careful while choosing their life partner. This marriage leads her into a scandalous incident. In the pursuit of economic benefit and social status, her sentiments take a backseat.

After the death of her first husband, she falls back into her previous condition. The only difference is that she is now practical and more experienced in dealing with relationships. In the novel, she confesses her innocence and wants to marry once again to regain her social status. The second time, she marries a tradesman but he goes to France and never comes back. The third time she marries her half-brother without having any knowledge about it. She eventually comes to know about him and her mother on reaching Virginia. In other words, she realizes her value and what she needs to do for survival. After facing a number of difficulties, she returns to England and becomes a mistress. Alan Dugald McKillop writes in *Early Masters of English Fiction*, "Moll Flanders is a victim of society, showing the workings of economic and social compulsion: unfortunate adventures, showing the workings of circumstance; a cool exponent of self-interest, systematically trying to figure profit and loss in business, love, and crime." (McKillop, 1948, p. 28).

Morality, ethics and personal profit are interwoven together in the eighteenth century. Moll Flanders' master attains some religious experience and this experience creates havoc in her life. She loses her financial position once again. In this plot, Flanders' master's religious

attitude is ambiguous. He does not try to improve Moll's condition, rather only tries to get rid of her.

Even after facing a lot of upheavals, Moll still wants her social and economic existence in society. By displaying financial power, she tries to gain a husband again. Her fourth husband Jimmy, also transforms into a fraud. She spends a peaceful and happy life only with her two husbands Robert and Banker. The major part of life is full of trouble. Unlike Robinson Crusoe, the protagonist in Defoe's novel about one man's struggle against extenuating circumstances, Moll Flanders carves out her own identity in society with a great determination to find a space for herself.

After the death of her fifth husband, she accepts the strategy of crime. This time she has lost her old charm and beauty. With the help of an old woman, she learns different tactics related to thievery and pickpocketing. In other words, circumstances compel her to adopt her mother's profession. The opening chapter of the novel provides a glimmer of information about her mother. In this novel Moll Flanders tells the story herself: "My mother was convicted of Felony for a certain petty naming (viz.) Having an opportunity of borrowing three Pieces of fine Holland, of certain Draper in Cheapside: The circumstances are too long to repeat, and I have heard them related so many ways, that I can scarce be certain which is the right account. However it was, this they all agree in, that my Mother pleaded her Belly, and being found quick with Child, she was respited for about seven months, in which time has brought me into the World, and about again, she was called Down, as they term it, to her former judgment, but obtained the Favor of being Transported to the Plantations, and left me about Half a Year old; and in bad Hands, you may be sure" (Defoe, 2003, p. 8). Like her mother, she, too, has been arrested. Newgate is intricately associated with the life of Defoe. In *The Common Reader*, Virginia Woolf writes: "He had eighteen months in Newgate and talked with thieves, pirates, highwaymen, and coiners before he wrote the history of Moll Flanders". Woolf interest in Defoe's writing stems from her own criticism of how women were treated in the 18th century, its reflection found in *A Room of One's Own* where she criticizes the restrictions put on women and imagines how life would be like for an imaginary sister of Shakespeare during that restrictive time. In prison, Moll meets her fourth husband Jimmy. Turns out that both the husband

and wife are criminals without knowing each other's criminal professions. Moll Flanders 'inherits' her mother's fate, adopting her mother's legacy. Just like her, she is also transported to Virginia. This journey of transportation marks the end of her troubled life.

Upon reading the novel, one comes to know that Moll Flanders has no real friends. Except Robert, her relationships with the men in the novel are purely conditional and exploitative. Only her governess shows faithfulness as a friend. During the difficult situation in her life, her governess renders her emotional comfort. In Moll Flanders' punishment, she plays a prominent role in reducing the death sentence to transportation. Like Defoe, Richardson and Fielding have also discussed the issues of the precarious situation of the poor class, gendered labor roles and overall hypocrisy of the patriarchal society in their literary works. In 1751, Fielding wrote a treatise titled *Late Increase of Robbers*. However, it is also undeniable that their novel focuses on some elements of crime in early eighteenth-century Britain.

In another instance of exploration of a woman's adjustment with prevalent patriarchal social norms of the 18th century, Richardson's *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* focuses on the emotional exploitation of the servant girl and her rebellion against the exploitation. This novel is in epistolary form. The opening chapter of this novel gives background information on Pamela's parents. They are the victims of poverty, and at the age of fifteen, Pamela works as a servant girl. The work discusses Pamela's uplift from the poor class to the middle class. Her mistress gives her an opportunity for education. She also becomes the victim of patriarchal norms however; she tries to resist and eventually succeeds to some extent. Sarup Singh in *Marriage in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel* (1995) discusses *Pamela* and quotes Margaret Doody. Doody says that this novel is "quite revolutionary in its own depth", a view that is quite agreeable because Pamela fights against social norms until the very end of the novel. Although her struggles differ from those faced by Moll Flanders, Pamela does not face as many upheavals.

After the death of his mother, Mr. B. tries to seduce her with all his power. Sarup Singh in the same book indicates that Mr. B. uses and abuses his power as a man, employer, and as a member of the governing class. In this novel, Richardson has tried to portray the defensive spirit and resilience of the servant girl. When Mr. B. tries to seduce

her in the locker room, she reacts aggressively and says that if her master is going out on real duty, she should have the right to object. Mr. B. is also a typical hypocrite like the other eighteenth-century men. He initially promises his mother that he will take care of Pamela, but after her death, he breaks the promise. He assures Pamela that he would send her to her parents but instead sends her to prison. In the later parts of the novel, she suffers a number of hardships. She thinks that it will be better to go to her parent's house than lose her honor. In this novel, the Squire also tries to destroy Pamela's honor, but Mrs. Jervis protects her, even though she does not treat Pamela fairly. While Mrs. Jervis 'protects' Pamela, she also tortures her mentally. In other words, she acts as a female agent of the patriarchal system.

Pamela's marriage with Mr. B. is also problematic in many ways. While she rebels against all social norms from the beginning until the end, she accepts the person who tries to molest her and forgives him despite all his immoral deeds. This decision provides her with a social position in this marriage, she loses her ideal nature. She also rigorously follows all the preordained social norms. Any adultery or pre-marital sex was an unpardonable crime in a patriarchal society for eighteenth-century women. But there were no rules for a man to be faithful towards his wife in a sexual relationship. Due to these stringent social norms, she loses her power. After marriage, women were not allowed to decide for their husbands. Sarup Singh in the same book, observes, "The wife should bear with her husband even when he is in the wrong, should be flexible, should overcome by sweetness and complaisance though not slavishly, should show no reluctance to oblige and obey him, and, if he is set on a wrong thing, should not dispute with him unless it is a really important point, but do it first and expostulate afterward" (Singh, 1995, p.. 95). Mr. B. preaches to Pamela about dressing, child-rearing, her conduct as a wife, and how to behave with his friends. Pamela rejects his ideas to some extent and thinks that she can reform her husband with her sweet nature. But her approach is quite ambiguous.

Gendered hierarchies and virtue

Renowned scholar of 18th century English studies Christopher Flint in his essay '*The Anxiety of Effluence Family and Class (Dis)Order in Pamela*', mentions that Richardson, in this novel, tries to challenge the institution of an aristocratic family. He states, "In seeking to explain

the contemporary popularity of *Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded*, critics often point out that as a master printer, pious Protestant, strict family authoritarian, and political conservative, Richardson, and by extension of his art, perfectly embodied a bourgeois class that was consolidating its power, challenging aristocratic institutions of control, and transforming cultural as well as economic means of production”, (Flint, 1995, p. 109). Flint, in his works like *Family Fictions: Narrative and Domestic Relations in Britain, 1688–1798*, published in 1998 explores gender roles, social hierarchies, the middle class and how the domestic space was where all these dynamics played out. Fielding focuses on this type of “disorder” in the family in his novel *The History of The Adventures of Joseph Andrews* where Fielding tries to establish relations between Pamela and Joseph Andrews. Joseph Andrews is the son of Mr. Wilson, who loses his financial status due to his pursuit of women. At the end of this novel, it is shown that Pamela and Andrews are siblings.

In this novel, Fielding has portrayed reversed gender roles. Ms. Booby, after the death of her husband Thomas Booby, shows her affection for Andrew, trying to seduce him on more than one occasion. However, her plan has been foiled by Andrew and she expels him from the job and the lodge. Andrew meets his friend Fanny but their economic conditions prevent them from marrying each other. In this relationship, Fielding indicates how economy and marriage are interwoven with each other and how both issues were incomplete without each other in the early eighteenth century. Both Andrew and Fanny are subjugated by the aristocratic class represented by Lady Booby, tries to create hurdles in their relationship in many ways. Like Lady Davers from *Pamela*, Lady Booby is also the type of woman who can create problems for poor-class people, particularly women. In their novels, both Richardson and Fielding have tried to portray that in eighteenth-century Britain there was a hierarchy among the women as well. At the end of this novel, all plans of Lady Booby fail and Joseph Andrew and Fanny unite with each other.

This novel also discusses crime. On more than one occasion, Andrew’s friend Adam has rescued him from thieves. But thieves do not get any punishment in this work. Like other novels, *Joseph Andrews* presents a glimpse into the various social issues of eighteenth-century English society. James Cruise, in his essay *Fielding Authority and New*

Commercialism in Joseph Andrews, states, “To Henry Fielding, an ambiguous aristocrat, the influence of commerce and the part it played in rewriting patriarchal authority poses a serious problem to social and moral order”, (Cruise, 1984, p. xx). In his other essay titled ‘Percept, Property, and “Bourgeois” Practice in Joseph Andrews’, Cruise indicates how Fielding has critiqued the moral hypocrisy of bourgeois society. The characters of Richardson and Fielding’s novels acquire social positions to some extent unlike the characters in Defoe’s novels who struggle a lot and hardly get any appropriate place in society. Fielding and Richardson have not only portrayed the social realism of contemporary society but also explored the vision of revolt against social norms. One of the most important aspects of social realism is the representation of society’s ills through its institutions. In the words of Lionel Trilling, the family is a “narrative institution” (Trilling, 1972, p. 139). In the texts discussed in this paper, the family or rather, the domestic space forms an important site that exposes the nature of human relationships in 18th century English society. The three novelists discussed in this essay have criticized the evils of English society and exposed how the intrusion of the public and social in private lives affects the family unit. The didactic nature of their narratives is critical to understanding 18th century English society and its evolving nature in the backdrop of the rise of the English middle class as an economic and social force.

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Cultural Playgrounds: Unlocking the Wellness Potentials of Indian Heritage Games

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Abstract

This paper seeks to investigate the well-being advantages associated with traditional Indian games. Renowned for its cultural diversity, India boasts a wealth of traditional games that have been handed down through generations. Beyond representing the cultural heritage of the nation, these games play a crucial role in fostering overall well-being of society. Employing qualitative data and adopting the “grounded theory” approach, this research delves into the varied spectrum of traditional Indian games, analysing their positive influences on (i) physical, (ii) mental, and (iii) social well-being of the players. The study findings draw upon five indigenous games deeply rooted in Indian history—Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Gilli Danda, Chhupa Chhupi, and Kite Flying. The results underscore that traditional Indian games are not merely relics of the past; rather, they embody a cultural legacy that actively enhances the lives of individuals throughout the country. The observed positive effects on physical, mental, and social well-being affirm the enduring significance of these games. In confronting the challenges of the contemporary era, integrating these traditional games into our lifestyles emerges as a comprehensive approach to well-being, presenting a harmonious fusion of tradition and modern health practices. This study holds substantial societal benefits, encompassing aspects

such as physical health, mental well-being, cultural preservation, and social unity at both micro and macro levels.

Keywords: Gilli Danda, Grounded Theory, India, Kite Flying and Traditional games.

Introduction

Games, in their diverse forms, play a pivotal role in shaping various aspects of our lives. Apart from being a mere source of entertainment, games contribute significantly to personal development, social interactions, and overall well-being. Engagement in physical games, whether team sports or individual activities, is crucial for maintaining good health. Regular physical activities help in the development of strength, endurance, and agility (Rillo-Albert et al., 2021; Dehkordi, 2017). Researchers proved that indulging in games is ideal for fostering the socio-emotional well-being of the players (Rillo-Albert et al., 2021; Aisyah, 2017). Games or even simple outdoor activities significantly contribute to cardiovascular fitness, muscle development, and overall health (Dehkordi, 2017). Games challenge the mind, promote cognitive abilities and mental acuity. Whether it's solving puzzles, playing strategic board games, or participating in mind sports like chess, the mental stimulation provided by games enhances problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and memory retention (Deterding, 2018).

Indulging in games teaches individuals to navigate both victory and defeat with equal grace. The emotional experiences associated with winning and losing contribute to the development of emotional resilience (Espoz-Lazo et al., 2020; Gelisli and Yazici, 2015). Learning to manage success and setbacks in the context of a game can translate into valuable life skills, fostering emotional intelligence (Gulia et al., 2020). Games are social activities that bring people of diverse cultures, interests, and religions together. Playing any kind of indoor, outdoor, and/or online game, fosters social bonds and enhances communication skills. Games provide a platform for individuals to connect, collaborate, and build meaningful relationships (Espoz-Lazo et al., 2020; Dehkordi, 2017; Groll et al., 2015).

Playing games also serves as a form of stress relief and relaxation. The immersive nature of gameplay provides a temporary escape from daily stressors (Alcaraz-Muñoz et al., 2020; Akesson et al., 2018; Groll et al., 2015). This break allows individuals to recharge, reducing stress

levels and promoting overall mental well-being. Games often require the development of specific skills. From hand-eye coordination to strategic thinking, individuals hone different life-saving skills through gameplay (Bazaz, et al., 2018). These skills may be utilized in other areas of life, contributing to personal and professional development. Games teach the importance of time management, particularly in scheduled sports or games with defined rules and timelines. Players learn to allocate time efficiently, make quick decisions, and prioritize tasks—a valuable skill that can be applied in academics, professional, and personal settings (Aisyuh, 2017). In addition to these benefits, traditional and cultural games are essential for preserving and passing down cultural heritage. These games often carry deep historical significance and are integral to the identity of communities (Aisyah, 2017).

Games, in their myriad forms, significantly contribute to the richness of life. From physical health to mental acuity, emotional resilience, and social bonds, the importance of games extends across various dimensions (Bessa et al., 2019). As individuals engage in games, whether for recreation or competition, they embark on a path of self-discovery and growth. Recognizing and appreciating the multifaceted role of games in life is essential for fostering holistic well-being and creating vibrant, interconnected communities (Bazaz, et al., 2018). Whether on a field, a board, or a digital screen, the importance of games in shaping our lives is undeniable—a testament to the enduring impact of play on the human experience (Bessa et al., 2019). Against this background, this research has been conducted to explore the well-being benefits of traditional games in the Indian context as traditional games are an integral part of India's cultural heritage, and hence, studying them will help in preserving and passing on cultural practices and values from one generation to another.

Literature Review

In the intricate tapestry of life, games and physical activities weave a vibrant thread that contributes significantly to our overall well-being (Akeson et al., 2018; Aisyuh, 2017). Beyond the realms of entertainment, these activities hold a pivotal place in daily routine, influencing physical health, mental resilience, and the quality of social interactions (Alcaraz-Muñoz, 2020) of humans. Engaging in regular physical activities and games is paramount for maintaining a healthy lifestyle (Bazaz, et al.,

2018). Whether it's jogging in the morning, hitting the gym, or participating in sports like tennis or basketball, these activities contribute to cardiovascular fitness, muscle strength, and overall physical well-being (Asmara and Syobar, 2018). The consistent pursuit of an active lifestyle helps prevent health issues and fosters vitality (Bessa et al., 2019). Games and physical activities serve as effective outlets for stress management and mental wellness. The endorphins released during exercise act as natural mood enhancers, alleviating stress and promoting a sense of well-being (Collins et al., 2021). Whether it's the thrill of competition or the satisfaction of achieving personal fitness goals, these activities become invaluable tools for maintaining mental balance. Engaging in strategic games, puzzles, or activities that require focus and concentration contributes to cognitive stimulation (Bhangu et al., 2023; Yadav, 2022). From chess and problem-solving games to activities like hiking that demand navigational skills, these endeavors challenge the mind, enhance critical thinking, and keep cognitive faculties sharp (Bhangu et al., 2023).

Incorporating games and physical activities into routine instills a sense of discipline and time management. Whether adhering to a workout schedule or allocating time for team sports, these activities require planning and commitment. This discipline extends beyond the realm of games, positively influencing other aspects of human life. Participating in group sports and games fosters social interaction and team building. Whether it's a game of soccer with friends or a team-building activity at work, these experiences create shared memories and deepen interpersonal connections. The collaborative nature of team sports promotes effective communication and cooperation (Rillo-Albert et al., 2021).

Games and physical activities provide a platform for self-discovery and personal growth. Setting and achieving fitness goals, overcoming challenges in sports, or mastering a new activity contribute to a sense of accomplishment. These experiences foster self-confidence, resilience, and a belief in players' capacity for continual growth. The diversity of games and physical activities encourages a spirit of lifelong learning and adaptability (Alcaraz-Muñoz et al., 2020; Groll et al., 2015). Whether trying a new sport, or exploring different forms of physical exercise, these activities cultivate a mindset of curiosity and adaptability, essential qualities for navigating life's uncertainties (Espoz-Lazo et al., 2020).

From the tangible benefits of physical fitness to the intangible rewards of mental well-being and social connections, these games contribute immeasurably to holistic development. As we navigate the challenges and joys of life, the importance of games and physical activities remains undeniable—a testament to their enduring impact on our overall health, happiness, and personal growth (Gelisli and Yazici, 2015; Groll et al., 2015).

Methodology

This is an exploratory research that aims to explore the well-being benefits of Indian traditional games. Accordingly, qualitative research methods of investigation known for their suitability for exploring complex non-quantifiable phenomena (Rillo-Albert et al., 2021; Summers et al., 2020) have been used for this research with an objective to delve into the underlying reasons, motivations, and meanings associated (Yadav, 2022) with the well-being benefits of traditional Indian games. Qualitative methods are found to be more effective in capturing the context and nuances of a situation. This is particularly valuable when studying social, human, historical, political, and cultural phenomena (Bhangu et al., 2023). All those who have played any of the traditional Indian games, i.e., Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Gilli Danda, Chhupa Chhupi, and Kite Flying in Delhi NCR, constituted the sample population for this study out of which a sample of 144 respondents (Table 1) was chosen by using the snowball sampling technique.

Interviews were conducted through a semi-structured questionnaire to obtain robust, realistic, reliable, and useful (Bhangu et al., 2023; Yadav, 2022) data for this study from the selected sample. The interview process started with an informal conversation (Swain and King, 2022) to create a connecting, positive, relaxed, comfortable, and output-oriented environment (Akesson, et al., 2018) followed by the actual data collection in March 2024. The participants illustrated their actual life occurrences, experiences, observations, beliefs, perspectives, and perceptions concerning the different benefits of playing games in general and traditional Indian games in particular. Thick description strategy as suggested by Cho and Lee (2014) has been adopted to ensure the trustworthiness of the collected responses.

Table 1: Sample Demographics

Characteristics	N = 144	%	Characteristics	N = 144	%
<i>Age (Years)</i>			<i>Game(s) Played</i>		
Below 10	18	12.5	Kabbadi	104	72.0
10 - 20	42	29.2	Kho-Kho	93	65.0
20 - 30	39	27.1	Gilli Danda	96	66.7
30 - 40	23	16.0	<i>Chhupa Chhupi</i>	123	85.4
Above 40	22	15.2	Kite Fling	98	68.1
<i>Gender</i>			<i>Family Structure</i>		
Male	92	64.0	Joint Family	69	47.9
Female	52	36.0	Nuclear Family	75	52.1

The collected responses were analysed with the help of the inductive approach, i.e., grounded theory approach (Ralph et al., 2015) to study the well-being benefits of playing Indian traditional games. Grounded theory is a qualitative research methodology that focuses on the systematic generation of theory from collected data. It was developed by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Carrillo and Bermudez, 2016; Charmaz, 2014) in the 1960s. The central idea behind grounded theory is to derive theories directly from the data, allowing themes and patterns to emerge during the research process rather than being predefined.

Conceptualization of chosen Indian traditional games

Kabaddi – Kabaddi is a contact team sport that resonates with the heartbeats of traditional communities. Kabaddi's origin can be traced to ancient India, where it was known by various regional names. The modern form of Kabaddi gained recognition through efforts to standardize rules and establish a competitive framework. In this game, two teams, each with seven players, take turns sending a “raider” into the opponent's half, while the other team defends. The raider's task is to tag as many defenders as possible and return to his half before being tackled. The defenders, on the other hand, aim to prevent the raider's return by tackling and holding him. The game unfolds in a fast-paced, continuous cycle of raids and defence, with each team striving for dominance. In recent years, Kabaddi has transcended its cultural roots and gained recognition on the global stage. The establishment of professional

Kabaddi leagues, such as the Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) in India, has played a pivotal role in popularizing the sport.

Kho-Kho – Kho-Kho, a traditional Indian sport with roots that trace back through centuries, stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of indigenous games. Known for its dynamic blend of agility, strategy, and teamwork, Kho-Kho has evolved from a cultural pastime to a competitive sport that captures the essence of Indian athleticism. The origins of Kho-Kho can be traced to ancient India, where it was played in various regional forms. Over time, efforts to standardize the rules and structure of the game led to the establishment of a more formalized version. The game involves two teams, each consisting of twelve players, with nine players on the field at a time. The objective is for one team to tag all the players of the opposing team, known as “chasers,” by touching them, while the other team tries to avoid being tagged. The dynamics of the game involve swift chases, dodges, and strategic positioning, creating a fast-paced and engaging experience. While deeply rooted in Indian culture, Kho-Kho has gained international recognition. Various national and state-level competitions showcase the sport’s competitiveness and draw attention to talented players.

Gilli Danda - In the vibrant tapestry of traditional Indian games, Gilli Danda stands out as a timeless pastime that transcends generations. This indigenous sport, rooted in simplicity and camaraderie, encapsulates the essence of rural life and showcases the ingenuity of traditional recreational activities. The game involves two primary elements: the “gilli,” a small wooden stick, and the “danda,” a larger stick used to strike the gilli. The player uses the danda to launch the gilli into the air, and while it is airborne, the player must strike the gilli to send it as far as possible. The opposing team or player then attempts to catch the gilli before it hits the ground, using only one hand. Points are scored based on the distance covered and the number of successful catches. The sound of the wooden danda striking the gilli and the cheers of encouragement create an atmosphere of joy and nostalgia.

Chhupa Chhupi - In the realm of traditional Indian games, Chhupa Chhupi, the whimsical and timeless game of hide and seek, holds a special place. As a game cherished by generations, it encapsulates the joy of childhood, fosters camaraderie, and serves as a cultural touchstone. While the exact historical origins of Chhupa Chhupi are challenging

to trace, the game has been an integral part of Indian culture for centuries. Its simplicity and universal appeal have allowed it to transcend regional boundaries, making it a ubiquitous pastime enjoyed by children in diverse communities. Chhupa Chhupi, also known as Hide and Seek, is a game played with enthusiasm and exuberance. The rules are straightforward: one player, known as the “seeker” or “denner,” closes their eyes and counts while other players hide. After reaching a predetermined count, the seeker begins searching for the hidden players. The goal for the hidden players is to return to the designated “base” or “home” without being tagged by the seeker. The first player tagged becomes the seeker for the next round.

Kite Flying - Kite flying, a centuries-old tradition that has transcended cultures and continents, stands as a testament to the enduring fascination with the simple yet exhilarating act of sending a colourful creation into the sky. The origins of kite flying can be traced back over 2,000 years to ancient China, where it is believed to have begun as a form of military signalling. Over time, the practice evolved, spreading across Asia, the Middle East, and eventually reaching Europe. Each culture infused its unique characteristics into the art of kite making and flying, leading to a diverse array of shapes, designs, and traditions associated with kite festivals. Kite making is both an art and a science. Traditionally crafted from bamboo and paper, kites now feature materials such as nylon and fiberglass, enhancing durability and flight performance. The designs range from simple diamond-shaped kites to intricate, multi-layered creations in various forms, including animals, birds, and mythical creatures. The mastery lies in achieving the delicate balance between weight, shape, and wind resistance that allows a kite to soar gracefully.

Data Analysis and Findings

Grounded theory, a qualitative and reflective research methodology pioneered by Corbin and Strauss (2015) emphasizes the systematic development of theory from collected data. One of the critical steps in grounded theory research is presenting the results, where the prime focus is on the rich tapestry of emergent concepts and patterns that is woven into a coherent and meaningful narrative. As stated by Charmaz (2014), “Grounded theory technique is characterised by specific techniques including interleaved rounds of data collection and analysis, inductive coding, memoing, constant comparison, and theoretical sampling”. Accordingly, the obtained responses were systematically

broken down into manageable units and assigned some codes. This process has generated a vast array of codes representing different aspects of the data. In the next step, the codes were organised into different categories based on the underlying connections and patterns among codes. Then these codes were further grouped into meaningful categories that aligned with the research objectives of this study. This process involved constant comparison and refinement, ensuring that the categories accurately reflect the data. During the entire coding process various theoretical memos were also created to serve as a guide, ensuring that the research remains closely aligned with the data and concepts, providing a roadmap for writing the results of this study grouped under three focused codes, i.e., physical, mental, and social well-being.

Physical well-being

Traditional Indian games have been an integral part of the country's cultural heritage, offering not only entertainment but also a range of physical benefits. In a world increasingly dominated by modern sports and digital entertainment, the significance of traditional Indian games in promoting physical well-being is often overlooked. Respondents have stated various physical benefits (Table 2) of playing these games.

Table 2: Physical Well-Being and Traditional Games

Category	f(%)	Quoted Examples
Enhanced motor skills and coordination	101 (70%)	<i>"Playing games need quick reflexes, precise movements, and planning which improved my hand-eye coordination and concentration skills"</i>
Cardiovascular fitness	99 (69%)	<i>"Games are physically demanding, you need to run continuously, tackling, and evasive manoeuvres, all these have improved my overall physical fitness"</i>
Muscle strength and flexibility	134 (93%)	<i>"Engagement in games often involve a combination of running, jumping, and physical contact, which helps in the development of muscle strength and flexibility"</i>
Improved balance and agility	86 (60%)	<i>"Playing games improved my core strength, stability, and overall body control as I need to maintain balance while executing quick and agile movements"</i>
Weight management, joint health and bone density	140 (97%)	<i>"By keeping myself engaged in physical games, I am able to maintain my weight...as advised by doctors, I play kabbadi to keep my weight under control... which impacted my joint bone health positively"</i>

Mental well-being

Traditional Indian games have long been celebrated not only for their cultural significance but also for the myriad mental benefits they offer.

In a world increasingly dominated by technology and fast-paced living, the mental advantages of engaging in these age-old games often go unnoticed. The respondents have clearly asserted that these age-old activities offer a holistic approach to mental well-being, promoting cognitive stimulation, emotional resilience, and social connection. In rediscovering and embracing these traditional games, individuals not only enrich their cultural experiences but also prioritize their mental health in a meaningful and enjoyable manner. Significant mental benefits (Table 3) of playing these games as enlisted by respondents are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Mental Well-Being and Traditional Games

Category	f(%)	Quoted Examples
Cognitive stimulation and strategic thinking	86 (60%)	<i>"Playing games means you have to follow certain rules, strategies, and tactics...for which you have to think critically ...in a way it improves our problem-solving abilities"</i>
Enhanced concentration and focus	110 (76%)	<i>"You need to be very focused to play any game"</i> <i>"Me and my son are sports enthusiasts ... he is doing very well in studies as well...I think games have improved his focus and concentration"</i>
Stress reduction and relaxation	131 (91%)	<i>"After playing and releasing sweat, I forget the pressures of life, feel so relaxed and stress free"</i>
Memory enhancement	81 (56%)	<i>"Improved concentration and no stress have improved my memory power.... now I remember things with precision"</i>
Social interaction and emotional well-being	129 (90%)	<i>"Best part of games is that I can meet my friends, interact with them and feel part of large gathering... it improved my communication skills"</i> <i>"I can share my joy and defeat with others"</i>
Cultural connection and identity	42 (29%)	<i>"On two occasions (Independence Day and Makar sankranti) every year our whole family enjoy the Kite-flying together...I always look forward for these two days"</i>
Problem-solving skills and adaptability	76 (53%)	<i>"To be in games we have to think quickly and adapt according to the situation"</i>

Social well-being

Indian traditional games, steeped in cultural heritage, offer more than just recreation—they serve as vibrant conduits for fostering social well-being. In an era characterised by digital connections and fast-paced lifestyles, the social advantages of engaging in these age-old games often go unnoticed. In the intricate weave of modern society, the social well-being benefits of playing traditional Indian games stand out as pillars of connection, unity, and cultural pride. These age-old activities, often passed down through generations, contribute significantly to the social fabric of communities. As we rediscover and embrace these

games, we not only enrich our cultural experiences but also prioritize our social health in a meaningful and enjoyable manner. Through the revival and continued appreciation of traditional Indian games, the invaluable social benefits of these activities can be preserved, ensuring vibrant and connected communities for generations to come. The respondents have identified various social benefits enumerated in Table 4 of playing these games.

Table 4: Social Well-Being and Traditional Games

Category	f(%)	Quoted Examples
Building community bonds	68 (47%)	<i>"Traditional games are played in groups. Which promotes a sense of bonding and belongingness"</i>
Team spirit	107 (74%)	<i>"When we play team-based games. to play and win we have to work as a team"</i> <i>"I feel a sense of unity towards my team members"</i>
Promoting social inclusion	82 (57%)	<i>"Kite-flying is a game for every age group"</i> <i>"When we play, our religion and status make no difference"</i> <i>"Anyone can play games with us"</i>
Celebrating cultural identity	49 (34%)	<i>"Kite-flying is our way to celebrate two important festivals"</i> <i>"My grandfather taught me to play kabaddi and kho-kho"</i> <i>"I learnt about my cultural rituals through various games that were played by my grandparent, parents, and now me"</i>
Better communication skills	99 (69%)	<i>"Playing means interaction and communication"</i> <i>"My speaking, convincing, and expressive ability have improved since I started playing Kho-Kho with my friends"</i>
Strengthening family ties	89 (62%)	<i>"I learnt kabbadi from my grandfather and he learnt about mobile phones from me"</i> <i>"Me and my father together play various games"</i>
Encouraging sportsmanship and fair play	118 (82%)	<i>"Whether we win or lose, we only play fair games"</i> <i>"Honesty is must in games"</i> <i>"Games teaches us to accept the outcomes graciously"</i>

Conclusion and Future Research

This is exploratory research that aims to explore the well-being benefits of Indian traditional games. Accordingly, qualitative research methods of investigation have been used in this research to obtain more comprehensive and authentic results based on the data collected from a sample of 144 respondents who have actually played these games and resided in Delhi NCR, India. Five traditional games were chosen for this study, i.e., Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Gilli Danda, Chhupa Chhupi, and Kite Flying. Grounded theory was applied to obtain the results of this study which are broadly summarized under three focus groups, namely the physical, mental, and social well-being benefits of playing traditional games.

The results of this study have clearly indicated that: (i) as one navigate the complexities of modern life, the role of traditional games in promoting the well-being of players is very significant; (ii) beyond their entertainment value, these games offer a holistic approach to health, encompassing physical fitness, mental stimulation, social interaction, and emotional resilience; (iii) by rediscovering and embracing traditional games, all involved not only enrich their cultural experiences but also prioritize their well-being in a meaningful and enjoyable manner; (iv) these age-old games, passed down through generations are inherently physical, often requiring players to engage in activities that promote fitness and agility; (v) whether it's the energetic movements in games like Kho-Kho, Kabaddi or the precision and coordination demanded by Gilli Danda and Kite-flying, players experience physical exercise in a natural and enjoyable manner; (vi) the regular practice of these games contributes to cardiovascular health, muscular development, and overall physical fitness, helping combat sedentary lifestyles and promoting an active lifestyle; (vii) engaging in traditional games is a powerful way to stimulate the mind and enhance cognitive functions; (viii) the mental stimulation provided by these games contributes to improved concentration, enhanced memory, and the development of critical thinking abilities; (ix) the joy and satisfaction derived from mastering game strategies contribute positively to emotional well-being; (x) traditional games are often communal activities that bring people together, fostering social bonds and a sense of belonging; (xi) whether played in family settings, communities, or organized events, these games provide opportunities for social interaction and collaboration; (xii) the shared experiences of playing traditional games contribute to the development of strong social connections, communication skills, and a sense of camaraderie which is instrumental in combating feelings of isolation and promoting a positive sense of community; (xiii) traditional games offer a healthy outlet for stress relief and relaxation, allowing players to disconnect from the pressures of daily life and find joy in the present moment; and (xiv) traditional games often involve unwritten rules and unexpected challenges, requiring players to adapt and learn in real-time by adjusting, navigating, and facing the unpredictable moves of opponents which helps in developing problem-solving skills in them.

Through the revival and continued appreciation of traditional Indian games, the timeless wisdom embedded in these activities can contribute significantly to the holistic well-being of individuals and communities

alike. The results of this study can further be examined in different settings with a bigger and more randomly selected sample by making use of quantitative research methods.

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Energy Ladder Progression in Indian Schools: A State-level Analysis

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Abstract

Advancing along the energy ladder is an essential undertaking within the domain of energy access, playing a pivotal role in fostering sustainable socio-economic development, encompassing sectors such as health, education, and beyond. This progression occurs as households or institutions transition from utilizing polluting and inefficient fuels—such as firewood and diesel—to adopting cleaner, more sustainable, and cost-effective energy alternatives, including liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), compressed natural gas (CNG), and renewable energy sources. Within the educational sector, the consistent availability of sustainable and affordable energy solutions is integral to fortifying the infrastructure of schools, enhancing the resilience of communities, and stimulating economic growth. According to the most recent UDISE report, which assesses the provision of various infrastructural facilities in schools, 89% of schools in India had access to electricity from diverse sources in the academic year 2021-22, a marked increase from 86.90% in the previous year. Of the schools with electricity access in 2021-22, 6.7% had installed solar panels. This represents a notable shift from coal-dependent electricity toward renewable energy solutions, though the transition remains far from complete. Significant efforts are still necessary at both institutional and policy levels to effect a large-scale transformation from coal-based energy to renewable energy sources in educational institutions across the nation.

Keywords: Energy Ladder, Renewable energy, solar panels, Electrification of Schools, Solarisation.

I. Introduction

Education institutions need electricity for lighting, heating, cooling, cooking, water supply and information and communication technology

(ICT) services. SDG 4 which focuses on quality education aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030¹. It has been observed that low rates of electricity access results in poor academic performance, lower attendance and leads to lower level of staff retention² (UNICEF 2019). In fact, a positive correlation has been examined between electrification and better education outcomes. An evaluation study by ADB (Rauniyar, et al 2010) found that in Bhutan, rural electrification resulted in 0.65 additional years of schooling for girls and 0.41 additional years for boys.

UNESCO (2019) reports that Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest electricity access in primary schools (35%), followed by South Asia (51%) and Latin America (87%), with over 230 million children globally studying without electricity. Access to sustainable energy enhances enrolment, sanitation, staff retention, lighting, and extended school hours, thus contributing to SDG 4 through progress on SDG 7.

Total Capacity : 454452.19 MW

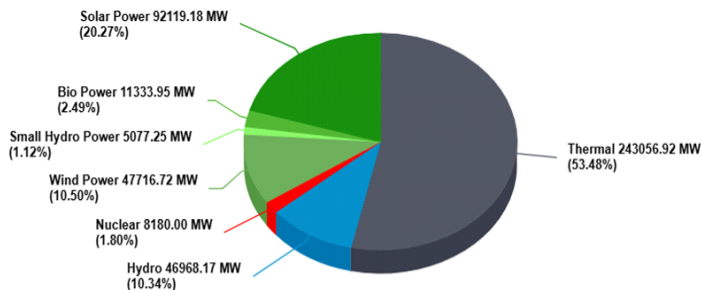


Figure 1. Category Wise Installed Capacity (As of 25/11/2024)

Source: <https://npp.gov.in/dashBoard/cp-map-dash-board>

Figure 1 depicts the installed capacity of various sources of electricity. Over the years the share of solar, wind & other renewable energy sources has increased by almost 11 percent³, indicating an energy transition towards the use of cleaner energy sources. Progress in SDG 7, with the use of solar power, which is at 20 percent, will help in moving up the energy ladder and thus reflect the country’s growing reliance on cleaner and sustainable energy sources. It will thereby help in achieving SDG 4 through access to sustainable and modern

use of electricity sources in schools. In this respect, the solarization of schools is an important step towards this energy transition and helps in progressing towards a more resilient energy future with less dependence on fossil-based sources of energy.

Energy ladder is a concept in which as the income of the households increases, it moves up the ladder from the use of dirty fuels like firewood, diesel to the use of cleaner and affordable fuels like renewable energy. But what about the energy ladder at the community level? This paper aims to see the energy ladder progression made in schools in India and its impact on the learning environment for students. The paper aims to explore how adoption of solar energy at state level in schools has moved up the energy ladder, from coal-based electricity to renewable sources of energy. What are the factors contributing to this change? How have states fared in the adoption of renewable energy?

II. Literature Review

Without electricity, access to basic and digital education remains a distant dream, especially in rural and remote areas which are unelectrified or under electrified. In 2021, 770 million people did not have access to electricity.⁴ Practical Action (2013) observed that in Bangladesh, teachers faced difficulty to teach in very low light conditions. Additionally, during rainy weather, schools had to be cancelled in the Philippines as classrooms were not sufficiently well lit for students and teachers (Valerio, 2014).

By 2020, 75.71 percent of primary schools had access to electricity, 86 percent of lower secondary schools had it, and 90 percent of upper secondary schools had it. A GEM report (2023) found that the share of schools with electricity increased marginally from 30 percent in 2015 to 32 percent in 2020 in Central and Southern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Investment in expansion of the national electricity grid is capital intensive and time consuming. As an alternative solution, the use of decentralised renewable energy (DRE) in schools can help in improving the education outcomes. UNESCAP has defined a decentralized energy system which is *“characterized by locating of energy production facilities closer to the site of energy consumption.”*⁵ DRE technologies are powered by renewable sources like solar and wind. In terms of solar PV generation,

solar panels installed to turn sunlight into an electric current, is the most common preference for decentralised power generation. In 1968, the first solar panel was installed in a primary school in Niger⁶. In Palestine, installing solar PV systems in Al-Dahriya secondary public school, not only helped Palestinians become energy independent but it also resulted in surplus electricity generation (Alsamamra and Shoqeir, 2021). The “Solar Schools” program in India provides rural schools with solar panels, to ensure a reliable source of electricity, and help in improving the quality of education (Lottu et al. 2023).

To improve education outcomes and build climate resilient schools, UNICEF supported the connection of 150 learning centres to renewable energy which benefited more than 3 lakh Rohingya children staying in refugee camps, in Cox’s Bazaar, Bangladesh (UNICEF 2022). With solar energy gaining traction, one in 10 K-12 public and private schools across New Jersey to California, were running on solar energy by early 2022 (Buckley, 2022). With electrification of schools, facilities like clean drinking water, cooked and nutritious meals and primary health services can be offered (UNICEF 2019). In Lagos, a solar powered floating school was installed for the Makoko water community which provided education to more than 100 children (Hsu, 2017). Solar-powered schools help children understand the need for clean energy and help nurture a culture of sustainability (Kamat & Nasnodkar, 2019; Khin & Jayaranjan, 2022; Shrimali & Rohra, 2012). Such innovative approaches can make solar energy more accessible and affordable in countries where there is a greater solar energy potential and help education institutions climb up the energy ladder progression.

Silva et al. (2024), analysed the average investment and estimated monthly savings from the installation of solar panels on 310 public schools in Sergipe, Brazil. The results showed that solar energy in schools resulted in a return on investment in the short and medium term, making the investment viable. Lottu et al. (2023) highlight that in the long term, economic benefits consist of cost savings and revenue generation through surplus electricity production (Silva et al. 2024). The use of solar energy systems in schools helps in providing lighting, installing internet equipment, and laptop charging facilities (Schinca and Amigo 2010). Khan et al. 2015, installed solar power systems in different schools in the Khyber region of Pakistan and found that the adoption of solar projects necessitates low initial cost, less maintenance,

and tends to be economical. Yet, challenges in the scalability of solar projects are the financial barrier with high initial costs of installation and infrastructure issues (Hosseini, 2019), especially for schools with limited budgets (Lottu et al. 2023).

In India, according to the latest UDISE⁷ report, which examines various infrastructure facilities being provided in schools, 89% of schools in India will have electricity access from various sources in 2021-22, which has increased from 86.90% in 2020-21. This figure stood at 77% in 2018-19, an improvement of 12% over four years. Out of these schools having electricity access in 2021-22, 6.7% of schools have solar panels installed. Substantial efforts are required to make a significant shift from coal-based access to renewable-based access to electricity at an institutional and policy level across the country. Rising the energy ladder is very crucial in the realm of energy access and sustainable socio-economic development including health and education besides other aspects.

Given the background, the solarization of schools in India has been at a slow pace and there is a need to examine the data and policies supporting it to scale this up. Given the recent data from the UDISE report, solar panels have been made available as a renewable energy source, to power schools in the country. The objective of the paper is to explore how schools with different ownerships have moved up the energy ladder, from coal-based electricity to renewable sources of energy. What are the factors contributing to this change? How have states fared in the adoption of renewable energy?

III. Data and Methodology

This study explores the accessibility, awareness, and progression made from fossil-based electricity to the use of solar electricity in schools across the country. The study uses secondary data provided in the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) report for 2021-22. The paper analyzes the installation of renewable energy under two broad areas: (i) National and (ii) State. A comparative data analysis is conducted to investigate the extent of solarization in educational institutions. Policy documents related to the solarization of schools, and case studies highlighting the impact of reliable, sustainable, and accessible electricity on educational outcomes are studied too. Moreover, this study uses the UDISE+ report data, which has

reported the adoption of solar panels for the first time in the country for the year 2021-22.

IV. Energy ladder progression for Indian schools

Access to reliable electricity is crucial for achieving quality education. The Economic Survey (2021) observed that states with lower literacy rates have low electricity rates in schools and vice versa. The Survey further highlighted a linkage between the Net Enrolment Ratio and certain states with low, medium, and high Human Development Indexes.⁸

Installation of solar panels in educational institutions is important as it ensures an uninterrupted supply of electricity, hence reducing the dependency on traditional sources of energy and contributing to a greener future. The supply of electricity in schools becomes more important in rural areas, where despite the electricity connection, the supply of electricity is unreliable. In recent years, the adoption of solar panels in schools across the country has been growing. In this regard, the UDISE report (2021-22) for the first time has started reporting data on several schools having solar panels across India.

Table 1 shows the number of Schools having solar panels at all India level and state-wise. At all India level, Government schools and private unaided schools had the highest number of solar panels available in 2021-22. There are more than 10 lakh government schools in the country, out of which a little over 54 thousand government schools have installed solar panels. This shows the commitment and intent of the government to promote renewable energy as a source of electricity in the education sector. National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) provided solar installations for lighting and cooling needs in 26 government schools in rural Telangana⁹. With the help of this initiative, schools were able to achieve their electricity needs by installing roof-top solar panels along with a battery and inverter system and all the classrooms have been provided with two fans and two lights. To ensure uninterrupted power supply in government schools, the Punjab Government has given its approval for the installation of solar rooftop panels in 965 government schools across the state, including 161 in Ludhiana¹⁰. This large-scale project shows the state government's commitment to renewable energy sources.

Table 1: Number of Schools having Solar panels available, 2021-22

India/ State/ UT	Total Schools				Schools with Solar Panels availability				Percentage of Schools with Solar Panels availability						
	All managem ent	Govt. aided	Govt. aided	Pvt. unaided	Others	All management	Govt. aided	Pvt. unaided	Others	All managem ent	Govt. aided	Pvt. unaided	Others		
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
India	1489115	1022386	82480	335844	48405	99678	54309	6298	35892	3179	6.7	5.3	7.6	10.7	6.6
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	416	342	2	72	0	13	10	0	3	0	3.1	2.9	0	4.2	0
Andhra Pradesh	61948	45137	1542	15058	211	3483	1756	88	1620	19	5.6	3.9	5.7	10.8	9
Assam	60859	2985	68	503	47	176	101	15	56	4	4.9	3.4	22.1	11.1	8.5
Arunachal Pradesh	60859	45490	3841	5852	5676	1864	1557	20	262	25	3.1	3.4	0.5	4.5	0.4
Bihar	93165	75558	742	8097	8768	7691	5686	62	1001	942	8.3	7.5	8.4	12.4	10.7
Chhattisgarh	233	123	7	76	27	158	91	5	61	1	67.8	74	71.4	80.3	3.7
Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	56512	48743	417	7063	289	2085	1844	22	216	3	3.7	3.8	5.3	3.1	1
Delhi	460	388	8	63	1	55	55	0	0	0	12	14.2	0	0	0
Goa	5619	2762	247	2610	0	1580	1076	44	460	0	28.1	39	17.8	17.6	0
Gujarat	1510	814	557	139	0	28	8	11	9	0	1.9	1	2	6.5	0
Haryana	53851	34699	5590	13559	3	2963	1398	366	1199	0	5.5	4	6.6	8.8	0
Himachal Pradesh	23726	14562	16	8261	887	3898	1527	3	2196	172	16.4	10.5	18.8	26.6	19.4
Jammu and Kashmir	18028	15380	0	2646	2	806	624	0	182	0	4.5	4.1	0	6.9	0
Jharkhand	28805	23173	1	5526	105	2583	2133	1	435	14	9	9.2	100	7.9	13.3
Karnataka	44855	35840	1175	1559	6281	3215	2416	77	215	507	7.2	6.7	6.6	13.8	8.1
Kerala	76450	49679	7110	19650	11	9817	5068	1079	5669	1	12.8	10.2	15.2	18.7	9.1
Ladakh	16240	5010	7183	3164	883	1108	436	273	351	48	6.8	8.7	3.8	11.1	5.4
Lakshadweep	978	838	28	112	0	154	112	7	35	0	15.8	13.4	25	31.3	0
Madhya Pradesh	38	38	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2.6	2.6	0	0	0
Maharashtra	125582	92695	740	30345	1802	5572	3845	46	1625	56	4.4	4.2	6.2	5.4	3.1
Manipur	196065	65639	24037	19268	661	11491	6543	2583	2329	36	10.5	10	10.8	12.1	5.5
Mizoram	4617	2889	583	1010	135	350	350	6	277	14	7.6	1.8	1	27.4	10.4
Meghalaya	14600	7783	4172	2120	525	268	123	74	55	16	1.8	1.6	1.8	2.6	3.1
Mizoram	3911	2563	230	1034	84	44	12	6	22	4	1.1	0.5	2.6	2.1	4.8
Nagaland	2718	1960	0	757	1	227	182	0	45	0	8.4	9.3	0	5.9	0
Odisha	62291	49072	5807	6104	1308	2265	1743	156	336	30	3.6	3.6	2.7	5.5	2.3
Puducherry	736	422	33	281	0	25	6	0	19	0	3.4	1.4	0	6.8	0
Punjab	27701	19259	450	7978	14	2489	1774	26	688	1	9	9.2	5.8	8.6	7.1
Rajasthan	106373	68948	0	34826	2599	4350	2011	0	2293	46	4.1	2.9	0	6.6	1.8
Sikkim	1259	864	19	376	0	84	62	2	20	0	6.7	7.2	10.5	5.3	0
Tamil Nadu	58801	37636	8323	12396	446	1910	952	173	868	17	3.3	2.3	2.1	7	3.8
Telangana	43083	30023	700	12193	167	2011	1008	30	965	8	4.7	3.4	4.3	7.9	4.8
Tripura	4929	4262	43	363	261	114	85	1	22	6	2.3	2	2.3	6.1	2.3
Uttar Pradesh	258054	137024	8113	97808	15109	22743	6741	1081	13757	1164	8.8	4.9	13.3	14.1	7.7
Uttarakhand	22815	16484	608	5225	498	924	523	35	347	19	4.1	3.2	5.8	6.6	3.8
West Bengal	94744	83302	88	9750	1604	3133	2847	6	254	26	3.3	3.4	6.8	2.6	1.6

Source: UDISE+ 2021-22

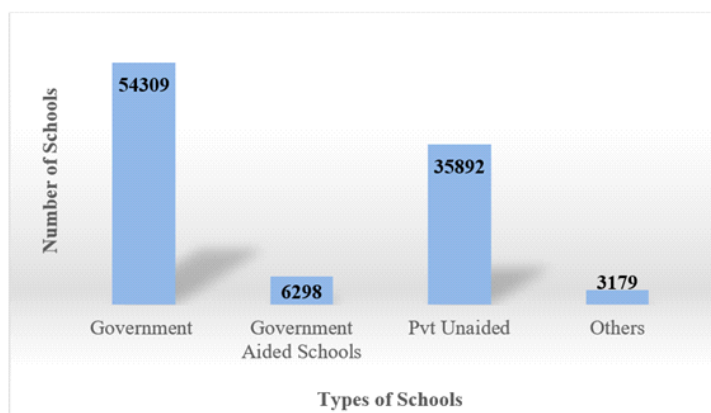


Figure 2: Number of schools with solar panels, UDISE Report 2021-22

In order to reduce the carbon footprint, several private schools in Jamshedpur, had installed rooftop solar panels, promoting renewable energy.¹¹ The solar electricity thus generated is sufficient during school hours. Adoption of solar energy in educational institutions helps in saving on electricity bills and also inspire the young generation to become agents of change and understand the importance of green energy and its use in the future.

In educational institutions, rising up the energy ladder does mean adopting solar technology but it also results in stacking up of energy sources. Due to frequent power cuts, supply of electricity hampers teaching in the classroom and use of the internet in computer labs, due to which schools have adopted solar energy in addition to the existing grid connection. This is known as the stacking model where there is an option of using multiple energy sources at the same time (Serrano et al. 2019). In a stacking model, the primary source of electricity is through the national grid and solar energy can be used as a backup power source in schools by installing solar panels that generate electricity during sunny days and store it in batteries for use during power outages.

V. Analysis for Indian states

State-wise data in Table 1 shows that states like Assam and West Bengal reported 3.1% and 3.3% of Schools with Solar Panels. With limited access to electricity in rural areas, the installation of solar panels in schools will help to “*enhance education opportunities, improve engagement, and provide a sustainable learning environment.*”¹² Kerala

and Andhra Pradesh are making continued investments in solarizing their schools with 6.8% and 5.6% of schools having solar panels (UDISE 2021-22).

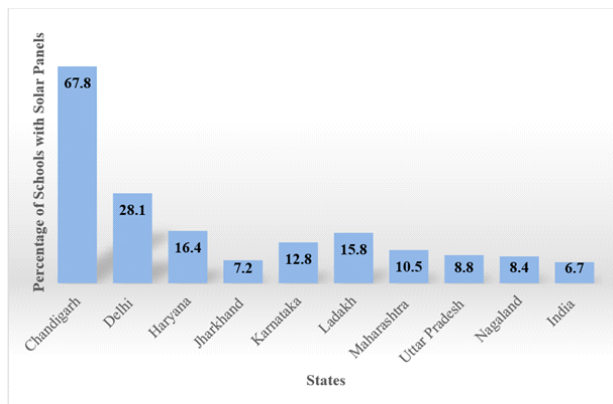


Figure 3: State-wise solarisation of schools in India, UDISE Report 2021-22

Figure 3 represents the states that were doing better than the national average of 6.7 percent in the solarisation of schools in India. The high adoption rate in Uttar Pradesh with 8.8% of schools with solar panels and dedicated commitment by the state government to sustainable education has paved the way for government schools to adopt solar energy. The state of Jharkhand has made remarkable progress with 7.2% of schools with solar panels. Niti Aayog in its SDG report 2020-21, had put Jharkhand in the aspirant category for SDG 4: Quality Education, having an index score of less than 50. The state's commitment to adopting and scaling solar power in schools shows a proactive approach by the government in providing reliable electricity access and promoting sustainability in education. On the other hand, Chandigarh and Delhi with 67.8% and 28.1% of schools with solar panels, show the importance and commitment by authorities to scale the solarization of schools in these states. The national percentage by all management types is 6.7 percent for adopting solar panels in schools. States that are doing remarkably above national level are Chandigarh (67%), Delhi (28%), Haryana (16%), Ladakh (15%) and Karnataka (12%).

1. Chandigarh

Chandigarh Renewable Energy & Science & Technology Promotion Society (CREST) had set a 'Net Zero Plan' for all government departments in the city. Within this plan, 106 government schools became self-reliant and met all their energy requirements through solar power.¹³ According to CREST in 2022, 58 out of 79 private schools have roof-top solar plants.¹⁴ Schools in Chandigarh have adopted solar technology at a large scale, not only to save on electricity bills but also to make students aware of the huge environmental challenges we face. Thereby, making them agents of change of sustainability that benefit their community. The installation of solar panels makes the students comprehend the practical knowledge of solar energy.

2. Delhi

In 2020, under a central government scheme, the Delhi government set up rooftop solar projects in 150 school buildings, to generate 2,000 megawatts (MW) of solar energy by 2025.¹⁵ Under this project, rooftop solar (RTS) developers were recognized via competitive bidding. The Zero-investment Renewable Energy Service Company (RESCO) model, which offers electricity to consumers from renewable energy sources, was taken up. Since the project was implemented under a central government scheme, a quarter of the total project cost was shouldered by the central government upon conclusion. With the help of this scheme, schools were able to save on their electricity bills and were able to utilize the saved money on the development of school infrastructure and to create awareness about renewable energy solutions. According to Antoninis et al. (2023), the percentage of schools with solar panel systems across the country was highest in Chandigarh and Delhi—two of the richest and most urban territories in the country. The Report suggested that this is because PV technology for school electrification was driven by potential capacity for investment and available technology in these two cities.

3. Haryana

To ensure self-sufficiency in schools, the Haryana Government made it compulsory for all private schools to adopt solar systems.¹⁶ As an incentive, the state government gave a grant of Rs. 20,000 per kilowatt to encourage schools to install solar panels. The mandate came into force, due to the high levels of pollution being witnessed in Gurgaon.

During the summer vacations, the solar electricity thus generated would be added to the grid and this record will be maintained through net metering. This will save the electricity bill of the private schools and promote a clean and green environment. A few schools which have installed green technology are Ajanta Public School which has set 265 kw solar panels on the rooftop and in due course will increase it to 500 kw. Suncity World School has installed a 77kw solar plant, producing 8,500 units of electricity per month. On the other hand, DPS Sushant Lok is in the process of setting up a 50kv solar plant in their school.¹⁷

4. Ladakh

“Axis Bank in collaboration with 17000 ft Foundation- a non-profit based organization in Ladakh, adopted 108 remote government schools of Ladakh under a 3 year project to improve infrastructure and bring in learning improvement for the children of these schools”¹⁸. In 2018, they launched Digi Lab- a project to bring Digital Learning opportunities in 108 schools, powered by Solar. Through this Digital Learning, access to hardware and software were provided to ensure customized e-learning content directly to the students. To provide electricity for Digital Labs in the school, 200 Solar panels and batteries were installed. With the help of these digital labs, the learning abilities of children will improve along with improving their computer literacy. This project shows that with the help of solar technology, digital technology can be made accessible in remote areas of Leh to not only improve the learning outcomes of children but also to customize the digital content to match the local curriculum.

Another example of solarizing in educational institutions is the Student’s Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL) situated in Leh. SECMOL campus is completely powered by solar energy and entirely run by the students, who are given the complete responsibility to manage the operation for the whole campus (Gupta 2024). The unique feature of this school is that it is a Net Zero Energy Building, i.e., the building is off-grid (which means not dependent on fossil fuel energy). In fact, the Solar panels installed are utilized for sourcing and generating of solar energy and meeting the energy requirements of the entire campus.¹⁹

5. Karnataka

To improve learning outcomes, state-run Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) set up solar-powered smart classrooms in 122 government schools in North Karnataka.²⁰ This initiative would benefit 13,000 students studying in these schools with smart classrooms equipped with modern technology. Such a medium of teaching will empower teachers to easily explain difficult concepts to students which would lead to better learning and academic performance. BEL has provided the smart-class facilities with a 50-inch LED television, central processing unit (CPU) with accessories, green board and LED lights charged with solar batteries.²¹

Another initiative was taken by Enphase Energy, supported by the Government Education Department, to solarize the Karnataka Public School with a 4-kW rooftop solar photovoltaic (PV) micro-inverter-based hybrid system to provide uninterrupted power supply to the entire school²² (Thomas, 2022). With the help of this project higher primary classrooms with desktops and projectors have been powered by the rooftop solar system.

VI. Policy Recommendations and Concluding Remarks

The above analysis highlights the growing momentum of solar energy adoption in schools across India, with states like Chandigarh, Delhi, and Haryana leading the way in integrating renewable energy solutions into their educational infrastructures. Solar panel installations not only offer a sustainable and cost-effective means of providing electricity to schools but also serve as an educational tool for fostering awareness about environmental sustainability among students. Furthermore, the synergy between solar energy and digital learning in regions like Ladakh underscores the transformative potential of renewable energy in improving educational outcomes, particularly in remote areas. The intersection of renewable energy and education holds tremendous promise, not only in reducing carbon emissions but also in creating dynamic learning environments, reducing operational costs for educational institutions, and nurturing a new generation of environmentally responsible citizens.

Despite the encouraging progress, substantial gaps remain in rural and underserved regions, where access to electricity is still limited. To bridge this divide, there is a need for more inclusive policies that prioritize solar energy adoption in these areas, alongside incentives

for both private and public schools to embrace renewable energy solutions. Below are the policy recommendations for solar panel electrification in Indian schools:

- 1. Expansion of Solar Panel Adoption in Rural and Underserved Areas:** While states like Chandigarh, Delhi, and Haryana have made significant strides in solarizing schools, regions with limited access to electricity, such as Assam, West Bengal, and several rural areas, must be prioritized. Policy initiatives should focus on extending the reach of solar energy to these underserved areas, particularly through targeted subsidies or financing mechanisms to ease the upfront costs of installation.
- 2. Incentivizing Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for Solar Infrastructure:** The success stories in Delhi and Haryana demonstrate the potential of public-private collaboration. Future policies should encourage more state and local governments to partner with private enterprises through models like the Zero-investment Renewable Energy Service Company (RESCO) model in Delhi. These partnerships can leverage private sector expertise and investment, while ensuring that educational institutions benefit from clean, affordable energy without upfront capital expenditure.
- 3. Strengthening State-Level Mandates for Solar Adoption:** States such as Haryana have implemented mandates requiring private schools to adopt solar systems, which should be expanded to include both private and public institutions. For example, Haryana's grant of Rs. 20,000 per kilowatt should be scaled up and expanded to include public schools, especially in regions with acute energy shortages, to incentivize adoption at all levels of the educational system.
- 4. Integrating Digital and Solar Technologies for Remote Education:** The example of Ladakh, where solar-powered digital learning tools have been implemented in remote schools, offers a replicable model. Policymakers should explore similar initiatives in other underserved regions, ensuring that solar energy powers not only lighting and basic infrastructure but also digital classrooms and e-learning facilities. Special attention should be paid to customizing digital content to local curricula, as demonstrated in Ladakh's Digi Lab initiative.

5. **Promoting Solar as Part of National Education Infrastructure Standards:** The national government should develop and implement policies that make solar energy a standard part of the educational infrastructure through bodies such as the Ministry of Education and Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. This could include mandating solar panels in new school constructions and offering financial support for retrofitting existing schools with solar energy systems.
6. **Capacity Building and Awareness Programs:** Alongside the technical installation of solar panels, policies should emphasize capacity building. School staff and students should be educated on the benefits of solar energy, energy efficiency, and environmental sustainability. Programs like Chandigarh's focus on student engagement with solar technology can serve as a model for schools nationwide, fostering a generation of students who are aware of environmental challenges and equipped to contribute to solutions.
7. **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data-Driven Policy Adjustment:** A robust system for monitoring the progress of solarization efforts should be established, utilizing platforms like UDISE to track solar adoption rates by state, school type, and geographic location. Regular evaluation will ensure that the most effective policies are scaled up, while less successful initiatives are reformed. Data-driven decision-making is essential for optimizing investments in solar energy in schools.

With the right policies, investments, and collaboration, India can significantly accelerate the transition towards a cleaner, greener educational future, aligning with its broader sustainability goals. The above discussion serves as a critical framework to understand the progress towards sustainable energy access and improved quality of life, hence making this study an important step towards enhancing equitable and sustainable development of the economy.

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India's Strategic Deployment of Soft Power in South Asia: Cultivating Regional Identity and Promoting Cooperation

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Abstract

This paper aims to evaluate India's use of soft power as a strategic asset in South Asia by drawing on cultural, educational, and diplomatic resources to shape regional identity and to ensure greater cooperation. Based on the scholarship, policy documents, and reports by various think tanks, the paper attempts to study Cold War and post-Cold War shifts in India's foreign policy and traces various instruments of India's soft power, such as culture, diaspora, and development assistance, and evaluate their effectiveness in cultivating a sense of shared identity in its immediate neighbourhood. Given historical antagonisms, regional power asymmetries, and competitive external influences, reliance upon soft power will become imperative for India to ensure stability, security, and regional leadership. The paper draws upon various sources, including academic literature, policy briefs, and case studies, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolving nature of India's soft power strategy. Filling gaps and providing new insights, the study shows the relevance of Indian soft power as a facilitator for regional cohesion in South Asia. It calls on the need to devise strategies by which India can hold credibility and stay competitive in leading a regional role that is slowly growing in competition.

Keywords: India, soft power, South Asia, cultural diplomacy, regional cooperation.

1. Introduction

In the modern international system, it is no longer sufficient to evaluate states' power merely by their military capabilities or economic assets. Increasingly, influence is also derived from the cultural, ideological, and diplomatic measures that states employ to shape global or regional perceptions. These dimensions, collectively termed "soft power," reflect

the ability to attract or co-opt rather than coerce (Nye, 2004; 2017). India, with its rich cultural heritage, diverse societal tapestry, and rapidly growing economy, has emerged as a major soft power actor—particularly in its immediate neighbourhood, South Asia. India's strategic focus on soft power has evolved through various historical phases. After its independence in 1947, India championed the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), a stance derived from its civilisational ethos and a desire to preserve its strategic autonomy during the Cold War (Rana, 1969; Harshe, 1990). Post-Cold War realignments and globalisation deepened India's engagement with the world, and more recently, New Delhi has identified soft power as a complementary instrument to its hard-power capabilities (Chaban & Holland, 2016; Kumar & Singh, 2012). Over the last few decades, India has systematically capitalised on its cultural influence—ranging from Bollywood movies to yoga diplomacy—to bolster regional ties and cultivate a common South Asian identity.

The central research question of this paper is: How has India strategically used soft power in South Asia to shape regional identity and foster cooperation? This study hypothesises that India's deployment of soft power, using cultural, educational, and diplomatic resources, has been significant in complementing the strength of regional identity in South Asia despite issues like geopolitical tension and external influences competing with the region. This paper addresses three research objectives. First, it charts the historical trajectory of India's soft power deployment, with a particular focus on the Cold War and post-Cold War periods when the country's foreign policy framework and regional strategies were in the process of crystallisation. Second, it interrogates the various instruments that India has resorted to in the practice of soft power—cultural diplomacy, diaspora engagement, education, development assistance, and digital outreach—and their impact on fostering regional identity within South Asia. Third, it makes some policy suggestions aimed at helping India to further improve its soft power strategies in view of increasing geopolitical competition and emerging regional ambitions.

The structure of this paper is as follows. After this introduction, Section 2 provides a review of relevant scholarly and policy literature, engaging with think-tank analyses and notable works on India's soft power, particularly Patryk Kugiel's *India's Soft Power: A New Foreign Policy*

Strategy (2017). Section 3 offers a concise historical overview while focusing predominantly on the Cold War and post–Cold War periods. Section 4 scrutinises South Asia’s importance in India’s strategic calculus, clarifying why India’s ability to shape a regional identity through soft power is critical. Section 5 dissects the instruments of India’s soft power outreach, drawing on specific case studies and policy initiatives. Section 6 evaluates the effectiveness of India’s soft power in the region, considering both achievements and challenges. Section 7 offers a series of recommendations to refine India’s soft power deployment, ensuring sustained regional influence and cooperation. Finally, the paper concludes with a synthesis of the findings and a call for a more agile and nuanced Indian soft power strategy in South Asia.

2. Conceptualising Soft Power

Joseph Nye’s seminal works of the 1990s and the early 2000s are now undeniably seen as magistral for the invention of soft power as an idea, namely by arguing that states can use intangibles—like culture, political values, and foreign policies—to convince (rather than coerce) others, or at least not decisively alienate them (Nye, 2017). Nye says that soft power is a “co-optive” force, allowing countries to woo others to do what they do by making their ideas, norms, and policies attractive (Nye, 1990). In an increasingly globalised world, the roles of public diplomacy, cultural exports, and educational exchanges play a pivotal role in the relationship between states. Nye’s concept has been sutured to various regional contexts, supplying important insights into how soft power strategies can either reinforce or counter a state’s geopolitical goals. Furthermore, the rise of digital media and social platforms has created additional channels for exercising soft power, allowing states to connect with international audiences more directly than ever before (Domingo, 2005; Shaikh, 2024). In today’s challenging international environment, states are implementing the use of soft power in foreign policy primarily, seeking to establish alliances and counter conflicts through common values and understandings.

India’s strategy for soft power, in particular, is significant in the South Asian context. A new body of scholarship over the past decade has emerged analysing India’s soft power strategies, emphasising the nexus between its historical legacies, domestic cultural assets, and its increasingly global ambitions. *India’s Soft Power: A New Foreign Policy*

Strategy (2017) by Patryk Kugiel is a notable example, which offers a comprehensive account of how India has strategically pursued cultural diplomacy, including the promotion of Bollywood, yoga, and the Indian diaspora. Kugiel identifies three key pillars of India's soft power approach: its cultural assets, the sale of democratic values, and the institutions, such as the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), that promote them (Kugiel, 2017). Although Kugiel's analysis offers a systematic account, a deeper dive into India's domestic challenges—whether stemming from religious polarisation or otherwise—would enhance our understanding of the complexity inherent in the country's soft power strategy.

Others, including Ian Hall (2012) and Daya Kishan Thussu (2013), point to Bollywood's impact on global perceptions of India, especially in countries with large South Asian diasporas. Codifying these strategies, India's philanthropic and developmental initiatives, of which the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme is a significant part of its soft power strategy, yet has been poorly reported within the press (United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, 2021). There has been considerable analysis published by policy research institutes and think tanks such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Brookings Institution, Observer Research Foundation (ORF), and the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) on India's practice of soft power, especially in South Asia (Mohan, 2014; Jaishankar, 2018; Chikermane, 2024). Such think tanks testify to India's "neighbourhood first" doctrine as well as emphasise the growing necessity of balancing contemporary national security anxieties with an integrated soft power approach (Mohan, 2007; Do Thanh Ha, 2023). Many of these reports recommend increasing people-to-people exchanges, scholarship programmes, and media collaborations to deepen India's regional relationship and to blunt the influence of outside powers, particularly China. With China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) expanding its footprint through infrastructure, media, and cultural initiatives in the region, India now has to recalibrate its soft power outreach to continue influencing the neighbourhood. Figure 1 looks at India's wide-ranging multilateral soft power strategy, highlighting its cultural exports, commitment to democratic values, and robust institutional frameworks that help shape its regional influence.

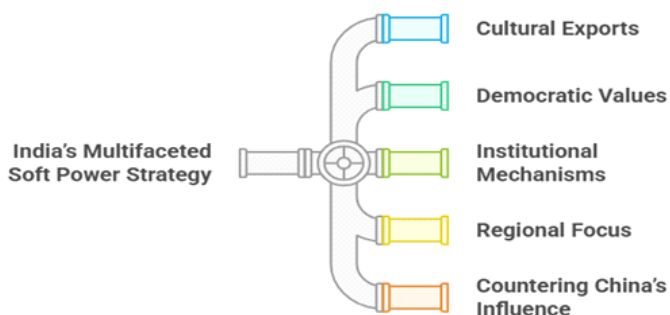


Figure 1: India's Comprehensive Multilateral Soft Power Strategy

The paper encompasses both scholarly insights and policy perspectives to bridge the gap between theory and practice in India's soft power strategy. Through examination of not just India's advantages but also its limitations in this regard, this study aims to provide insights into how India may adapt its strategic approach to maintaining relevance in South Asia in the face of intensifying geopolitical rivalry. It also underlines that the emerging multipolar world requires India to recalibrate its soft power strategy for it to remain relevant in the dynamic regional architecture. The paper also explores the potential for emerging technologies and digital diplomacy to bolster India's soft power outreach in the region.

3. From Ancient Roots to the Modi Government Era: Historical Overview

Ancient and Mediaeval Narratives: India boasts a civilisational deep lineage over thousands of years recognisable by profound philosophical traditions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism), thriving trade routes, and pollination with Persia, the Arab World, and Southeast Asia. Elements of soft power have been visible throughout antiquity and the mediaeval period in the form of religious interactions, for example, Buddhist missions to Sri Lanka and vigorous maritime commerce (Khara, 2018). The relevance of these legacies for contemporary Indian foreign policy is in their informing India's cultural self-image and causing the external images of Indian civilisation to be spiritually profound and culturally rich.

The Cold War Period: After gaining independence in 1947, India adopted policies of non-alignment and anti-colonial solidarity, which

were partly strategic responses to bipolar power blocs and partly symptomatic of India's cultural and philosophical inclinations. At the Bandung Conference (1955), in which Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru played a key role, Afro-Asian solidarity around a shared history of colonised nations was the main theme (Acharya, 2016). India engaged in cultural diplomacy through institutions like the ICCR, which was set up in 1950, with neighbouring states by way of performances, exhibitions, and academic exchange (Singh, Mol, Bika, Kanwat, & Singh, 2023). However, India's soft power initiatives during the Cold War were not always systematic. Cultural diplomacy was often eclipsed by domestic economic challenges and regional crises. India's wars with Pakistan (1965, 1971) and strained relations with neighbours suppressed the capabilities for regional unity (Ganguly, 2001). But India's experiment in democracy, the leadership of the NAM, and intellectual prowess—represented best, perhaps, by Rabindranath Tagore—added to India's 'soft power' profile.

The Post-Cold War Period: This era witnessed a paradigm shift in Indian foreign policy. From 1991 onwards, economic liberalisation, globalisation, and India's speedy integration into the global marketplace turned India into an emerging power (Muni, 1991). It was here that the idea of soft power began to take root in Indian policymaking circles. Bollywood cinema, yoga, Ayurveda, and cuisine, popular cultural exports of India, were very well received, the government realised. Indian art, dance, and educational exchanges started to be demonstrated at its diplomatic missions, embedded in a wider strategy of international engagement (Shairgojri, 2021). In South Asia, India tried to shift from a security-heavy policy to one that utilised soft power tools too. The ITEC programme, for example, provided training and educational opportunities to India's neighbours, while bilateral cultural festivals—often held in partnership with local governments—showcased India's diversity and hospitality. The post-1998 nuclear tests deterioration and the Kargil War (1999) created turbulence in the region (Ajaykumar, 2024). But by the early 2000s, India had stepped into a paradigm of a more robust soft power outreach, strengthening bilateral relations through cultural and developmental outreach with Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. Figure 2 maps India's evolving soft power strategy, tracing its historical foundations, policy shifts, and contemporary adaptations to maintain cultural and diplomatic leadership in a dynamic regional landscape.

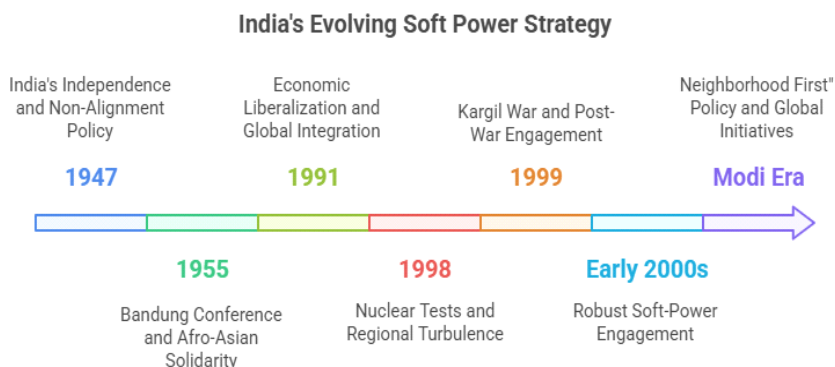


Figure 2: Trends and Transformations in India's Evolving Soft Power Approach

The Modi Government: With Prime Minister Narendra Modi having redefined India's soft power strategy, there is great emphasis on South Asia and strengthening regional ties. The neighbourhood-first policy is focused on stepping up cultural and developmental outreach and developing closer ties through people-to-people contacts and regional cooperation. Modi's government has also been keen to play up India's leadership role in international organisations, putting India forward as a champion of democratic values and development (Mazumdar, 2018). These initiatives, along with well-planned efforts such as the International Day of Yoga, digital diplomacy, and outreach into the Indian diaspora, have greatly enhanced India's global soft power (Kumari, 2023). Furthermore, India has worked to leverage its cultural and humanitarian influence to offset the increasing presence of China in South Asia, balancing both soft and hard power strategies to maintain its leadership in the region.

4. Importance of South Asia to India's Strategic Calculus

Why does South Asia remain central to India's strategic imagination? The answer is geographic contiguity, common cultural and historical experience, and interdependent security concerns. More than 1.8 billion people, most of whom have linguistic, religious, and cultural ties to Indian communities on the other side of the border, live in India's immediate neighbourhood—Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (Chakma, 2020). This is integral to India's national security, trade potential, and ambitions for great-power status—ensuring a peaceful, cooperative neighbourhood. Figure 3

highlights India's strategic interests in South Asia, emphasising its geopolitical priorities, economic outreach, and security concerns while underlining the role of soft power in shaping regional stability and cooperation.

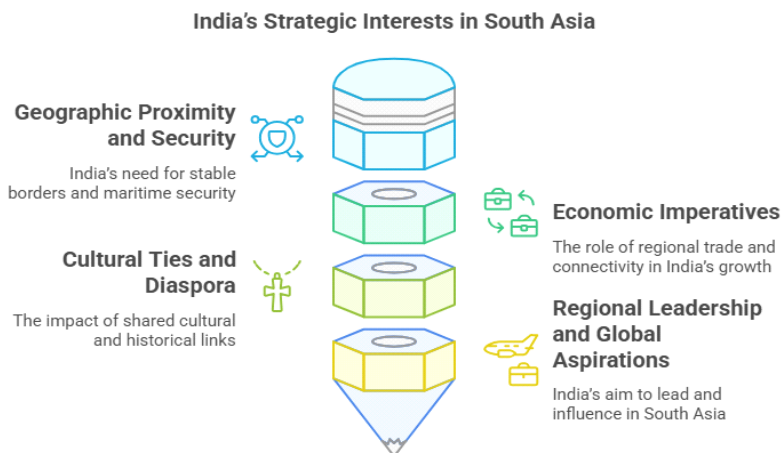


Figure 3: Strategic Objectives and Interests of India in South Asia

- a. ***Geographic Contiguity and Security***—India shares long land fronts with quite a few of the closest neighbours and maritime frontiers in its Indian Ocean littoral (Tripathi & Chaturvedi, 2019). Background historical grudges with Pakistan, security dilemmas in the Himalayas (with Nepal and China), and meanderings in the Indian Ocean (coastal states like Sri Lanka and Maldives) all highlight the need for stable regional relations.
- b. ***Economic Imperatives***: There is significant potential for trade, investment, tourism, and energy flows in South Asia. But India's journey of economic growth is intertwined with cross-border connectivity—roads, rail, and energy grids that hinge on neighbourhood cooperation (De & Kumarasamy, 2024). Conflict or political instability in neighbouring states often disrupts trade routes, deters investment, and strains bilateral relationships.
- c. ***Cultural Connect and Diaspora***: The cultural and demographic intertwining between the South Asian states is deep. Ethnic Indians live in millions throughout the region, and cross-border ethnic communities have shared religious, linguistic, and historical

ties (Isar, 2017). This interconnectedness is both an opportunity—enabling cultural diplomacy—and a challenge, as the domestic politics of neighbouring states can be influenced by India’s cultural presence, increasing suspicions of interference at times.

- d. *Regional Leadership and Global Aspirations:*** India’s aspiration to be a great power in its own right requires its capacity to engage and lead from its doorstep. Responsible and conflict-resolving leadership and development policies in South Asia enhance India’s international credentials. A stable South Asian environment also allows India to deploy resources in the global space outside mere crisis management in the neighbourhood.

Therefore, developing a common regional identity that promotes mutual respect, cultural ties, and economic integration is desirable both as a soft power instrument and as a significant national security agenda. If implemented successfully, India’s ability to establish these ties will lead to increased diplomatic support, less antagonism, and a better climate for cooperation that will benefit the region.

5. Instruments of India’s Soft Power in South Asia

India’s soft power tools in South Asia are numerous, mirroring the country’s cultural pluralism as well as policy creativity. Though cultural heritage is still the principal asset, India also reaches out in the form of media, education, development assistance, and diaspora outreach. This section deconstructs these instruments, exploring how they reverberate throughout India’s immediate neighbourhood.

Cultural Diplomacy: The Bollywood Effect, Yoga, and Ayurveda—Bollywood cinema is India’s biggest cultural export. Top Bollywood stars like Shah Rukh Khan, Aamir Khan, and Salman Khan have a large following in countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Cross-border film viewership has frequently attenuated attitudes towards India and helped create a common sense of cultural values and aspirations (Mehta, 2011). Yet, this soft power has been diminished amidst bans or restrictions on the Indian media due to diplomatic tensions. Outside of film, yoga and traditional Indian medicine, or Ayurveda, have enjoyed international success (Pandey, Rastogi, & Rawat, 2013; Press Trust of India, 2022). International Day of Yoga—the annual celebration, established in 2014 at the behest of India—is an

example of the outsized effect of these cultural exports. In South Asian capitals like Kathmandu, Colombo, and Dhaka, local authorities and community organisations hold yoga sessions in public places, often backed by Indian embassies. These add to the ancient cultural traditions of India, which have significance in an increasingly global era driven by interest in wellness and holistic, healthy living. Cultural workshops, arranged by the ICCR, are held regularly, presenting various forms of dance, including those of Bharatnatyam and Kathak, classical music, and other forms of art (Sahay, 2019). These events, which are often aligned with national celebrations, showcase India's cultural diversity. They also promote cooperation between artists from different countries and enhance people-to-people dialogue.

Educational Exchanges and Scholarships: Education has been a cornerstone in India's outreach for soft power. Scholarship schemes under ITEC, established in 1964, and those administered by the Ministry of External Affairs present opportunities for students and professionals in neighbouring countries to train at Indian institutions (Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation, n.d.; MEA, n.d.). Every year, thousands of South Asian students' study at Indian universities to promote academic collaboration and people-to-people ties. Many of the alumni go on to assume key positions in government, business, or academia in their home countries, further solidifying India's soft power footprint. Some of the more specialised institutions, such as South Asian University (SAU) in New Delhi, reflect the Indian vision for a shared regional knowledge ecosystem. The SAU hosts students from all the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries, encouraging cross-cultural dialogue and scholarly collaboration (Jiali, 2012). These educational initiatives have helped project India as a knowledge hub, offering intellectual resources to its neighbours.

Development Assistance and Humanitarian Aid: The gamut of India's development assistance runs from infrastructure projects to capacity-building workshops and humanitarian aid during natural disasters. In Nepal, for instance, Indian-funded projects include road construction in the Terai region, hydropower initiatives, and healthcare facilities. In Sri Lanka, India has supported housing projects for war-affected populations in the Northern Province. Meanwhile, projects like the Afghan Parliament building and the Salma Dam in Afghanistan stand as testaments to India's commitment to the reconstruction of war-torn

societies. Similarly, India has supported Bhutan through hydropower development and capacity-building programmes while aiding the Maldives with housing initiatives and water supply projects, reflecting its broader commitment to regional welfare (Saha, 2017; Bhole & Mehta, 2024). Humanitarian interventions, such as post-disaster assistance in the 2015 Nepal earthquake or pandemic relief, amplify the compassionate image of India further (Chakradeo, 2020; Parry & Bhat, 2023). Although some critics argue that the development assistance provided by India often appears politicised or paternalistic, it generally contributes to strengthening bilateral goodwill. Due to the resource constraints of many South Asian states, the funding from India often covers very vital developmental needs, thus reinforcing Indian influence and moral authority.

The Role of Diaspora: While India's biggest diaspora populations live in the Middle East, Europe, and North America, sizable diaspora populations are found in South Asia too—especially in Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. Diaspora-linked remittances and cultural exchanges feed into India's soft power storehouse. While diaspora festivals, language schools, and religious institutions reinforce the historical links that have existed between India and its neighbours. Indian missions routinely host events and programmes for the diaspora—cultural exhibitions, film festivals, and national day celebrations—celebrating Indian heritage (Kriti, 2023). Involving diaspora leaders helps New Delhi cultivate grassroots constituencies and local leaders who support closer relations with India. But diaspora politics can also lead to controversies when local people view India's engagement with its diaspora as an intervention in domestic affairs. Striking a balance between diaspora outreach and deference to the sensibilities of their host countries remains key to India's soft power quest.

Digital Outreach and Media: The post-2014 era for India has seen a methodical embrace of social media, digital broadcasting, and online portals as tools of soft power in the age of digitalisation and globalisation. All the Indian embassies in South Asia also professedly use multiple platforms such as X, Facebook, Instagram, Threads, and YouTube. They post cultural materials, scholarship announcements, and crisis-related news. When it comes to these platforms, India's diplomacy gets personal and interactive with conversations being built and knowledge disseminated in real time (Rani, Acharya, & Trehan, 2025).

State-run media organisations like Prasar Bharati have also been expanded, as indicated by cross-border initiatives. Doordarshan, among others, has agreements with neighbouring countries for joint programming and content sharing (Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, 2024). This view reflects shared cultural and social life stories. These digital platforms transcend geographical boundaries to put out Indian cultural output directly into homes across the subcontinent.

Table 1: Instruments of India’s Soft Power in South Asia: Key Strategies and Impacts

Instrument	Examples	Impact
Cultural Diplomacy	Bollywood cinema, yoga, Indian festivals, dance (Bharatanatyam, Kathak), music, traditional Indian medicine	Fosters shared cultural norms, strengthens people-to-people ties
Educational Exchanges	ITEC scholarships, SAU, student exchange programmes, professional training schemes	Builds academic collaboration, creates goodwill through returning alumni in key positions
Development Assistance	Infrastructure projects, humanitarian aid (e.g., Nepal earthquake relief, Sri Lankan housing projects)	Enhances goodwill, meets critical developmental needs, reinforces India’s moral authority
Diaspora Engagement	Diaspora festivals, language schools, cultural exhibitions, remittances, religious institutions	Supports cultural continuity, bolsters grassroots support, fosters cross-border connections
Digital Outreach and Media	Social media campaigns, YouTube channels, joint programming with neighbouring countries	Promotes immediate, interactive diplomatic engagement, expands cultural influence digitally

Source: Author

Table 1 details how India’s soft power tools—from cultural diplomacy and educational exchanges to development aid, diaspora engagement, and digital outreach—foster regional goodwill, collaboration, and influence in South Asia. Moreover, India’s soft power in South Asia balances tradition and modernity, cultural diversity, and growing regional influence. Bollywood, yoga, academic exchanges of students, and food were the means for India to seek more linkages within the region and influenced perceptions. Despite some ongoing territorial disputes with regional actors and rivalry with Pakistan, India tries to strike balanced responses. Yet more than a contest from the outside, it’s cultural diplomacy and people-to-people contact that is the sustainable architecture of the event, which will help India restate its leadership of the region.

6. Assessing India's Soft Power in South Asia: Gains and Setbacks

Although the strategic deployment of Indian soft power has resulted in a number of successes, simultaneously it faces myriad challenges that may dent its effectiveness. The successes that India's soft power has been able to gain can be put into four broad categories: cultural resonance, educational leadership, humanitarian diplomacy, and institutional frameworks. First, Indian cultural exports have blanketed South Asia in the forms of cinema, music, and spiritual traditions that help bridge linguistic and national divides. The global popularity of Bollywood, the rise of yoga, and India's religious and spiritual influence have fostered a pro-India sentiment, particularly among the youth (Kugiel, 2012). This cultural familiarity not only enhances India's regional image but also nurtures shared cultural values, creating a foundation for closer regional ties.

Second, India has been an educational and research leader in a way that reinforces its soft power position: extensive scholarship schemes, professional training programmes, and academic links have made it a regional education hub. Thousands of students study every year in India from South Asia, returning to influential positions back home in government, business, and academia. In this process, it forms a network of informal ambassadors supporting and advocating India's policies and culture, hence increasing its regional influence. Third, humanitarian diplomacy has also been quite effectively used by India, particularly during the crisis phase. Be it providing relief during natural disasters of such magnitude as the 2015 earthquake in Nepal or helping with the aftermath of floods in Bangladesh, the swiftness of its response enhanced its image as a dependable neighbour (Banerji, 2023). Such goodwill gestures and similar initiatives indeed go a long way in assuaging historical tensions and rivalries, which in turn are bound to decrease the impact that political disputes within the region have. Moreover, the institutions of ICCR, ITEC programmes, and robust SAU for constant avenues have been a booster for soft power engagement. These indeed reflect the long-term approach of India for regional collaboration at structured and institutional levels in a sustainable way.

However, India's soft power approach has several limitations: the perception of hegemony can be one huge critique. Such dominance in culture and economy can perpetuate neo-imperialism fear among smaller

states. In this trend, some of the neighbours may view India's soft power as a form of influence rather than an attempt to develop partnership and cooperation. This perceived hegemonic ambition could result in a backlash in the country's outreach efforts. Geopolitical rivalries also get in the way of the soft power ambitions of India, the unending dispute with Pakistan, coupled with China's growing influence in the region, makes it extremely hard (Bhasin, 2008). The BRI-alternative framework of regional engagement for China—with large infrastructure investments in South Asia—undermines the impact of India's cultural and economic influence.

Furthermore, India deploys its soft power incredibly unevenly throughout the region: countries like Bhutan and Nepal receive robust cultural engagement, while others, like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, often find themselves being passed over or farther down on the agenda of India's soft power policies. This perceived pecking order of recipients—where some countries benefit from India's outreach more than others—can foster feelings of inequality and regional fragmentation. In addition, India's domestic challenges play a role in the effectiveness of its soft power. Social unrest, along with religious polarisation and a general scepticism of democratic backsliding, has thus tarnished, to a certain degree, India's image on the international platform (Bartels, Daxecker, Hyde, Lindberg, & Nooruddin, 2023). Regional audiences who read about communal tensions, economic disparities, or human rights abuses at home may begin to wonder whether India is serious about pluralism and inclusion, which undermines its credentials as a democratic leader in South Asia. Finally, in India, communication gaps created in their digital diplomacy become one of the key challenges to broader audience outreach. Although India has increased its presence on social media and online cultural exchange programmes, a lot more content needs to be created in various vernaculars to engage with the local populace. Thus, this basically undermines the very motive of India's goal to carve a niche with diversified populations in South Asia. Table 2 outlines how India's soft power initiatives—from cultural diplomacy and educational exchanges to development aid, diaspora engagement, and digital outreach—build regional goodwill in South Asia, while also confronting setbacks like neo-imperialism perceptions, uneven impact, geopolitical tensions, domestic issues, and language barriers.

Table 2: Gains and Setbacks of India's Soft Power in South Asia

Category	Gains	Setbacks
Cultural Resonance	Bollywood, music, yoga, and spiritual traditions build pro-India sentiment.	Perceived hegemony and neo-imperialism fears from smaller states.
Educational Leadership	Scholarship schemes, professional training, and academic links create a network of ambassadors.	Uneven deployment of soft power (more robust in Bhutan and Nepal, less in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka).
Humanitarian Diplomacy	Swift response to disasters like the Nepal earthquake and Bangladesh floods enhances India's image as a neighbour.	Geopolitical rivalries with Pakistan and China affect India's outreach efforts.
Institutional Frameworks	ICCR, ITEC, and SAU programmes foster long-term regional collaboration.	Domestic issues like social unrest and religious polarisation tarnish India's image.
Digital Diplomacy	Increased presence on social media and online cultural exchanges.	Lack of content in vernacular languages reduces engagement with local populations.

Source: Author

In short, all these soft power initiatives by India have been gaining remarkable momentum in South Asia on deeper cultural exchange, educational understanding, humanitarian approaches, and regional institutional frameworks. Yet, serious deterrents persist in the neighbourhood, Indian cultural resonance and educational leadership—its potential to attract—indeed are very valuable assets, but perceptions of hegemony, rivalries, and differential policies of implementation blunt their true value. Further, the domestic issues of social unrest and the requirement for more inclusive outreach strategies dent India's soft power credibility. Therefore, it becomes of paramount importance that India's influence gets strengthened to overcome such limitations by refining its soft power strategy. Developing deeper and more inclusive relationships with all South Asian nations, improving its communication, and taking care of the domestic concerns that may reduce its moral authority in the region.

7. Recommendations for Enhancing India's Soft Power in South Asia

From the above analysis of the existing soft power strategies that India follows in its near neighbours, several recommendations can be made to enhance its influence in the region. These recommendations are designed to not only manage some of the challenges but also take advantage of opportunities for more effective engagement with South Asian nations. Improving upon these approaches will endow India

with the regional leadership role it needs to complement its ends of soft power. Figure 4 explores key pathways for strengthening India's soft power in South Asia, suggesting innovative approaches in digital diplomacy, cultural exchanges, educational partnerships, and humanitarian initiatives to reinforce India's positive influence in the region.



Figure 4: Strategies for Enhancing India's Soft Power Influence in South Asia

- a. Adopt a Nuanced, Country-Specific Approach:* India's soft power engagement as a tool ought to be tailored to the specific cultural, political, and economic contours of every South Asian state. This calls for a more comprehensive mapping of cultural linkages—shared historical commonalities, linguistic affinities, or educational needs. The one-size-fits-all approach to cultural policy is rarely effective, and by avoiding it, India can cultivate deeper emotional bonds with local populations. Cross-border film production with Bangladesh, for instance, could be focused on the use of linguistic and literary heritage, while the festival aspects in Nepal that communicate mythological beliefs and traditions would resonate more.
- b. Use Collaborative Platforms in Media and Entertainment:* In place of a mere export of Bollywood films, India could collaborate on regional production of content that showcases shared stories that nurture a pan-South Asian identity. Content co-created by artists across SAARC could be offered through regional broadcasting networks or Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms.

That would undercut charges of Indian cultural hegemony and simultaneously strengthen shared storytelling traditions.

- c. ***Enhance Educational and Research Partnerships:*** India already has scholarships and training programmes, which can be scaled up. Indian universities can forge partnerships with institutions in neighbouring countries, which can encompass joint degree programmes, virtual classrooms, or collaborative research projects. Joint faculty and student exchanges and academic programmes, cultural immersion programmes, and regular academic conferences across the region can enhance intellectual linkages. This will develop critical institutional infrastructure and a scholarly base that would further institutionalise the SAU's knowledge ecosystem.
- d. ***Improve Public-Private Partnerships for Development Projects:*** Several alternative partnerships could potentially co-finance Indian development needs in South Asia such as rural electrification, skill-building centres, and digital literacy projects with the involvement of local partners or private sector actors. This would reduce perceptions of unilateral Indian action and enhance genuine mission ownership by recipient communities. Joint management committees with Indian representation can help across project design, monitoring, and transparency.
- e. ***Deepen Diaspora Engagement without Overreach:*** Surely, India can persist in supporting cultural events and educational programmes, but it must navigate local politics in South Asian countries. Regular consultation with host governments and local leaders can help to identify diaspora initiatives that foster cultural attachments—without the charge of intervention. Soft power approaches can only succeed when coupled with respect for local sovereignty and sensitivities.
- f. ***Fortify Digital Diplomacy and Multilingual Outreach:*** Indian missions, state broadcasters, and cultural institutions should create feverishly more digital content in local South Asian languages. Short documentaries, podcast series, and interactive social media campaigns can showcase success stories of India's development assistance, cultural festivals, or alumni success

stories. Partnering with a local figure, like a musician, journalist, or community activist and influencer, can help make India's message even more locally relevant and help overcome language barriers.

- g. *Restore Democratic Values and Good Governance:*** India's soft power leadership in South Asia depends on its democratic character and inclusive governance model. Making institutions at home stronger—a free press, civil liberties, and social cohesion—will make India's words abroad more credible. This means that Indian policymakers cannot afford to ignore, on the grounds of state sovereignty, internal issues of religious differences or issues like torture and extrajudicial killings if New Delhi is to protect India's moral authority in the region.
- h. *Institutionalise Soft Power Assessments:*** Periodically assessing India's soft power effectiveness will allow for the recalibration of strategies when required. Public opinion surveys, opinion polls, and focus groups in neighbouring states could measure public perceptions of Indian cultural diplomacy and development assistance. Banks of think tanks and academic institutions should work on trend analysis with big data coming through social media, gauging the sentiment changing hands in real time, and advising on policy when appropriate.

Such moves could enable India to develop a more credible, all-encompassing, and sustainable soft power narrative that appeals to a cross-section of South Asian communities. A much more sophisticated approach could mitigate regional concerns, combat external competition, and provide an atmosphere of collaboration that leads to shared prosperity in the South Asian Region.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, therefore, India's soft power strategy in South Asia can be located within the broad canvas of a multivariate influence imparted by shared cultural heritage, changing policy opportunities, and external forces. The paper outlined the historical roots of India's cultural diplomacy and gave a brief overview of the ancient and mediaeval legacies but concentrated largely on the transformative Cold War and post-Cold War periods. These were times when India moved from

being overwhelmingly security-minded about its regional strategy to one that increasingly deployed cultural, educational, and developmental tools. South Asia lies at the heart of India's strategic priorities because of geopolitical proximity, cultural affinities, economic linkages, and aspirations of regional leadership. The instruments of Indian soft power are varied and widespread—from Bollywood's cinematic influence to education scholarships, the diaspora, digital diplomacy, and humanitarian relief. However, these measures have had unequal effects. Many of India's neighbours appreciate the cultural links and economic benefits that come with Indian soft power, while others fear hegemonistic intentions, competition with China, India's internal issues, and barriers in communication that restrain the effectiveness of such efforts.

Results have been underlining that, though relevant, soft power for India is not a panacea in working through regional tensions. India should focus on the implementation of measures related to relationship-building and context-specific policies that will foster a stronger sense of South Asian identity while promoting sustainable regional cooperation. The policy recommendations include making soft power interventions bespoke for each neighbour, creating media content collaboratively that will provide shared narratives for the region, scaling up educational cooperation, and institutionalising methods of measuring and improving India's cultural reach. Soft power is an underutilised yet important part of India's foreign policy in South Asia. In refining its plans further, focusing on the hilltop, and elaborating on what it has been measuring on the horizons of inclusivity, local partnership, good communication, and consistently being democratic at home, India does have a very significant role in change for a stable and integrated neighbourhood. This is an environment necessary for the security and development of India itself and also for the larger idea of a cooperative and globally capable South Asia.

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Measuring Export Performance and Competitiveness of Indian Textile Products at Two-digit Level

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Abstract

The Indian textile sector employs about 100 million people and it is the country's second-largest employment provider after agriculture. Indian textile industry contributes to the GDP of India, industrial production, and total exports of goods by 4%, 12% and 10.5% respectively. The present study is an attempt to measure the export-import performances and competitiveness of eleven products of the Indian textile industry bearing code HS 50- HS 60 from 2004 to 2023. For measuring export and import performance over the period, Compound Average Growth Rate (CAGR) has been calculated and for measuring the competitiveness of products, Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) index of Balassa (1965) has been performed. The results showed that Ten out of eleven categories of textile exports grew with a positive CAGR ranging from 3.36% to 13.22% from 2004 to 2023. Only one category i.e., Silk has a negative CAGR of -6.04% during the same period. HS-56 grew at the highest compounded rate of 13.22% followed by a CAGR of 12.84% exhibited by HS-60. It was found that India gained a comparative advantage over 7 products: HS-50(3.57), HS-52(6.77), HS-53(3.69), HS-54(1.79), HS-55(2.57), HS-57(5.84) and HS-58(1.63). China is the largest exporter of textile products at the world level and showed a comparative advantage against all eleven products for the year 2023. Italy is known for producing luxurious and high-quality products showing a comparative advantage of 8 products HS-50, HS-51, HS-53, HS-54, HS-56, and HS-58 for the year 2023.

Keywords: Textile, Competitiveness, Performance, Export, Growth.

1. Introduction

The Indian textile industry is one of the oldest and vital parts of the economy. It contributes significantly to employment and foreign exchange profits. Under the Agreement on Textile and Clothing of the WTO in January 2005, India's exports of apparel and textiles to the global market have grown, and its competitiveness has also increased. Due to the opening up of the garment market and global textile, Indian firms are going to be the largest gainers after China (Landes *et al.*, 2005). India's textile industry employs over 100 million people and is the country's second-largest employer after agriculture. It employs almost 45 million people directly and another 55 million indirectly (PIB, Government of India 2021). Indian Textile Industry contributes to the GDP of India, industrial production, and total exports of goods by 4%, 12% and 10.5% respectively. The Indian government has established several export promotion initiatives for the textile industry. The government has allowed 100% FDI through automatic routes in Indian textile sector. Some major players in the Indian textile industry are Victoria Mills Ltd, Chiripal Group, Bombay Dyeing, The Ruby Mills Ltd, Digjam, Welspun India Ltd, Arvind Mills Ltd, Raymond Ltd, Alok Industries Ltd. Despite long years of deregulation and liberalization of the Indian textile industry, there are still many control orders/notifications in force, low salaries, an abundance of inexpensive cotton, and a solid understanding of production methods are some of the advantages of the Indian textile sector. However, it also has certain drawbacks, such as excessive electricity costs, inadequate funding, and a lack of infrastructure, among others, which act as a hindrance to its progress. Indian textile exports consist of Cotton textiles, Ready-made garments, Textiles made from man-made fibre, Silk, Wool and Woollen goods, Coir, Handicrafts, and Jute, out of which silk and man-made textiles showed the highest growth rate. The textile policy was created in 1985, and subsequent changes in 1990 helped to strengthen India's textile sector. Later, the Indian textile industry was de-licensed and reforms on the export and fiscal front were pursued. Because of this, India's Textile exports have reached Rs. 9,23,940 million during the financial year 2007-2008 from Rs. 1,54,836 million in 1992-93 showing an annual growth of 13 per cent per annum. This period also showed a decline in the share of textile exports. There was a decline in total exports from 29% to 15 % from the financial year 1992-93 to 2007-08. Since 1994 India has negligible import content and country's proportion of global exports has also not increased (Ramaswamy and

Gereffi 2000). Textile imports increased from ₹ 13,426 million to ₹ 1,39,140 million from the financial year 1992-1993 to 2007-08. Major markets for textile import are China Taipei, Chinese republic Korea and low and middle-income countries, which is around 36% of imports in textiles. Without a doubt, under the post-quota regime, the global textile sector is expanding dramatically. The textile industry has grown significantly in some nations, including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Mauritius (Chakrabarty, 2014). The Indian textile industry can improve its position in the global market by improving its competitiveness.

The amount of merchandise traded between nations is significantly influenced by the global textile industry. Developing nations are responsible for two-thirds of global textile exports. The USA, Germany, Japan, and Canada are the top importers of textiles worldwide. Asia has been the principal source for imports of textiles by both the European Union and the USA. India is one of the largest exporters of yarn. India has a lot of international opportunities in the textile sector. It makes a significant contribution to foreign exchange revenues, employment creation, and industrial production. It contributes to the employment of more than 100 million people both directly and indirectly and its share in the country's total export earnings is around 16.63%. Indian textile has the highest loomage and it contributes around 61 percent to the world loomage. India ranks first in the world for jute production, second for silk, third for cotton, fourth for cellulose fibre/yarn, and fifth for synthetic fibres/yarns. The Indian textile sector also helps in the development of the rural economy by employing large-scale rural people in the production of fibre crops such as cotton, wool, and silk, and in crafts such as handicrafts and handlooms.

The present study comprises five sections. The first section covers the basic introduction, history of Indian textile products, composition of the Indian Textile Industry and export of different textile products to the top countries of the world. The second section covers the past studies related to the topic i.e., review of the literature. The third section covers the need, objectives, and hypotheses of the study. The fourth section presents the research methodology and analysis of the data and the fifth section concludes the study.

1.1 History of Indian Textile Industry

India is the second-largest manufacturer of textiles and clothing

worldwide. The textile industry provides not only foreign exchange earnings but also employs more than 105 million employees in both direct and indirect ways. C.N. Dawar established the first Indian textile industry in Mumbai in 1854, while Seth Ranchhodmal Chotalal established the country's first cotton spinning machine in Ahmedabad in 1861. Following this, numerous additional textile factories were established in cities like Indore, Chennai, Mumbai, and Ahmedabad. In these mills, the cloth was made using machines instead of handlooms. These devices first operated on steam before switching to electricity. Machines were used to clean the cotton, to card it and to make yarn and cloth out of it.

1.2 Composition of Indian Textile Industry

At the two-digit level, the Indian textile industry is divided into 14 major commodities. The commodities have a universal code-named Harmonised System (HS). The following table shows the Principal Commodities of Indian Textile Export at the 02-digit level.

Table I: Principal Commodities of Indian Textile Export at 02-digit level

Product Code	Name
HS50	Silk
HS51	Wool, fine or coarse animal hair; horsehair yarn and woven fabric
HS52	Cotton
HS53	Other vegetable textile fibres; paper yarn and woven fabrics of paper yarn
HS54	Man-made filaments; strip and the like of man-made textile materials
HS55	Man-made staple fibres
HS56	Wadding, felt and nonwovens; special yarns; twine, cordage, ropes and cables and articles thereof
HS57	Carpets and other textile floor coverings
HS58	Special woven fabrics; tufted textile fabrics; lace; tapestries; trimmings; embroidery
HS59	Impregnated, coated, covered or laminated textile fabrics; textile articles of a kind suitable for industrial use
HS60	Knitted or crocheted fabrics

Source: <https://www.intracen.org/resources/data-and-analysis/trade-statistics>.

1.3 Export of Different Textile Products to the Top Countries of the World

The table II and III show export of different textile products to the top countries of the world during the year 2004 and 2023. It shows that the USA and Italy are the main importers of different products.

Table II: Export of textile products to the top countries of the world during the year 2004

Product Code	Total Export (\$)	Top exporting country	Export Value (\$)	% Share to top exporting country
HS 50	3,81,361	USA	1,05,255	27.59%
HS51	64,999	Italy	10,368	15.95%
HS52	24,82,097	Bangladesh	2,52,384	10.16%
HS53	1,64,302	Belgium	22,618	13.76%
HS54	9,57,424	UAE	2,93,527	30.65%
HS55	7,75,361	UAE	1,01,036	13.03%
HS56	51,862	USA	7,980	15.38%
HS57	7,95,707	USA	3,51,394	44.16%
HS58	1,11,600	USA	19,713	17.66%
HS59	73,813	UAE	13,740	18.61%
HS60	46,234	UK	7,712	16.68%

Source: <https://www.intracen.org/resources/data-and-analysis/trade-statistics>.

Table III: Export of textile products to the top countries of the world during the year 2023

Product Code	Total Export (\$)	Top exporting country	Export Value (\$)	% Share to top exporting country
HS 50	1,16,684	USA	36,076	30.91%
HS51	1,72,623	Italy	25581	14.81%
HS52	64,93,090	Bangladesh	21,78,543	33.55%
HS53	4,34,125	China	87,267	20.10%
HS54	17,95,181	Turkey	2,63,727	14.69%
HS55	16,77,955	Turkey	2,21,395	13.19%
HS56	5,48,931	USA	1,50,225	27.36%
HS57	18,11,075	USA	10,47,981	57.86%
HS58	3,67,069	Italy	50,460	13.74%
HS59	4,63,692	USA	1,95,144	42.08%
HS60	4,58,816	Sri Lanka	2,24,495	48.92%

Source: <https://www.intracen.org/resources/data-and-analysis/trade-statistics>.

The table II and III shows that for the products HS51, HS52, HS56 and HS57 top most exporter countries remain the same both in the years 2004 and 2023. For these products, their position remains number one in 2004 and 2023. These countries are Italy, Bangladesh, and the USA. For the products HS50, HS54, HS55, HS58, and HS59 the top exporting country has changed from the year 2004 to 2023. Belgium and UK fall in position of HS53 and HS60 products respectively from number one in the year 2004 to number 11 and 14 respectively in the year 2023 (<https://www.intracen.org/resources/data-and-analysis/trade-statistics>). High export taxes and the collapse of Britain's textile industry are the main causes of the fall in exports to these countries.

2. Review of Literature

Despite being a vital component of the Indian economy, textile industry has not expanded significantly (Ramachandran, 2001). Some of the production chain weak points have been identified, along with major productivity export barriers and regulatory adjustments. The Indian textile industry has miles to go before it can face the rigours of free trade (Pohit and Bhide, 1998). If concerted efforts are made to make it internationally competitive India and China can become a major player in the world markets. Several past studies have been done on textile industry including factors affecting the export performance (Sharma and Dhiman, 2016, Wang et al., 2013, Tandon et al., 2016, Kaur and Rao 2009), evaluating the textile industry's competitiveness (Gautam and Lal ,2020, Sharma and Dhiman 2016, Kumar and Singh 2015, Verma, 2002). Since 1994, India's proportion of global exports has remained unchanged (Ramaswamy and Gereffi 2000) due to slowdown in the import growth of India's major markets, namely, EU and United States and due to uneven government policy in the post-1947 (Verma 2002). Arumugam (2017) has suggested some measures for Indian textile and apparel industry like large investments are needed in capacity building and other Requirements from government namely new scheme of Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme (TUFS) at the earliest. Extending TUFS assistance that government will not intervene against exports, price or other market movements, for any products. Kumar and Singh (2015) examined the Indian textile industry's export performance and competitiveness in comparison to the global market. The competitiveness and export performance of the Indian textile sector from 2010 to 2013 were the main topics of this study. The Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) of eleven distinct textile product groups

is used to calculate export competitiveness. Seven of the eleven goods had a competitive advantage, whereas the other four did not have competitive advantage. Silk, cotton, vegetable textile fibers, paper yarn, woven fabric, synthetic filament, synthetic staple fibers, carpets and other textile floor coverings, and special woven or tufted fabric, lace, tapestry, etc. are the commodities that are more competitive in the global market. Cotton, carpets, and other textile floor coverings are the commodities with the highest RCA value that are doing reasonably well on the global market. Bedi (2009) examined government programs and policies for the sector by examining pertinent papers. It examined different ways to increase the industry's efficiency and competitiveness and offered some insights into the adjustments needed in various governmental measures. Numerous factors were examined in the study, including the number of intermediaries involved from the factory stage to consumer stage, the stages of processing, production sectors, retail marketing, and their competitiveness. The condition and prospects of technological textiles in India were also examined. The effects of liberalization have been examined by Nordås (2004), who focused on recent advancements in supply chain management in the apparel and textile industries while also accounting for recent managerial and technological advancements in the fields. For MFA (ATC) product categories, Samar Verma (2002) studied India's competitive performance in the US and EU markets. It has illustrated how the international trading climate is evolving, which will probably have a big effect on the world's textile and apparel trade. The study has identified areas that need government policy action to increase the industry's competitiveness. To unleash this latent potential, the Indian industry—particularly the apparel sector—needs a number of critical legislative changes. Furthermore, it seems that market access will play a bigger role in converting competitiveness into export performance given the changing character of the global trade environment. According to Ganesh (2002), the domestic textile industry's competitive advantage stems from evading excise duty, which has caused the better organized sector units to shift their focus from the home market to exports. However, if exporting units are denied access to the local market, they become vulnerable. Although it may be too late for the government to resolve the issues it has caused, the budget recommendations for 2002–03 are at least a positive start. According to Ramachandran (2001), textile output has not increased significantly while being a highly important sector of the Indian economy. In order to increase production and

exports in the textile and apparel industry, he identified weak points in the production chain, major barriers to productivity and exports, and necessary regulatory adjustments. Indian textile companies would confront both internal and international rivalry in the next years, Chandra (1999).

It is suggested that creating long-term differentiated competencies will be necessary for Indian enterprises to remain competitive. Saha (1982) examined a few key elements that have significantly impeded the industry's expansion and rendered the government's textile strategy ineffectual, creating a conundrum.

3. NEED OF THE STUDY

Various past studies have been conducted on the Indian textile trade (Arumugam 2013) which focused on what has to be achieved and what need to be done to make Indian industry competitive at international level. Some other studies have also been conducted to find out cost and competitiveness of Indian textile industry (Paul and Mote 1967) there are some other studies (Saha 1982) which analysed some important factors that hampered the growth of textile industry and made the government policy ineffective. But there are very few published past studies to find out export performance and competitiveness of Indian textile industry (Kumar and Singh 2013) with the help of which we can judge about the performance of Indian textile industry so the purpose of this study is to determine the competitiveness and export performance of goods from the Indian textile sector. Hence the study aims to achieve the following objectives.

- To study the composition and direction of Indian textile imports and exports.
- To examine the Export performance of Indian textile products at 02 digits level.
- To examine the Import performance of Indian textile products at 02 digits level.
- To study the Competitiveness of Indian textile products and their comparison with the world's major players in textiles.

3.1 Formulation of Hypotheses

The present section discusses the formulation of various hypotheses to achieve the objectives of the study. In this study, an analysis of export performance and competitiveness of eleven products of the Indian textile industry from code HS 50- HS 60 from 2004 to 2023 has been taken. These eleven products are named silk, wool, cotton, textile fibres, manmade filaments, man-made staple fibres, wadding, carpets, special woven fabrics, coated covered and laminated textile fabrics, knitted and crocheted fabrics. The export/ Import performance can be found with the help of the CAGR growth rate in this period.

Export and Import Growth

A product is said to be performing good at export and import level if its market share grows over the period 2004-2023. Mukherje and Mukherjee (2012) gave a summary of the export performance of three major commodities: cotton, electronics, and gems and jewelry. They also pointed out critical policy changes that may have an effect on both domestic production and the demand for these products abroad. The findings demonstrate that the manufacturing sector's overall success in India has a significant impact on many facets of the economy, with employment being one of the primary areas of benefit. For Multi-Fibre Arrangement (Agreement on Textile and Clothing) product categories, Verma (2002) has studied India's competitive performance in the US and EU markets. It has also shown how the global textile and apparel sector will probably be impacted by the shifting international trading landscape. The study has identified areas that need government policy action to increase the industry's competitiveness. According to the study's findings, the Indian apparel industry urgently needs a number of regulatory changes to unleash its potential. Furthermore, it seems that market access will play a bigger role in converting competitiveness into export performance given the changing character of the global trade environment.

H1: There is a significant export growth of Indian textile products and their market.

H2: There is a significant import growth of Indian textile products and their market.

Competitiveness

Competitiveness is concerned with the productivity and the purpose of this study is to determine the competitive advantage of textile items made in India. Paul and Mote (2012) concluded that to increase the competitiveness of Indian products, exports should be improved in the global market. They also discovered that prices for the identical products vary between Indian manufacturers and their competitors. According to the study, Indian mills' fixed costs and, consequently, their requirement to realize a larger contribution, might have been decreased by an improvement in the wage productivity relationship. According to Kumar and Singh (2015), the majority of textile sector products have a competitive edge in the global market. And since the majority of the items' export growth is positive, the Indian textile industry still has a lot of room to grow in the global market. In present study Revealed Competitiveness Analysis has been done with other competitive countries of textile industry (Gautam and Lal ,2020).

H3: Indian textile products have a competitive advantage over the other countries in textiles.

4. Research Methodology and Findings

The present section highlights the research methodology and findings of the study

4.1 Research Design

This study examines the competitiveness and export performance of eleven Indian textile industry goods from codes HS50–HS60 from 2004–2023. These products are named silk, wool, cotton, textile fibre, manmade filaments, man-made staple fibres, wadding, carpets, special woven fabrics, coated covered and laminated textile fabrics, knitted and crocheted fabrics. The performance of textile industry can be found with the help of CAGR growth rate in this period. RCA has been performed to measure the competitiveness of Indian products.

Compounded Annual Growth Rates (CAGR): The compound annual growth rate, or CAGR, is calculated by taking the n th root of the total growth rate, where n is the number of years in the complete time period. It indicates the increasing or decreasing trends of imports and exports of textile products.

$$CAGR = 100 * \left(\left(\frac{X_{ijKt2}}{X_{ijKt1}} \right)^{\frac{1}{t2-t1}} - 1 \right)$$

Where

X is the value of export of product K from country i to destination j

t1 is the start year of the series

t2 is the end year of the series

A CAGR value of less than 0 shows contraction and a value of more than 0 shows growth.

Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA): The Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) metric of Balassa (1965) can be used to analyze competitiveness. Balassa's index is defined as a country's share of world commodity exports divided by its share of total world exports. The index for commodity j and country i is calculated as follows:

$$RCA = [X_{ij}/X_i] / [X_{aj}/X_a]$$

Where, X_{ij} = Export of product j from country i

X_i = Total exports coming out of the nation

X_{aj} = Total export of product j from the world

X_a = Total exports from the world

In order to measure export performance, RCA provides a straightforward interpretation that compares a country's market share of commodities with its average proportion of global exports. The nation has a demonstrated comparative advantage in that specific product if its value is higher than unity.

4.1.1 Sampling: Sampling involves using a small number of items out of the population in order to make conclusions about the whole population. The present study employed a sampling design based on secondary data as follows: Number of years * Number of products * Number of countries = 20 * 11 * 3 = 660.

The present study will attempt to analyze the export performance and competitiveness of eleven products of the Indian textile industry from code HS50- HS60 for the period 2004 to 2023. Time series secondary data gathered from numerous government agency publications serve as the primary foundation for this analysis. The secondary data was tapped mainly from the following sources: International Trade Centre, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Ministry of Textile, Cotton Textile Export Promotion Council, Confederation of Indian Textile Industry, and WTO reports.

4.2 Trend of Textile Exports for the period ranging from 2004 To 2023:

India's export of textile industry consists of many commodities but in the study only 11 main commodities are taken. The textile commodities have universal two digit Harmonized System (HS) code. In the study the HS code 50 to HS code 60 is considered. The detail of HS codes wise products is given in Table I.

From Figures 1 and 2 it is clear that Export of Silk (HS 50) increased in 2005 after that it decreases over the period. Export of HS 51 continuously increased till 2011 then decreased till 2013 after that it showed a mixed trend but overall, there was an increase. The export of HS 52: Cotton continuously increased till 2013 after that it decreased with some exceptions. Export of HS 53 continuously increased till 2021 and it decreased in the last two years. Export of HS 54: Man-made filaments; strip and the like of man-made textile materials increased initially till 2011 then it created the up-down trend. Almost same pattern was followed by the export of HS 55: Man-made staple fibres. The Export of HS 56: Wadding, felt and nonwovens; special yarns; twine, cordage, ropes and cables and articles thereof formed the upward trend with some exceptions. HS 57: Carpets and other textile floor coverings showed the overall upward trend of export. Export of HS 58: Special woven fabrics; tufted textile fabrics; lace; tapestries; trimmings; embroidery showed an increased trend by 2014 after that it showed a downfall trend. Export of HS 59: Impregnated, coated, covered or laminated textile fabrics; textile articles of a kind suitable for industrial use has unique pattern, till 2014 it increased, after that it formed U pattern till 2021 but overall, it had increasing pattern. Export of HS: 60 Knitted or crocheted fabrics has upward trend except last two years.

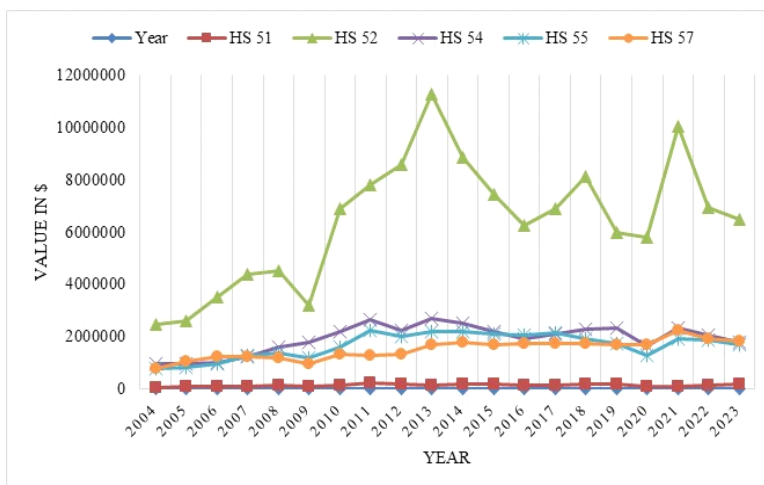


Figure 1: Trends in Indian Textile Exports From 2004-2023

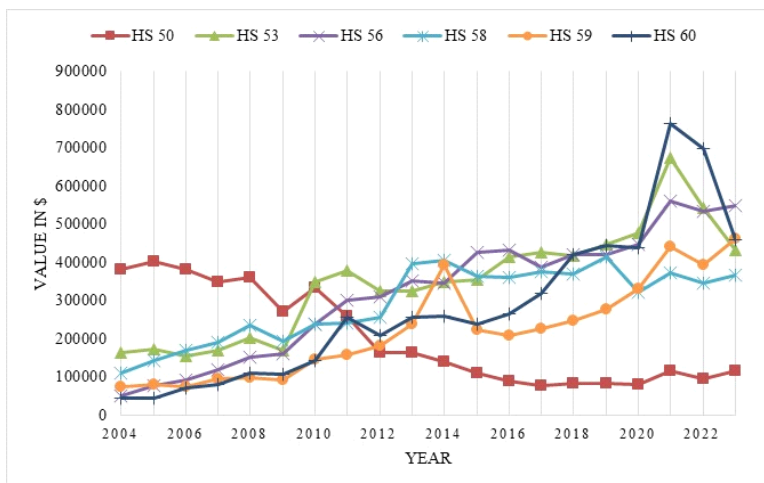


Figure 2: Trends in Indian Textile Exports From 2004-2023

Source: Author's compilation based on data collected from <https://www.intracen.org/resources/data-and-analysis/trade-statistics>

4.3 Trend of Textile Import for the period ranging from 2004 To 2023

Figures 3 and 4 reflect that import of Silk HS 50 increased in 2005 after that it decreased and showed a major downfall in the year 2020

then rose in 2022 and then again showed a fall in 2023. Import of HS 51: Wool, fine or coarse animal hair; horsehair yarn and woven fabric has up-down pattern with mixed trend. The import of HS 52: Cotton has showed a many rises and downfall and showed a V shaped pattern. Import of HS 53: Other vegetable textile fibers; paper yarn and woven fabrics of paper yarn continuously increased with some exception in 2020. Import of HS 54: Man-made filaments; strip and the like of man-made textile materials showed an increased trend till 2019 then after showing a downfall in 2020 again it increased till 2023. Import of HS 55: Man-made staple fibres had upward trend with some exceptions. The Import of HS 56: Wadding, felt and nonwovens; special yarns; twine, cordage, ropes and cables and articles thereof formed the upward trend with some exceptions in the year 2020. HS 57: Carpets and other textile floor coverings showed the overall upward trend of export except the year 2019-2020. Import of HS 58: Special woven fabrics; tufted textile fabrics; lace; tapestries; trimmings; embroidery has upward trend except the year 2020. Import of HS 59: Impregnated, coated, covered or laminated textile fabrics; textile articles of a kind suitable for industrial use had upward trend till 2018 then formed V pattern. Import of HS: 60 Knitted or crocheted fabrics has upward trend except the year 2020.

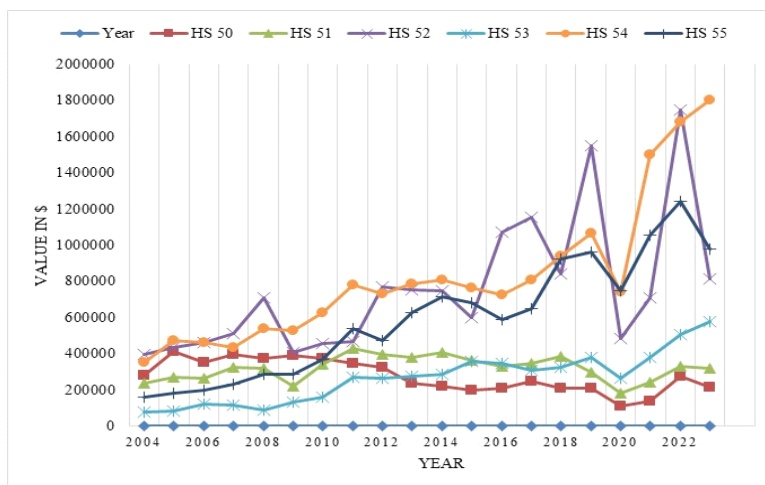


Figure 3: Trends in Indian Textile Import From 2004-2023

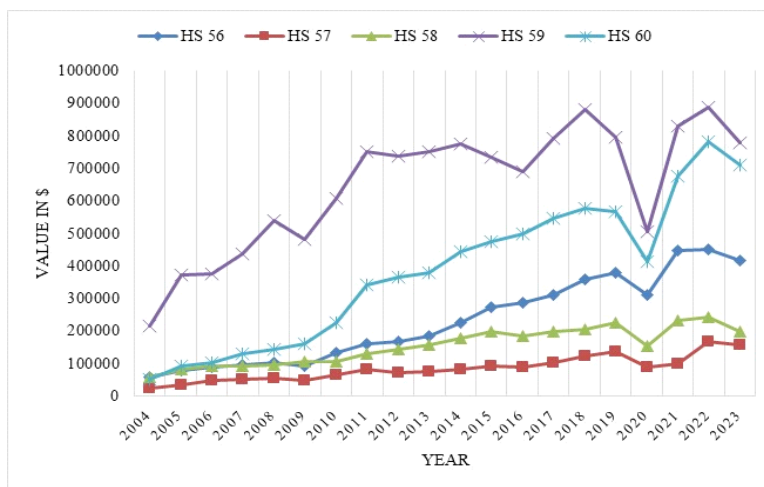


Figure 4: Trends in Indian Textile Import From 2004-2023

Source: Author's compilation based on data collected from <https://www.intracen.org/resources/data-and-analysis/trade-statistics>

4.4 Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of Textile Exports

Ten out of eleven categories of textile export grown with positive CAGR ranging from 3.36% to 13.22% during the period of 2004 to 2023. Only one category i.e., Silk has negative CAGR of 6.04% during the same time period. Negative CAGR of silk is due to non-availability of yarn (Goswami, 2006). From the table below it is very clear that HS 56: Wadding, felt and nonwovens; special yarns; twine, cordage, ropes and cables and articles thereof grew at the highest compounded rate of 13.22% followed by HS 60: Knitted or crocheted fabrics, HS 59: Impregnated, coated, covered or laminated textile fabrics; textile articles of a kind suitable for industrial use at 12.84% and 10.16% of CAGR respectively. Other categories having positive CAGR grew by less than 10% and HS 54: Man-made filaments; strip and the like of man-made textile materials grew at minimum positive CAGR of 3.36%. Overall, the export of textile products has positive CAGR.

Table IV: Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of Textile Exports.

Product Code	Name of Product	CAGR (2004-2023)
HS50	Silk	-6.04
HS51	Wool, fine or coarse animal hair; horsehair yarn and woven fabric	5.28
HS52	Cotton	5.19
HS53	Other vegetable textile fibres; paper yarn and woven fabrics of paper yarn	5.25
HS54	Man-made filaments; strip and the like of man-made textile materials	3.36
HS55	Man-made staple fibres	4.15
HS56	Wadding, felt and nonwovens; special yarns; twine, cordage, ropes and cables and articles thereof	13.22
HS57	Carpets and other textile floor coverings	4.42
HS58	Special woven fabrics; tufted textile fabrics; lace; tapestries; trimmings; embroidery	6.47
HS59	Impregnated, coated, covered or laminated textile fabrics; textile articles of a kind suitable for industrial use	10.16
HS60	Knitted or crocheted fabrics	12.84

Source: Author's compilation based on data collected from <https://www.intracen.org/resources/data-and-analysis/trade-statistics>

4.5 Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of Textile Imports

As far as the import of textile products is concerned the trend is almost similar to export. Ten out of eleven categories of textile import grown with positive CAGR ranging from 1.54% to 14.69% during the period of 2004 to 2023. Only one category i.e., Silk has negative CAGR of 1.42% during the same time period. From the table below it is very clear that HS 60: Knitted or crocheted fabrics grew at the highest compounded rate of 14.69% followed by HS 53: Other vegetable textile fibres; paper yarn and woven fabrics of paper yarn, HS 56: Wadding, felt and nonwovens; special yarns; twine, cordage, ropes and cables and articles thereof, HS 57: Carpets and other textile floor coverings at 11.23%, 10.99% and 10.46% of CAGR respectively. Other categories having positive CAGR grew by less than 10% and HS 51: Wool, fine or coarse animal hair; horsehair yarn and woven fabric grew at minimum positive CAGR of 1.54%. Both Export and import of textile products have positive CAGR with an exception of Silk which has negative CAGR. Hence **H1**: There is a significant export growth of Indian textile products and their market and **H2**: There is a significant import growth of Indian textile products and their market have been accepted.

Table V: Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of Textile Imports

Product Code	Name of Product	CAGR (2004-2023)
HS50	Silk	-1.42
HS51	Wool, fine or coarse animal hair; horsehair yarn and woven fabric	1.54
HS52	Cotton	3.88
HS53	Other vegetable textile fibres; paper yarn and woven fabrics of paper yarn	11.23
HS54	Man-made filaments; strip and the like of man-made textile materials	8.99
HS55	Man-made staple fibres	9.98
HS56	Wadding, felt and nonwovens; special yarns; twine, cordage, ropes and cables and articles thereof	10.99
HS57	Carpets and other textile floor coverings	10.46
HS58	Special woven fabrics; tufted textile fabrics; lace; tapestries; trimmings; embroidery	6.55
HS59	Impregnated, coated, covered or laminated textile fabrics; textile articles of a kind suitable for industrial use	6.99
HS60	Knitted or crocheted fabrics	14.69

Source: Author's compilation based on data collected from <https://www.intracen.org/resources/data-and-analysis/trade-statistics>

4.6 Revealed Comparative Advantage

A revealed comparative analysis has been done for four countries for the years 2019 and 2023 shown in the table VI and VII below. It was found that India gained a comparative advantage over 7 products named HS-50, HS-52, HS-53, HS-54, HS-55, HS-57, and HS-58. The results showed products HS-51, HS-56, HS-59 and HS-60 have comparative disadvantages as their values are less than one. China showed good growth in textile products it is the largest exporter of textile products at the world level with a 43.5% share of global export in the year 2020. The results showed that in the year 2019, they had a comparative advantage of 10 products out of 11 products which increased in the year 2023 and China showed a comparative advantage against all the eleven products. On the other side results of Vietnam country showed a decrease in the comparative advantage of 4 products in the year 2023 against the comparative advantage of 5 products in the year 2019. Italy is known for producing luxurious and high-quality products showing a comparative advantage of 8 products both in the year 2019 and 2023.

Table VI: Comparative analysis of products from HS-50-60 for the year 2019.

Product code	RCA (India)	RCA (China)	RCA (Vietnam)	RCA(Italy)
HS50	2.45	3.74	3.86	4.93
HS51	.831	1.39	.038	5.96
HS52	6.20	1.89	3.85	.78
HS53	4.93	1.95	.48	1.85
HS54	2.63	3.22	1.55	1.33
HS55	2.81	2.57	1.27	.978
HS56	.896	1.66	1.06	2.06
HS57	6.27	1.18	.770	.455
HS58	1.89	3.15	.676	1.43
HS59	0.625	.23	1.96	1.47
HS60	.705	3.84	.978	2.26

Source: Author's compilation based on data collected from <https://www.intracen.org/resources/data-and-analysis/trade-statistics>

Table VII: Comparative analysis of products from HS-50-60 for the year 2023.

Product code	RCA (India)	RCA (China)	RCA (Vietnam)	RCA (Italy)
HS50	3.57	3.13	4.52	5.70
HS51	.824	1.25	.162	6.5
HS52	6.77	1.41	2.95	.779
HS53	3.69	1.72	.256	2.23
HS54	1.79	3.65	.115	1.17
HS55	2.57	2.58	.974	.950
HS56	.985	1.736	.712	1.98
HS57	5.84	1.65	1.09	.48
HS58	1.63	3.24	.668	1.51
HS59	.905	2.30	1.60	1.55
HS60	.66	6.87	1.63	1.09

Source: Author's compilation based on data collected from <https://www.intracen.org/resources/data-and-analysis/trade-statistics>

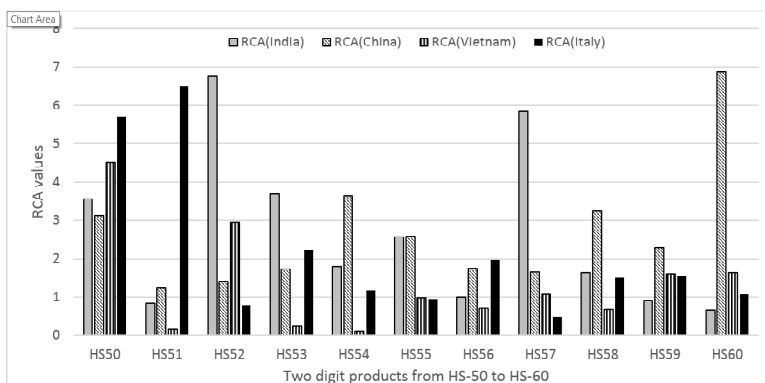


Figure 5: Comparative RCA of India, China, Vietnam and Italy for the year 2023

Source: Author's compilation based on data collected from <https://www.intracen.org/resources/data-and-analysis/trade-statistics>

Figure 5 shows the revealed comparative analysis of four countries (India, China, Italy and Vietnam) for the year 2023. This figure shows that for HS-52, HS-53 and HS- 57 India has highest RCA as against China, Vietnam and Italy. Hence **H3**: Indian textile products have a competitive advantage over the other countries in textiles has been accepted. China has a highest RCA for the five products having code HS-54, HS-55, HS-58, HS-59 and HS-60 as compared to other three countries. And Italy has the highest RCA for HS-50 and HS-51 as compared to India, China and Vietnam. The slower growth of textile products in India as compared to China is due to less modernisation of Indian infrastructure in textile products (Singh and Lal, 2014) while China has invested heavily in modernising its textile infrastructure and its good and stable policy implications. China has a competitive advantage against India because of high quality and diversity of its products, large-scale production, and efficient infrastructure services (Lu and Karpova 2011).

5. Conclusion

The Indian textile industry is a critical contributor to export earnings and the second-largest employer. Ten out of eleven categories of textile exports grew with a positive CAGR ranging from 3.36% to 13.22% from 2004 to 2023. Technology played a vital role in the growth of the textile industry like the use of automated machines and looms

reduced human error and helped in increasing productivity. Digitization of the Indian textile industry generated more employment opportunities, increased consumer surplus and productivity (Kanupriya 2020). Only one category i.e., Silk has a negative CAGR of -6.04% during the same period. The negative CAGR of silk is due to the non-availability of yarn and inadequate infrastructure (Goswami, 2006). The increased demand for synthetic products and intensified competition from synthetic and blended fibers are other causes of slowing down the growth of silk production. Lockdown due to pandemic disrupted the labour availability and transportation for silk production. It was found that India gained a comparative advantage over 7 products named HS-50, HS-52, HS-53, HS-54, HS-55, HS-57, and HS-58. Technology advancement helps in the improvement of the comparative advantage of the Indian textile industry (Gautam and Lal, 2020). India showed good growth in textile products but compared to China still, it is lagging because of outdated infrastructure, limited access to technology, power shortages and inadequate transportation. On the other side, China also enjoys a large-scale production economy advantage as compared to India. China is performing well for HS-60 because of high quality and diversity of its products, large-scale production, and efficient infrastructure services. Low-cost nation Vietnam has shown a drastic improvement in textile exports, it showed a comparative advantage of 5 products in the year 2023. Italy is known for producing luxurious and high-quality products showing a comparative advantage of 8 products both in the year 2019 and 2023. High-quality products, substantial creativity and the ability to execute a cooperative strategy are the factors for the competitive advantage of textile products in Italy. For India to improve competitiveness in weaker product areas like HS-51 our government should focus not only on introducing high-yield wool breeds but also on promoting the use of advanced spinning and processing technology and for products HS-56 our government should encourage research for nonwoven products by providing various subsidies. Not only this improving the logistics network to reduce export lead time would also help in increasing the competitiveness of Indian products in weaker areas.

In India, a temporary decline in textile export has been seen in the year 2022-23 due to recession in some parts of the world but few cotton textile products have been imported duty-free from India under the India-ASEAN free trade agreement showing a stable supplier of

cotton to the many countries of the world. Signing Free Trade Agreements, India, UK and EU will show some optimism for Indian textile products. Improving the quality of products, adopting advanced technology, expanding the market area, and ensuring sustainability can strengthen the Indian textile industry at the global level.

Research Implications, Limitations and Future Research

The present research paper indicates the need for providing various labour training programs and use of developed technology to remain competitive at the world level. Paper also indicates the need for various incentive plans like tax benefits and subsidies for increasing the productivity of textile industries. More attention needs to be attached to the issues of sickness of textile industry.

Present study has a narrow scope as its focus was on showing the trends of export performance, greater emphasis could be given to external factors affecting the export performance and competitiveness of textile products. So Future research can be undertaken taking into consideration various external factors affecting the performance of textile products like recession, inflation, pandemics etc. As the study focused on measuring the export performance of selected products of Indian textile industry it can provide a base for many future studies like making strategies for improving competitiveness of Indian textile products. Future research can also be conducted by comparing competitiveness of Indian textile products with some of the other developed countries like U.S. and Canada.

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A Study of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Practices in Uttar Pradesh: A Comparison of the Eastern and Western Regions (2019–2023)

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Abstract

A collaborative relationship between businesses and government is crucial for societal progress through the effective accumulation and allocation of capital. This partnership ensures the equitable distribution of benefits and the creation of lasting values for all stakeholders. In this context, corporate social responsibility (CSR) plays a pivotal role in promoting sustainable development. This study explores the scale and focus of CSR investments made by companies in Uttar Pradesh from 2018–19 to 2022–23 period, while also assessing the regional disparities in CSR funding between Western and Eastern UP. Using secondary data from the National CSR Portal of India and relevant literature, the research highlights the concentration of CSR efforts in the healthcare and education sectors in the state. The study utilises percentage analysis, tools of descriptive statistics and F-test to further show that investment is skewed in favour of the Western region, with Gautam Buddha Nagar being the chief beneficiary. Government policies aim to support and promote balance and sustainable development by encouraging equitable investments.

Keywords: CSR, Sector-specific, Regional disparity, Uttar Pradesh.

1.0 Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is the integration of social, environmental, and ethical considerations into business operations, emphasizing a balance between profitability and societal welfare. It has evolved from a voluntary philanthropic activity to a structured and strategic framework, particularly in India, where CSR is now legally mandated. This study focuses on CSR practices in Uttar Pradesh (UP), analyzing the regional disparities between its industrialized Western region and the rural, agrarian Eastern region from 2019 to 2023.

India's progression toward becoming a welfare state is deeply intertwined with its historical and cultural traditions of philanthropy. Ancient Indian scriptures highlight a governance-centric approach to societal welfare, laying the foundation for early concepts of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Muniapan and Mohan, 2008). Initially, CSR in India was rooted in religious and ethical duties, reflecting a traditional commitment to giving back to the community. Over time, evolving societal expectations led businesses to adopt broader responsibilities that extended beyond profit generation. These included addressing environmental challenges, promoting equitable development, and supporting marginalized groups. This transformation in corporate ideology marked a significant evolution, redefining the role of businesses as active contributors to socio-economic progress (Sheikh, 1996).

The 1990s signalled a watershed moment for CSR in India, as businesses began to operationalize these evolving expectations through structured frameworks that integrated social responsibilities into their operations. These frameworks emphasized balancing corporate interests with societal welfare, fostering long-term sustainability and resilience (Welford and Frost, 2006). Recognizing CSR's transformative potential, the Indian government took proactive steps to institutionalize its practice. Significant milestones include the introduction of voluntary CSR guidelines by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs in 2009, the National Voluntary Guidelines on Social, Environmental, and Economic Responsibilities of Business in 2011, and Business Responsibility Reporting in 2012. The culmination of these efforts was the landmark enactment of Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013, which came into effect in 2014. This legislation made India the first country to legally mandate CSR activities, requiring eligible companies to allocate at least 2% of their average net profits over three years to CSR initiatives. This move

formalized corporate contributions to socio-economic development, transforming CSR from a discretionary activity into a statutory obligation.

In India, CSR has emerged as a strategic mechanism to address pressing socio-economic issues and foster inclusive growth (JICA, 2021). While the regulatory framework has spurred professional implementation, CSR in India remains largely compliance-driven. The focus on meeting legal requirements often overshadows the potential for more strategic and philanthropic initiatives, a challenge further compounded by spatial disparities in CSR spending (PWC, 2022).

The state of Uttar Pradesh exemplifies these disparities, with its economic and demographic diversity offering a unique lens to examine CSR practices. The Western region of UP, characterized by its industrial hubs and proximity to the National Capital Region (NCR), consistently attracts the majority of CSR investments. Districts like Gautam Buddha Nagar and Ghaziabad benefit from better infrastructure, industrial presence, and connectivity, making them favourable destinations for corporate investments. In contrast, Eastern UP, which is predominantly rural and agrarian, remains underfunded in CSR allocations despite its significant socio-economic challenges. This imbalance highlights the limitations of current CSR strategies in addressing regional inequalities and underscores the need for a more equitable distribution of resources.

This paper aims to investigate the trends, patterns, and implications of CSR spending across Uttar Pradesh from 2019 to 2023, focusing on the disparities between Eastern and Western regions. It explores sectoral priorities, analyses the socio-economic impact of CSR initiatives, and identifies factors contributing to the uneven distribution of funds. By addressing these challenges, the study identifies the sectors where optimizing CSR practices is required in order to ensure more inclusive and sustainable development in Uttar Pradesh. In doing so, it contributes to the broader discourse on leveraging CSR as a tool for equitable growth, bridging regional divides, and fostering holistic progress.

India is a welfare state. Most individuals and companies participate in philanthropic activities which have eventually evolved into Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). CSR philosophy can be traced back to Indian Vedic literature and Puranas. However, Kautilya's "Arthashastra" was the first to provide an inside-out approach to CSR (Muniapan and Mohan, 2008).

Earlier the conceptualisation of CSR was based on religious virtues but over a period with the change in society it transformed into a bigger picture. The world became conscious about their economic contribution to the local communities in which they operate. With the passage of time, business organisations become more socially responsible. A paradigm shift was observed in the philosophy and primary responsibility of business organisations (Sheikh 1996).

The 1990s marked the beginning of wide-spread acceptance of CSR. Several CSR models and frameworks were developed during this decade which focused on the philanthropic role of corporations and the concept of sharing.

This decade saw the corporates being encouraged to balance their self-interest of businesses with its wider and more virtuous role of social responsibility, which further encouraged them to act more socially responsible for their long-term endurance (Welford and Frost, 2006).

The Indian government conceived CSR as an instrument for integrating social, environmental and human concerns in the entire value chain of businesses. In this regard the ministry of corporate affairs issued a voluntary guideline on CSR in 2009 as its first step. A journey of legislative developments in this regard took off in early 2010, with the advent of the 21st Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Companies Bill. This was followed by the National Voluntary Guidelines on Social, Environmental and Economic Responsibilities of Business in 2011 and Business Responsibility Reporting in 2012. Finally, 2014 marked the landmark when a mandatory provision of CSR under Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013 came into effect from 1st April, 2014 making India the first country to legally mandate it.

CSR is defined by the European Commission as “responsibility of enterprises for their impact on society,” acts as a link between the society and the corporate world (Chauhan and Dawra, 2017). The primary objective of CSR is to deepen and widen the participation of the companies in the country’s socio-economic development and inclusive growth (JICA, 2021). The Companies Act, 2013 encourages companies to spend at least 2% of their average net profit of the previous three years on CSR activities. The combination of regulatory as well as

societal pressure has meant that companies have to pursue their CSR activities more professionally (PWC, 2022).

CSR is majorly compliance driven in India and has yet to evolve into a philanthropic and strategic practice because CSR spending has elevated spatial inequality in India (Thadikaran, et. al., 2021).

2.0 A Brief Review of Recent Studies

The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) emerged in Western economic literature during the 1930s, long after it had been a part of Indian thought and tradition since Vedic times. In the 1950s, Bowen (1953) introduced the idea of corporate responsibilities, asserting that business leaders' social duty is to align corporate decisions with societal values. This marked a critical point in shaping the definition of CSR and is regarded as one of the first academic interpretations of the concept (Latapí Agudelo et al., 2019). It led to CSR's development as a mediator of the empirical link between corporate social performance (CSP) and corporate financial performance (CFP) (Margolis & Walsh, 2003).

The concept of CSR has continued to evolve in line with shifting social expectations of corporate conduct. Initially focused on profit generation, CSR gradually expanded to encompass broader responsibilities, eventually progressing to the creation of shared value (Latapí Agudelo et al., 2019).

The rationale for CSR can be categorized into four primary components: reducing costs and risks, enhancing legitimacy and reputation, gaining a competitive advantage, and fostering mutually beneficial outcomes through synergistic value creation (Kurucz et al., 2008). In contrast to global trends where CSR is often driven by spirituality, self-interest, fear of government intervention, or perceived government inefficiency in addressing social issues (Jones, 2013), in India, CSR is largely shaped by the need for legitimacy and reputation, which plays a critical role in linking CSR activities to financial performance (Aggarwal & Jha, 2019). Indian CSR practices are grounded in the principle of 'Trusteeship' articulated by Mahatma Gandhi, and this was legally formalized in the Companies Act, 2013.

The CSR mandate under this Act has impacted over 16,237 companies, generating an estimated INR 200 billion in economic inflow (Mitra & Schmidpeter, 2016). Since its introduction, the number of companies engaging in CSR has grown, reflecting a positive economic trajectory for the nation. Between FY 2014-15 and 2018-19, there was a nearly 20% decline in the number of companies with zero CSR expenditure in both Category 1 and Category 2, according to the Ministry of Home Affairs (JICA Report, 2021).

Indian businesses are implementing various CSR models that align with their corporate missions, such as cause-related marketing, preferential buying, volunteerism, micro-credit, stakeholder engagement, and philanthropy. Scholars have proposed additional models aimed at addressing the shortcomings of earlier ones, including employment provision, skill development for disadvantaged groups, and addressing social dimensions (Das, 2009).

Through the integration of CSR into India's business practices, long-term economic growth prospects are expected to enhance ecological, cultural, and financial resources rather than depleting them (Mitra & Schmidpeter, 2016). Research has shown that CSR positively influences customer loyalty (Gürlek, Düzgün, & Uygur, 2017), brand image, and sustainability (Behringer & Szegedi, 2016). Additionally, studies in Uttar Pradesh suggest that a balanced CSR approach can significantly improve financial inclusion in rural areas (Singh & Misra, 2020).

Over recent years, CSR expenditure in India has increased, becoming a key tool for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at both the national and state levels. CSR activities have redirected corporate focus from profit maximization to addressing the needs of marginalized and disadvantaged groups. Key areas of CSR spending, such as environmental conservation, healthcare, education, and rural development, are crucial for achieving the SDGs (Mitra & Schmidpeter, 2016). With its quality and impact, CSR is helping promote inclusive growth by complementing government initiatives in reaching underserved communities (Chauhan & Dawra, 2017).

CSR reflects corporations' obligations in economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic domains (Carroll, 1991), connecting businesses to communities and fostering accountability through collaboration among civil societies, businesses, and government (Singh & Misra, 2021).

However, despite its benefits, research indicates that corporations often engage in CSR primarily to enhance their reputation and financial performance (Sarkar & Sarkar, 2015). Critics argue that the CSR law in India is not fully effective, as some companies use it for tax avoidance through interlocked holdings (Naz, 2008), and it encourages CSR spending within local areas (Section 135, Companies Act, 2013). Studies also highlight spatial inequalities in CSR spending across different states in India (Thadikaran et al., 2021).

India's growing spatial disparity is exacerbated by differences in per capita output and access to essential public services (Bourrousse et al., 2017). Furthermore, CSR may contribute to this imbalance, fostering development in certain regions while leaving others stagnant, thus worsening spatial inequality (Thadikaran et al., 2021). Research shows that income inequality is typically greater within countries than between them (Bohman et al., 2019).

Regarding multinational enterprises (MNEs), there is debate about whether they bear any social responsibility. Some studies oppose the notion (Narula & Straaten, 2021), while others argue that firms' responsibilities extend beyond internal inequality to include societal issues like distributive justice and economic inequality (Rygh, 2021). While views differ, human well-being remains the central concern of these practices (Kolk, 2016).

3.0 Research Gap

The relationship between Corporate Social Performance (CSP) and Corporate Financial Performance (CFP) has been extensively studied, with most research indicating a positive correlation. However, variations in findings reveal gaps in understanding, often due to differing methodologies, biases, and the influence of contextual factors (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Within this framework, examining the effectiveness of CSR practices is particularly crucial, especially in their role in addressing spatial inequality—an issue that remains underexplored in India.

The need for this study stems from the critical role Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) plays in fostering sustainable socio-economic development across regions in India. While CSR has become a key mechanism for businesses to contribute to societal welfare, its

implementation and resource allocation often exhibit significant regional disparities. In Uttar Pradesh, one of India's most populous and economically diverse states, CSR expenditure patterns show a marked contrast between the western and eastern regions. These disparities may be influenced by varying levels of industrialization, economic development, and socio-political factors. Understanding how these elements shape CSR spending is crucial for evaluating its effectiveness in promoting balanced regional development (Thadikaran et al., 2021).

Despite the Companies Act, 2013, which mandates CSR contributions from eligible companies, research on the intra-state distribution of CSR activities in Uttar Pradesh remains sparse. The western region, characterized by industrial hubs and superior infrastructure, tends to attract a higher share of CSR investments. In contrast, the eastern region, grappling with poverty and inadequate public services, often receives less focus. This pattern raises concerns about whether CSR practices alleviate or exacerbate regional inequalities (Aggarwal & Jha, 2019). Examining the factors driving this unequal distribution is critical to understanding CSR's potential role in fostering inclusive growth.

Furthermore, limited research explores how CSR initiatives are tailored to address region-specific socio-economic challenges. CSR has the potential to go beyond traditional philanthropy, acting as a tool for sustainable development and income generation (Moon & Parc, 2019). However, the extent to which CSR strategies differ between regions remains unclear. For instance, while the eastern region might prioritize poverty alleviation, healthcare, and education, the western region may focus on environmental sustainability and infrastructure. A comparative analysis could shed light on whether CSR practices effectively address local needs or perpetuate existing imbalances.

The period from 2018 to 2023, heavily influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, provides a unique lens to study CSR's adaptability. During this time, many corporations shifted their CSR focus to pandemic relief, emphasizing healthcare and livelihoods. However, the extent to which these efforts addressed spatial inequalities within Uttar Pradesh is unclear. A temporal analysis of CSR initiatives during this period could provide insights into their equitable impact and contribution to long-term regional development (Singh & Misra, 2021).

This study aims to address these gaps by analysing trends in CSR spending across Uttar Pradesh, identifying factors driving its uneven distribution, and comparing CSR initiatives in the state's eastern and western regions. By doing so, it will offer valuable insights into optimizing CSR practices to reduce regional disparities and promote equitable socio-economic growth (Thadikaran et al., 2021; Mitra & Schmidpeter, 2016). This research contributes to the broader discourse on CSR's role in creating inclusive development and transforming companies into "smart corporations" that generate shared value for both society and business.

4.0 Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To analyse the overall trend of CSR spending in Uttar Pradesh over the specified period.
- To explore the reasons behind the uneven CSR expenditure in Western and Eastern Uttar Pradesh.
- To compare CSR expenditure patterns between Western and Eastern Uttar Pradesh.

5.0 Scope of the Study and Methodology

The primary focus of this study is to analyse regional disparity in CSR expenditure, with a particular emphasis on the state of Uttar Pradesh. This state was selected due to its high population density and unique demographic characteristics. Data for the study has been sourced from secondary materials, including the National CSR Portal and the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India. Additional information has been gathered from annual company reports and director's reports. The study employs methods such as percentage analysis and other descriptive statistical tools to draw meaningful inferences

6.0 Data Analysis

6.1 CSR Expenditure Trend in Uttar Pradesh: 2018-19 to 2022-23.

After the implementation of CSR Act in 2014, the number of companies legally doing CSR expenditure under Section 135 of the Companies Act 2013 went up steadily from 2014–15 to 2020–21, reflecting an

increase in the state's economic growth and improved government support during this period. The CSR expenditure in Uttar Pradesh witnessed an upward trend from FY 2018-19 to FY 2022-23 with a CAGR of 21.94% (figure 1). On the contrary, the YOY growth rate of CSR expenditure in Uttar Pradesh has increased significantly in the past five years (2018-19 to 2022-23). The years leading up to the pandemic (2018-2020) witnessed consistent growth, with modest investments directed towards key sectors like education, health, and rural development (figure n).

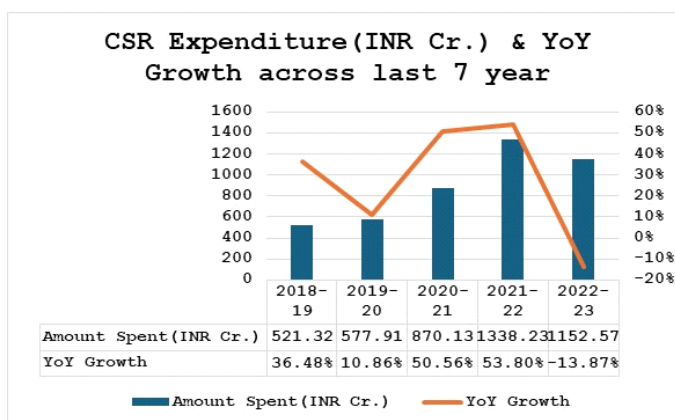


Figure 1

Source: csr.gov.in

Throughout the pandemic years (2020-2022), CSR expenditure remained stagnant, largely driven by COVID-19 relief initiatives. It reached its peak in 2021-22 at ₹ 1,338.23 crores, reflecting a year-on-year growth of 53.80%. Companies allocated funds to healthcare infrastructure, COVID-19 vaccination campaigns, and pandemic recovery efforts, demonstrating a swift and urgent response to the crisis. However, post-pandemic spending in 2022-23 declined by 13.87% to ₹ 1,152.57 crores, indicating a shift back to regular CSR programming and financial adjustments amid economic uncertainties.

6.2 Sector-wise Distribution of CSR Spending in Uttar Pradesh

The following sectors (Figure 2) witnessed a significant CSR spending in Uttar Pradesh. These sectors include- education, healthcare and rural development. The healthcare sector experienced a sharp rise in CSR

expenditure in 2020-21 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. On the contrary, some of the sectors remained underfunded due to many companies prioritising their essential needs such as health, education, livelihood, etc. Figures 2 and 3 show that the Health, Hunger Eradication, Poverty, and Malnutrition sector consistently received the largest share of CSR funding (40%-50%), with a significant increase during 2020-22 due to COVID-19-related initiatives. The slight decline in 2022-23 indicates a transition from pandemic-specific priorities to regular development initiatives. Education, Livelihood, and Differently Abled sectors ranked second in priority (25%-30%), reflecting a steady commitment from corporations. Expenditure in these areas remained stable even during 2020-21 and 2021-22, indicating that education and livelihoods were not deprioritized despite the increased focus on healthcare. The allocation to the education sector did not experience a significant drop post-pandemic (2022-23), pointing to a return to developmental initiatives such as improving literacy, skill development, and access to quality education. Potential projects in this area include digital learning platforms, infrastructure enhancements, and vocational training programs to mitigate the impact of school closures.

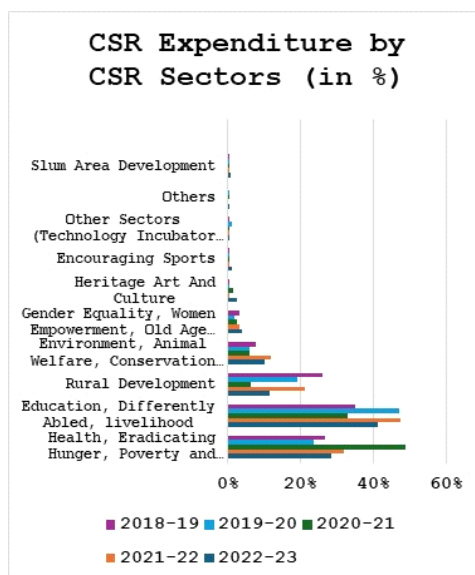
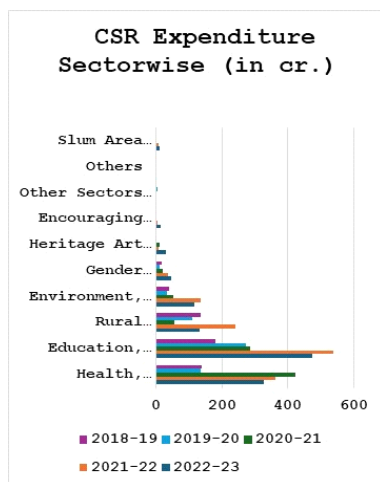


Figure 2

Source: csr.gov.in

**Figure 3**

Source: csr.gov.in

Despite the rural challenges faced by Uttar Pradesh, Rural Development only accounted for 10%-15%, suggesting an urban bias in CSR spending. Environmental initiatives remained underfunded (less than 10%), even in light of growing ecological concerns. Allocations for Gender Equality and Heritage and Culture were minimal (2%-5%), indicating a lack of focus on these critical social and cultural issues. Furthermore, Slum Development received less than 1% of CSR funds, highlighting insufficient attention to urban poverty, as companies prioritized urgent needs such as health, education, and livelihoods.

6.3 East-West Regional Disparities in Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh is a microcosm of India's diversity, with its regions differing significantly in terms of economic development, industrialization, social infrastructure, and cultural attributes.

To explore regional inequality in Uttar Pradesh, the study divides the state into Eastern and Western regions, with Lucknow serving as the demarcation point and the administratively mandated center.

Western Uttar Pradesh receives a larger share of CSR expenditure compared to Eastern Uttar Pradesh, driven by several key factors such as better connectivity, industrial presence and socio-economic advantage.

A major difference is the number of districts, with 43 districts in Western UP versus 31 in Eastern UP, underscoring the sharp regional divide. Wealthier districts are predominantly concentrated in the western part of the state, while the more underdeveloped areas are found in the east. Projects in Eastern Uttar Pradesh are often fragmented and focus on basic needs like water and sanitation rather than long-term developmental goals.

On the other hand, Western Uttar Pradesh benefits from its partial inclusion in the National Capital Region (NCR), which provides better access to funding, infrastructure, improved road connectivity, and a higher influx of investment and industries. The disparity between the regions is also evident in the availability of basic services such as electricity, water, and other public utilities. Gautam Buddha Nagar, in particular, plays a central role in attracting CSR funding, due to its strategic location and economic prominence. This explains the difference in CSR expenditure done by the business firms in both the regions.

6.3.1. Western Uttar Pradesh

To investigate the spatial disparity in CSR expenditures in **West Uttar Pradesh**, the figure 4 data from 2018-19 to 2022-23 highlights significant regional inequalities. Gautam Buddh Nagar, with a total CSR expenditure of Rs. 683.23 crores, emerges as the dominant district, reflecting its industrial and corporate hub status. This district benefits from its proximity to the NCR (National Capital Region), robust infrastructure, and concentrated corporate offices. Similarly, Ghaziabad (Rs. 181.56 crores) and Bareilly (Rs. 101.81 crores) have consistently attracted significant CSR investments due to their urban nature and industrial activities.

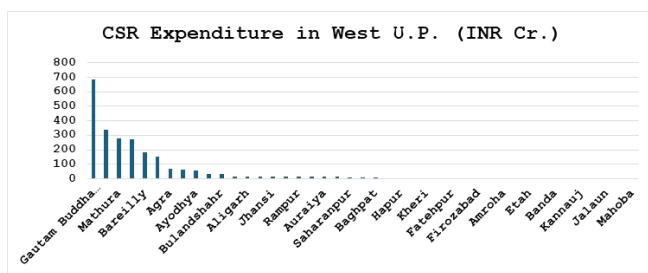


Figure 4

Source: csr.gov.in

In contrast, rural and underdeveloped districts like Mahoba and Sambhal recorded no CSR expenditure during this period, underscoring a neglect of backward regions. Additionally, districts such as Kannauj (¹ 0.85 crores) and Shamli (¹ 0.45 crores) received only nominal funds, indicating limited corporate presence and lesser alignment with CSR initiatives.

The figure 5 illustrates year-on-year (YoY) growth in CSR expenditure across the top five districts in Western Uttar Pradesh—Gautam Buddha Nagar, Hardoi, Mathura, Shahjahanpur, and Bareilly—over four financial years (2019-20 to 2022-23). Gautam Buddha Nagar, a consistent top performer, experienced steady growth trends, starting with a high of 116% in 2019-20, followed by a slight dip of -6% in 2020-21 during the pandemic, and moderate growth of 41% in 2021-22 and 40% in 2022-23, maintaining its dominant role as a corporate hub.

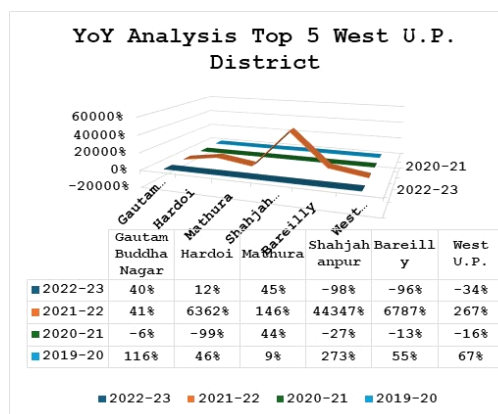


Figure 5

Source: csr.gov.in

Hardoi exhibits extreme fluctuations, with an extraordinary spike of 63,626% in 2021-22, marking a sudden influx of CSR funds, for pandemic-related projects or large-scale rural development initiatives. This contrasts with minimal growth in preceding years (46% in 2019-20 and -99% in 2020-21), while 2022-23 saw a drastic reduction to just 12%, reflecting unsustainable investment patterns. Mathura maintained more consistent trends, with moderate growth in 2019-20 (9%), 2020-21 (44%), and 2021-22 (146%), before stabilizing at 45% in 2022-23, demonstrating consistent corporate interest, likely driven by factors such as religious tourism or infrastructure development.

Shahjahanpur displayed dramatic variations, with a peak of 44,347% in 2021-22, following subdued growth in 2019-20 (273%) and 2020-21 (-27%). However, 2022-23 saw a significant drop to -98%, signalling a sharp withdrawal of CSR activities. Bareilly, showed relatively stable growth with 55% in 2019-20 and 2021-22, contrasting with a dip of -13% in 2020-21 and a sharp decline of -96% in 2022-23, indicating reduced corporate focus in the post-pandemic period.

Overall, Western Uttar Pradesh recorded its highest YoY growth (267%) in 2021-22 at ₹ 972.81 crores, driven by pandemic-specific projects, but this growth fell to -34% in 2022-23 (₹ 642.54 crores) as corporate spending normalized. While Gautam Buddha Nagar remains the anchor for CSR investments. Districts like Hardoi and Shahjahanpur highlight volatile patterns, suggesting temporary priorities. Mathura's consistent growth reflects its strategic importance, whereas Bareilly's declining trends raise concerns about its long-term sustainability in CSR allocations within the region.

Urban centers of western UP dominate CSR resource allocation, leaving rural areas like Banda, Kannauj, and Shamli with minimal funding. This imbalance indicates the socio-economic disparity between well-off urban districts and neglected rural regions. Targeting underdeveloped districts for strategic investments in education, healthcare, and rural development is essential for equitable growth. Furthermore, collaboration between corporations and government agencies could help achieve a more equitable distribution of CSR resources across the region.

6.3.2. East Uttar Pradesh

The figure 6 provides an overview of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) expenditure across districts in Eastern Uttar Pradesh from 2018-19 to 2022-23 (sum of CSR expenditure in different districts from 2018-19 to 2022-23), providing insights into regional trends and disparities in corporate investments. The analysis highlights significant imbalances between urban and rural districts in fund allocation.

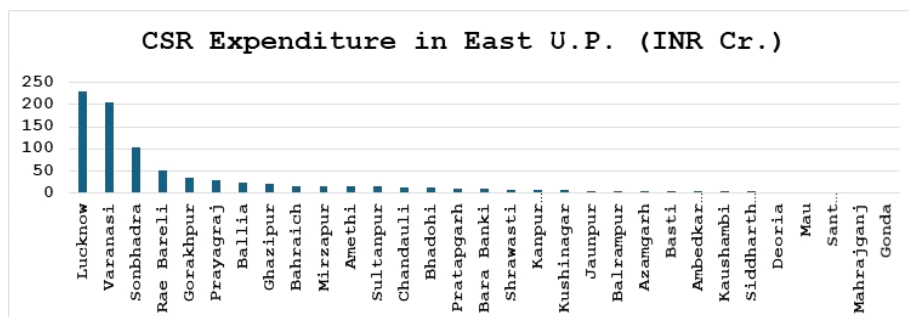


Figure 6

Source: csr.gov.in

Lucknow, receiving a total CSR expenditure of Rs. 228.85 crore, is the top recipient, reflecting its role as a key administrative and economic center. It is followed by Varanasi, which saw a significant rise in CSR funding, reaching Rs. 204.26 crore, likely driven by its cultural importance and urban development in 2021-22 and 2022-23. Sonbhadra ranks third with Rs. 102.81 crore, benefiting from its resource-rich profile and industrial activities, which have attracted steady CSR investments over the years.

In contrast, several districts received minimal CSR investments like Maharajanj (Rs. 0.74 crore), Sant Kabir Nagar (Rs. 0.77 crore), and Deoria (Rs. 2.72 crore). These figures highlight a concentration of funds in urban and economically significant districts, while rural and less-developed areas remain largely neglected.

Figure 7 illustrates the year-on-year (YoY) growth in CSR expenditure for the top five districts in Eastern Uttar Pradesh—Lucknow, Varanasi, Sonbhadra, Rae Bareilly, and Gorakhpur—over four financial years (2019-20 to 2022-23). Lucknow shows steady yet moderate growth, peaking at 248% in 2020-21 due to pandemic-related funding, before leveling off at 15% in 2021-22 and 5% in 2022-23, indicating a plateau in corporate interest. Varanasi, in contrast, saw sharp fluctuations, with a significant decline of -47% in 2019-20, followed by strong recoveries of 75% in 2020-21, 160% in 2021-22, and 95% in 2022-23, highlighting its ongoing significance as a key area for corporate investment.

Sonbhadra experienced extraordinary growth of 2110% in 2020-21, likely driven by large-scale industrial or healthcare investments, though growth slowed to 35% in 2021-22 and 21% in 2022-23. Raebareli shows the most volatile trends, with growth surging to 448% in 2019-20 and an unprecedented 4227% in 2021-22, reflecting a pandemic-driven focus. A steep decline of -80% in 2022-23 was observed, indicating a withdrawal of CSR activities. Gorakhpur demonstrated steady performance, marked by a significant rise of 395% in 2019-20, a dip of -21% in 2020-21, and subsequent growth of 37% in 2021-22 and 210% in 2022-23, signalling renewed corporate attention.

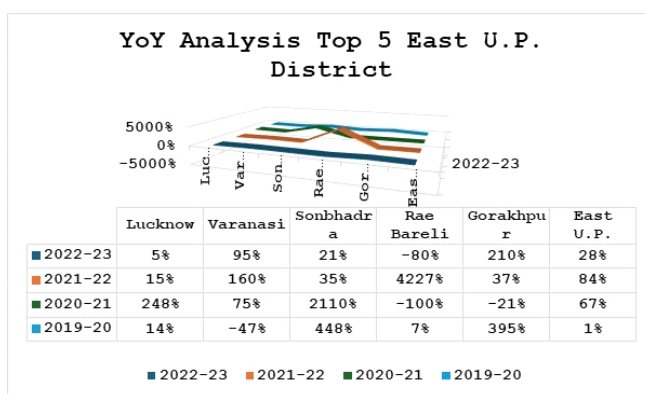


Figure 7

Source: csr.gov.in

Overall, Eastern Uttar Pradesh recorded its highest YoY growth (84%) in 2021-22, reaching a total CSR expenditure of ¹ 251.85 crore, driven by pandemic relief efforts. However, growth slowed to 28% in 2022-23 as CSR activities shifted back to regular development projects. While urban centers like Lucknow and Varanasi continue to attract steady investment, Rae Bareilly's volatility and Sonbhadra's industrial focus reflect the varied priorities in corporate spending. Gorakhpur's growing significance and the region's overall growth highlight the increasing importance of Eastern Uttar Pradesh in CSR allocations, although the distribution across districts remains uneven.

6.3.3. A CSR Expenditure Perspective: Eastern vs Western Uttar Pradesh

CSR expenditure in Uttar Pradesh is shaped by diverse factors such as regional development, industrial activity, and socio-economic

conditions. The distribution of funds across districts reveals insights into how corporate social responsibility initiatives are aligned with local needs and priorities. This analysis explores the trends and patterns in CSR spending across the state.

The key observations are as follows:

- **Urban Focus:** CSR expenditure is heavily concentrated in urban hubs like Lucknow and Varanasi, where corporate presence and infrastructure facilitate investments.
- **Neglected Rural Areas:** Districts such as Amethi, Maharajganj, and Sant Kabir Nagar receive negligible or no CSR funding, reflecting disparities in resource distribution.
- **Sectoral Impacts:** Understanding the specific sectors (health, education, rural development) where CSR funds are deployed could provide further insights into corporate priorities and their alignment with regional needs.
- The disparity reflects the sharp regional divide in Uttar Pradesh. While the western region's developed infrastructure attracts consistent investment, the eastern region struggles due to its limited utilities and challenging socio-economic conditions. Bridging this gap requires a deliberate shift in CSR strategies to target underdeveloped districts with sustainable, long-term rural development initiatives.

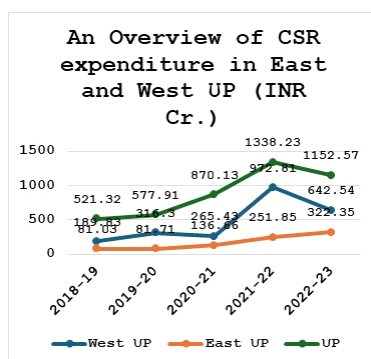


Figure 8

Source: csr.gov.in

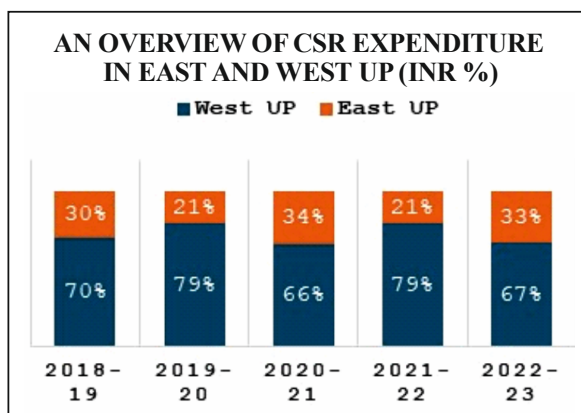


Figure 9

Source: csr.gov.in

- The analysis of CSR expenditure in Uttar Pradesh from 2018-19 to 2022-23 reveals a significant regional disparity. West U.P. consistently receives the majority of CSR funds, peaking at ¹ 972.81 crores in 2021-22, driven by its urban centers like Gautam Buddha Nagar and Ghaziabad. In contrast, East U.P. lags behind, with CSR allocation peaking at Rs. 251.85 crores in 2021-22 and showing only a modest increase in subsequent years. The disparity highlights the need for more balanced CSR investments, focusing on the socio-economic development of Eastern Uttar Pradesh. To evaluate the variability in CSR expenditures between East and West Uttar Pradesh, an F-test was conducted. The test compared the variances of CSR spending over the five-year period (2018-19 to 2022-23) for both regions. The null hypothesis (H_0) assumes equal variances in CSR expenditures across East and West U.P., while the alternative hypothesis (H_1) suggests unequal variances. The F-statistic was computed as the ratio of the variance of CSR expenditure in West U.P. to that in East U.P. The F-statistic was calculated at a 5% significance level; the F-statistic was found to be 9.1436, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis. The test confirms that there is a variability in CSR expenditure between Eastern and Western UP.

7.0 Results and Discussion

The trend of increased CSR spending from 2018-19 to 2021-22 aligns with the growing emphasis on corporate contributions to sustainable development. The increase in healthcare investments during the pandemic reflects the adaptability of CSR strategies in addressing urgent public health challenges. Similar findings have been documented in previous studies, which show that crises often drive corporations to channel resources toward critical sectors (Singh & Misra, 2021).

However, the sharp decline in 2022-23 raises concerns about the sustainability of CSR expenditure of the corporates in the face of economic uncertainties. The reduced spending post-crisis indicates a shift back to pre-pandemic priorities or financial constraints faced by corporations.

Sector-wise Distribution of CSR Spending

In Uttar Pradesh, the sectoral distribution of CSR funds revealed healthcare as the leading beneficiary, particularly during the pandemic. Between 2020-21, healthcare accounted for 40% to 50% of total CSR funding, reflecting a substantial increase. Education and livelihood initiatives consistently followed, receiving approximately 25% to 30% of the funds. Additionally, rural development emerged as one of the top three priority sectors, aligning closely with the state's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and budgetary priorities. The Companies Act played a pivotal role in driving the effective implementation of government policies and programs, supporting the broader sustainable development agenda.

Volatility in CSR Expenditure Patterns

The district-level analysis of CSR expenditure revealed significant volatility across both regions of Uttar Pradesh. In Western Uttar Pradesh, districts like Gautam Buddha Nagar demonstrated consistent growth, whereas Hardoi and Shahjahanpur experienced erratic increases, largely influenced by pandemic-related funding. Similarly, Eastern Uttar Pradesh showed fluctuations, with Varanasi and Lucknow displaying steady growth, while districts like Rae Bareilly exhibited extreme variations. These patterns underscore the temporary nature of certain CSR investments, often driven by short-term priorities or one-time funding initiatives.

Regional Disparities in CSR Spending

The study highlights a significant disparity in CSR spending between Western and Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Western districts like Gautam Buddha Nagar and Ghaziabad, with better infrastructure and proximity to the NCR, consistently received higher CSR funds. In contrast, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, particularly rural areas like Maharajganj and Sant Kabir Nagar, received minimal funding. This urban-centric allocation underscores the need for balanced CSR strategies to ensure equitable development across the state.

The private sector has contributed significantly to the CSR spending of Uttar Pradesh. But a lack of conscious standardised monitoring is seen with respect to diversion of funds towards Western UP at the cost of Eastern one. Gautam Buddha Nagar alone accounts for CSR allocations equivalent to the combined funding of top Eastern districts such as Lucknow, Sonbadra, Ayodhya, and Varanasi. This imbalance reflects the principle of “money attracts money” and “development attracts development,” as Gautam Buddha Nagar’s strategic location within the NCR and its status as an industrial hub make it a prime destination for corporate investments. Notably, some companies, such as Bennett Coleman and Co., have allocated their entire CSR budgets to this district. With a total investment of ¹ 18,693 crores (UPGIS, 2023), Gautam Buddha Nagar has emerged as one of India’s most promising investment destinations. This trend highlights the need for more equitable CSR strategies to address regional imbalances and ensure inclusive growth across the state.

To further assess the regional disparity in CSR expenditure, an F-test was conducted to compare the variances of CSR spending in East and West Uttar Pradesh. The results validate the conclusion that CSR expenditures are more volatile and concentrated in Western Uttar Pradesh compared to the Eastern region.

The State Government is actively working to address the regional disparity in CSR spending between Western and Eastern Uttar Pradesh by promoting new growth trajectories and striving for inclusive, sustainable, and balanced development. To this end, the government is focusing on developing key cities in the eastern region, including Varanasi, Sonabhadra, Ayodhya, and Lucknow. Lucknow, as the capital city, Sonabhadra as India’s energy hub, and Ayodhya and Varanasi as

important socio-cultural centers, are seen as promising areas for fostering regional development and bridging the CSR divide.

The interconnectedness of various elements within the social system, along with a shared vision for the future and a collective responsibility for the welfare of all, has been a fundamental guiding principle of the state (Dhanesh, 2016). In this context, the state's approach to CSR draws inspiration from the ancient Vedic concept of Sarva Lok Hitam, which emphasizes the well-being of all stakeholders and fosters a holistic, inclusive view of corporate responsibility.

8.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the CSR expenditure trend in Uttar Pradesh from 2018-19 to 2022-23 highlights a complex dynamic of regional economic imbalances, sectoral priorities, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Western Uttar Pradesh consistently receives a larger share of CSR funds, while Eastern Uttar Pradesh remains underfunded. This calls for a more balanced allocation approach. Redirecting resources to the eastern region, especially in rural development, healthcare, and education, is essential to addressing its socio-economic challenges and ensuring equitable growth across the state.

A symbiotic relationship between businesses and the government is necessary to effectively distribute CSR benefits, fostering sustainable long-term value for all stakeholders.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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Investors' Perception of Stock Market: Evidence from Sikkim

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Abstract

Stock market possesses a dynamic nature and is influenced by many variables. Among them, one of the most prominent is investors' perception. This paper seeks to investigate the investors' perception of the stock market in the state of Sikkim. Subsequently, the study will also establish an association between various socio-economic variables and Investors' perception. For the purpose of this study, data collection has been conducted by utilizing purposive sampling from 50 individual retail investors from across all six districts of Sikkim. Perception along with knowledge, familiarity and awareness of the individual investor have been analyzed in the study. It was found that 58% of the total respondents indicated a positive outlook towards the Stock market, however they considered it as a risky investment avenue as 88% indicated huge risk towards the stock market. It was analyzed that investors had a moderate risk-taking ability as 48% of the total respondents prefer to invest in banking instruments rather than investing in the Stock market. It has been found that there is a difference in the familiarity and perceived knowledge scores amongst various socio-economic variables. However, on the basis of hypothesis testing it was analyzed that when it comes to familiarity of the stock market only stream of education played a crucial role and other socio-economic variables had no significant impact. Similarly, only education and income level had a significant impact on determining the knowledge base with regard to the stock market.

Keywords: Awareness, Familiarity, Investors' Perception, Perceived Knowledge, Stock Market, Sikkim.

Introduction

Stock market plays a pivotal role in the development of an economy as it provides an avenue for capital formation, resource allocation and

acts as an investment platform for Individual investors. Earlier the Investors had to physically visit stock exchanges and brokers in order to trade. However, due to the rapid growth in technology trading stocks and other financial instruments can be made through the convenience of the home with a registered broker, in recent times app-based trading has become a staple in the stock market. In India, namely two largest stock exchanges are National Stock Exchange and Bombay Stock Exchange, National Stock Exchange is the larger of the two and stands 8th in overall market capitalization in the world. (World Federation of Exchanges, 2023)¹. Stock market provides a platform for firms to finance their funds through public funding and provides potential investors with reliable investment avenues. National Stock Exchange has 2379 companies registered with a market capitalization of Rs. 3,581,291,532. (NSE,2024) similarly Bombay Stock Exchange 5471 companies registered Rs. 37,636,886.59. (BSE, 2024). There are two different markets that exist within the stock market namely the primary and the secondary market. The primary market acts as a platform for the corporations to issue and sell their shares directly to the general public for the first time and this is known as initial public offering (IPO). In the secondary market the stock market acts as a platform to buy or sell already issued stocks in the market, in this market the corporates have to deal with the dealings amongst the traders who have already bought the shares and want to sell it. In this market the capital is not raised for the firms. The Securities and exchange board of India (SEBI) is responsible for the overall supervision, development, and regulation of the stock market. SEBI was established in 1992, and its headquarters is in Mumbai, India.

Sikkim is a small Himalayan state which is the least populated among all other states in India and has the lowest population in India. Sikkim, although small, has economic potential as it has one of the highest per capita GDP amounting to 5,41,544 which is growing at a CAGR of 18.5%.² Sikkim currently has 54,114 individual investors in BSE, the rate of growth of individual investors in Sikkim is quite high at 44.89% between 2023 and 2024. (BSE,2024)³

Literature Review

Koenen et.al (2021) Their study focused on understanding and predicting the probability of respondents knowing correct answers with regard to financial literacy. They found that women respondents in general tend

to avoid responding to any questions and responded neutrally to the majority of the questions that measure financial literacy. However, whenever the neutral stance in a question is not made available to them, they answer correctly. They concluded that almost one third of the lower financial literacy can be attributed to the lower confidence level of women and their lower willingness to participate. It was further concluded that both financial knowledge and confidence level attributed to the participation of stock market in both men and female respondents.

Sivaramakrishnan et.al. (2017) aimed to study the impact on participation and investment decisions caused by financial literacy. For the purpose of the study, they used theory of planned behaviour for understanding the relationship between the variables. The study focused on the two aspects of financial literacy i.e. Objective and subjective financial literacy where it was found that both aspects affected the intention to participate in the stock market whereas only objective financial literacy affected the behavior.

Kukreja (2021) his study was based on the NCR region of India with the aim to study the investors' perception. 120 samples were used for the study by using systematic sampling technique. For the purpose of his study 119 functional variables were used to measure investors' perception. It was found that benefits and influence of investment had the highest relevance with regard to investors' perception. Variables such as liquidity, charges in trading, attributes of investment act as arbitrate factors. As a whole functional variable had a high impact as it impacted about 72% on measuring investors' perception.

Sowmya, Reddy (2016) had sought to investigate the perception of investors on various investment opportunities. It was found that majority investors preferred investments ranging from 2 to 10 years and majority of the investors only invested less than 30% of their total income. The most preferred investment opportunity was fixed deposit and the least preferred was bonds and debentures. It was found that stable income had the most impact on the intention to participate in the stock market followed by profit in investment, increase in the value of investment and safety in the investment respectively.

Mouna, Jarboui (2015) they focused on studying how human sentiments affect the decision making process with regard to examining the investment portfolio's return and risk. They also aimed to study the

impact of stock market experience on reducing errors and bias. Findings indicate that behavioral biases of small investors influenced the portfolio returns. They found that variables such as age, familiarity, experience and anchoring are important factors that contribute towards the decision-making process of investment in the stock market. It was concluded that a small investors' experience level can reduce various biases and risks while making decisions with regard to investments.

Seetha,Nithya (2016) they aimed to study the level of awareness among investors and identify the preferred investment avenues of investors along with the perception of Investors on these investments. They also aimed to understand the relationship of various socio-economic variables with investment. A primary study of 250 samples was carried out to achieve the objectives of their study. They used descriptive statistics along with factor analysis for the purpose of the study. It was found that making earnings is the primary objective of the investors along with having flow of income and purchase of assets also motivated the investors. Investors preferred mutual funds and investing in equity was also preferred. The study indicated 5 factors that affected the perception of investors.

Velmurugan.et.al (2015) their study focused on identifying the relationship of various socio-economic variables along with the investment decisions of investors. It also established the impact Investment decisions on the various avenues with respect to gender. It was found that the preference on all across various investment avenues were similar except gold and post office deposits. With respect to differences in age groups it was found that stock market, gold, post office and bank savings had significant differences whereas all avenues remained the same.

Sharma (2019) She analyzed 100 respondents to analyse the level of awareness and perception of investors towards mutual funds. Along with it her study aimed to analyze the various factors that affected the investors' perception. It was found that lower income investors preferred the mutual funds over equity investment and also the majority of investors recommended mutual funds to their peer groups as a safe investment platform. It was also indicated that there were 5 basic factors that affected the perception of investors which were fund characteristics, credibility, convenience, success factors and fund family. It was also

concluded that there are numerous socio-economic variables which impact perception particularly the female and low-income population has not been fully penetrated.

Objectives of the Study:

- To investigate the perception of investors in the stock market in Sikkim.
- To identify the association between socioeconomic variables and familiarity towards stock market
- To identify the association between socioeconomic variables and Knowledge base on the stock market.

Research Methodology

The nature of the study is analytical and descriptive. For the purpose of the study, data collection has been conducted by using convenience sampling method as the study population is not known precisely. The collection of the data was done with the help of self-structured questionnaires from 50 individual Investors investing in the stock market at a regular interval from the state of Sikkim. The sample size is limited because of the limited active investors in the state who make their own independent decisions. The first part of the questionnaire contains measures with regard to socioeconomic variables of the respondents namely Age, Gender, Education, Nature of Educational Background, Marital Status, Income, Occupation, and Geographical Locations. The second part of the questionnaire contained various questions pertaining to risk assessment, thinking, familiarity, perceived knowledge, preference awareness of Stock market. The sample for the study was collected in the month of Mar-Oct,2023. The average time taken to administer the structured questionnaire was around 15 minutes. For analyzing the research data, the Descriptive Statistics tools such as standard deviation, weighted mean, percentage were utilized to draw inferences from the data and Hypothesis testing was conducted to analyze significant differences among various socio-economic groups.

Data Analysis

Individual Investors' Perception towards Stock Market

Table 1: Perception towards stock market.

Perception towards the stock market.	Frequency	Percentage
Very Positive	4	8%
Positive	22	44%
Neutral	23	46%
Negative Very Negative	1	2%
	6	12%
Total	50	100%

The study highlights that majority of the respondents (52%) or 5 in 10 people have a positive perception towards the stock market, in which 8% have very positive and 44% have a positive perception, 46% or 4 in 10 people have a neutral perception which is neither positive or negative perception about the stock market they have been ambiguous which means they don't have any definite image and thinking in relation to stock market. Only 2% which is a very small percentage of the respondents have a negative perception about the stock market.

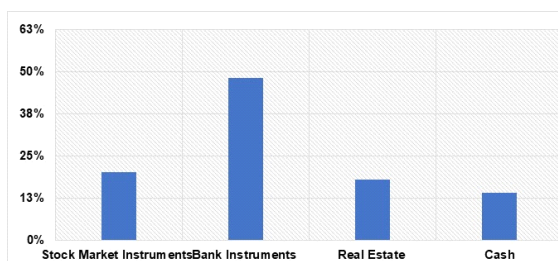
Table 2: Sources of information for Investments

Sources of information for Investments	Frequency	Percentage
Family & Friends	19	38%
Schools/Colleges	6	12%
By Research	11	22%
By social media	7	14%
News/Articles	7	14%
Total	50	100%

It was found that majority of the respondents (38%) or almost 4 in 10 people have indicated that they got introduced to stock market via their friends and family, while 22.2% people got introduced to stock market by themselves, while 14% each have indicated that social media and news article, the least only 12% of the respondents have indicated that school and colleges introduced them to stock market.

Table 3: Preference of Investment opportunity

Investment Opportunity	Respondents	Percentage
Stock Market Instruments	10	0.2
Bank Instruments	24	0.48
Real Estate	9	0.18
Cash	7	0.14

**Figure 1: Preference of Investment Opportunity**

As we can clearly see that majority of the respondents (48%) or almost 5 in 10 people have indicated that they have invested their savings in bank instruments like savings schemes, fixed deposits, while 20% people or almost 2 in 10 people have invested in stock market instruments like shares, mutual funds etc., have indicated that they have invested in real estate, the least 14% of the respondents have indicated that have kept their savings in the form of cash.

Table 4: Perception of Risk related to Stock market

Perception of Risk related to Stock market	Frequency	Percentage
Very Good Opportunity with no risk	0	0%
Mostly an Opportunity with Risk	30	60%
Opportunity with huge Risk	14	28%
Very Risky	6	12%
Total	50	100%

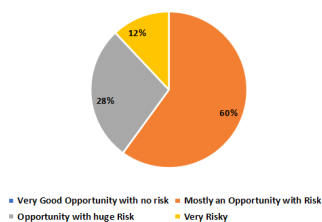
**Figure 2: Perception of Risk Related to Stock market**

Table 4 revealed that 60% of respondents, which is 6 in ten people, think that investing in the stock market is mostly an opportunity with risk, although 28% of respondents think that it is an opportunity with huge risk and 12% of respondents think that investing in stock market is very risky.

Table 5: Knowledge Classification with regard to Stock Market

Knowledge Classification	Frequency	Percentage
More than Adequate	4	8%
Adequate	12	24%
Lot to learn about it	24	48%
No Knowledge	10	20%
Total	50	100%

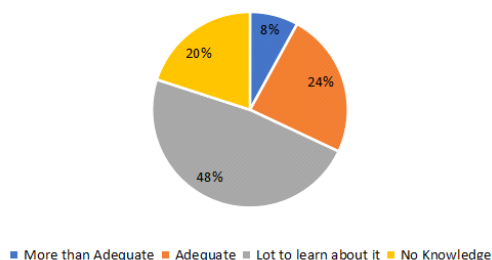


Figure 3: Knowledge Classification with regard to Stock Market

Table 5 highlights that majority of respondent 48% which is 5 in ten people has classify their knowledge about the stock market that they have to learn a lot about it, where as 32% of respondent has said that they have an adequate knowledge about the stock market out of which 8% of respondent has stated that they have more than adequate knowledge about stock market and we can see that 20% has absolutely no knowledge about investing in stock market.

Table 6: Perception on Stock Market being similar to Gambling

Perception on Stock Market being similar to Gambling	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	0	0.00%
Agree	6	12.00%
Neutral	25	50.00%
Disagree	15	30.00%
Strongly disagree	4	8.00%
Total	50	100%

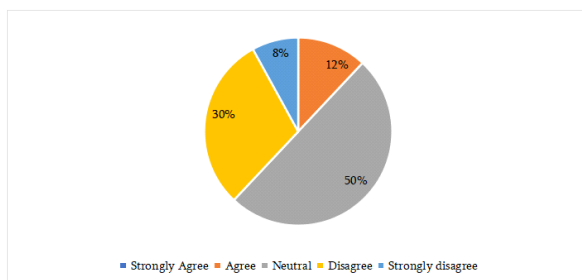


Figure 4: Perception on Stock Market being similar to Gambling

The study found that majority 52.1% respondent which is 5 in ten people neither agree or disagree that the investment in stock market is similar to gambling, where as 27.1% respondent which is 3 in ten people and 8.3% respondent which is 1 in ten people has strongly disagree in this thought and more overly 12.1% respondent has agreed that investing in stock market is similar to gambling.

Analysis of the familiarity of Stock Market

To Ascertain the familiarity of the individual investors with regard to the Stock Market. A scale has been structured ranging from 1 to 5 where 1 indicates “Not at all Familiar”, 2 “Not familiar”, 3 “Neutral”, 4 “Familiar” and 5 “Very Familiar”. To study the familiarity of the respondents an average of their indicated familiarity score was calculated from a scale of 1 to 5. When we studied the familiarity of the whole sample base of the individual investors it was found that the average familiarity score of all respondents stood at 2.17 which indicates unfamiliarity with regard to stock market among the samples.

Table 7: Comparing Familiarity score on the basis of Educational Qualification and Stream of Education

Comparing Familiarity Score on the basis of Stream and Educational Qualification		
Educational Qualification	Ph.D.	4
	Post Graduation	2.7
	Graduation	1.89
	Higher Secondary	1.66
	Matriculate	1
Stream of Education	Commerce/Finance/Economics	3.5
	Humanities and Related Subjects	1.65
	Science and Related Subjects	2

Familiarity score on the basis of Education Qualification indicates that highly educated investors have shown more familiarity than less educated investors as the investors with a Ph.D. degree have the highest familiarity score of 4 followed by Post graduate investors 2.7, Graduate investor 1.89, Higher Secondary 1.66 and lastly Matriculate investors had the lowest familiarity of 1 among all samples. It can be noted that higher education can indicate a higher familiarity to the stock market as a whole.

When we compare the various-stream of education among the investors with regard to familiarity it was found that Commerce/Finance/Economic background investors had the highest familiarity score of 3.5 followed by science and related subjects with a score of 2 and lastly humanities and related subjects scored the lowest among all other subjects with a score of 1.65. Thus, it can be said that investors with a background of studying the stock market at some level had a higher familiarity score as Commerce/Finance/Economics had more familiarity than other streams.

Table 8: Comparing Familiarity score on the basis of Age and Income levels

Familiarity Score on the Basis of Age and Income of Investors		
Age of Investors	20-30	2.31
	30-40	2.45
	40-50	1.44
	Above 50	2
Income level of Investors	Less than 25,000	1.866
	25,000 to 35,000	2.42
	35,000 to 50,000	2.06
	50,000 to 75,000	3
	Above 75,000	2

It can be clearly stated that younger investors have slightly more familiarity than older investors. It was found that adults ranging from 30-40 years had the most familiarity followed by young adults aged 20-30 scoring 2.31 followed by older investors with age more than 50 scoring an average familiarity score of 2. Lastly, investors ranging from 40-50 years of age had the lowest score of 1.44.

It was found that investors with investors belonging from middle income groups have higher familiarity scores than either low earning or high earning investors. Highest familiarity score of 3 was found in the income group 50,000 to 75,000 followed by 25,000 to 35,000 scoring 2.42, 35,000 to 50,000 scoring 2.06, High income group scoring 2 and lastly the least familiarity was found in the lowest income group which scored an average of 1.866.

Table 9: Comparing Familiarity score on the basis of Gender and Nature of Employment

Familiarity Score on the basis of Gender and Nature of Employment		
Gender	Male	2.7
	Female	1.94
Nature of Employment	Private	2.7
	Government	1.84

When we compare the average similarity score on the basis of Gender it can be clearly noted that Male respondents have a higher score of 2.7 than the Female respondents who have scored an average familiarity score of 1.94. Therefore, it can be said that Male respondents are more familiar than Female respondents with regard to Stock Market workings.

On the basis of Nature of Employment, it can be concluded that investors engaged in the private sector have scored 2.7 which is more than government employees who have scored 1.84 thus, it can be said that private employees have a higher familiarity with the stock market than those engaged in government sector.

Comparative Analysis of Knowledge on Stock Market

To Investigate the knowledge of the respondents on Stock Market a self-structured questionnaire containing 11 basic questions on Stock Market was administered to the individual investors. The respondents were then marked on these 11 questions whether they answered correctly or not, then an average of the marks scored was taken to calculate the perceived knowledge they had on the stock market.

Table 10: Comparing Knowledge score on the basis of Educational Qualification and Stream of Education

Comparing Knowledge Score on the basis of Stream and Educational Qualification		
Educational Qualification	Ph.D.	74%
	Post Graduation	62%
	Graduation	40%
	Higher Secondary	24%
	Matriculate	18%
Stream of Education	Commerce/Finance/Economics	72%
	Humanities and Related Subjects	29%
	Science and Related Subjects	51%

On the basis of the Knowledge score of respondents it was found that higher education levels led to higher scores. Ph.D. respondents had the highest score of 74% correct answers, followed by postgraduate score of 62%, Graduate scored 40%, Higher Secondary 24% Lastly matriculate respondents only scored 18% correct answers indicating a low knowledge base on stock market.

When it comes to the stream of education it can be clearly stated that respondents from commerce/finance/economics had the highest score of 72% correct answers followed by Science 51% and lastly Humanities scored only 29% correct answers. It can be stated that respondents who have a history of some level of learning on the stock market performed better than other streams.

Table 11: Comparing Knowledge score on the basis of Gender and Nature of Employment

Knowledge Score on the basis of Gender and Nature of Employment		
Gender	Male	55%
	Female	40%
Nature of Employment	Private	47%
	Government	43%

On the basis of Gender, it is noted that male respondents scored slightly better than female respondents as male respondents answered 55% of the total questions correctly whereas female respondents scored 40% of the total questions correctly. It can be said that males have a better knowledge base on the stock market than females.

On Comparing the respondents on the basis of their nature of employment it was found that private sector employees scored 47% of the total questions correctly whereas Government employees scored 43% of the total questions correctly. It can be stated that private employees had a slightly better knowledge base on the stock market than government employees.

Table 12: Comparing Knowledge score on the basis of Age and Income levels

Knowledge Score on the Basis of Age and Income of Investors		
Age of Investors	20-30	49%
	30-40	40%
	40-50	39%
	Above 50	42%
Income level of Investors	Less than 25,000	35%
	25,000 to 35,000	45%
	35,000 to 50,000	40%
	50,000 to 75,000	89%
	Above 75,000	55%

It was found that the youngest age group ranging from 20-30 had the highest knowledge score of 49% correct answers followed by the oldest age group scoring 42% correct answers, Middle age groups ranging from 30-40 and 40-50 scored 40% and 39% respectively. It can be said that young adults have a stronger knowledge base than other age groups.

Comparing the respondents on the basis of income level it was found that higher income earning respondents had the higher score compared to lower income earning respondents, The income level ranging from 50,000 to 75,000 had the highest score of 89% followed by Above 75,000 scoring 55% correct answers, then 25,000 to 35,000 scoring 45% and lastly 35,000 to 50,000 scored 40% followed by less than 25,000 income group scoring the lowest score of 35%. We can conclude that a higher income level led to a higher knowledge base on the stock market.

Hypothesis Testing

In order to ascertain the association between familiarity scores and socio-economic variables along with the association between knowledge base and socio-economic variables hypothesis test namely Mann-Whitney U test for association and chi square test of association has been conducted to accept or reject the null hypothesis.

Mann-Whitney U test between familiarity of stock market on the basis of gender

H_{01} : There is no significant difference in the familiarity of the stock market among male and females.

For the hypothesis testing the level of significance is 0.05.

Table 13: Mann-Whitney U Test

Particulars	Value
n1	19
n2	31
$n1(n1+1)/2$	190
$n2(n2+1)/2$	496
U.Stat. Value	207.5.
Critical Value	149

U.Stat (207.5) > Critical Value (149) at significance level of 0.05 we have failed to reject the null hypothesis therefore we have to conclude that the difference between males and females in terms of their score is likely to be caused by chance and there is no significant difference between the familiarity of the stock market among males and females therefore we failed to reject our null hypothesis or we have to accept our alternate hypothesis.

It is therefore implied that the familiarity of the stock market among males and females are not statically different or they are statically same.

Mann-Whitney U test between knowledge perceived of stock market on the basis of Gender

H_{02} : There is no significant difference in the knowledge perceived of the stock market among male and females.

For the hypothesis testing the level of significance is 0.05.

Table 14: Mann-Whitney U test

Particulars	Value
n1	19
n2	31
$n1(n1+1)/2$	190
$n2(n2+1)/2$	496
U.Stat. Value	212
Critical Value	149

U. Stat (212) > Critical Value (149) at significance level of 0.05 we have failed to reject the null hypothesis therefore we have to conclude that the difference between males and females in terms of their score is likely to be caused by chance and there is no significant difference between the perceived knowledge of the stock market among males and females therefore we failed to reject our null hypothesis or we have to accept our alternate hypothesis.

It is therefore implied that the perceived knowledge of stock market among males and females are not statically different or they are statically same.

Chi Square Analysis between Familiarity Score and Socio-Economic Variables

Table 15: Chi Square Scores of Familiarity Scores

Test Variables	Value	df	p value	Significance level	Remarks
Age	5.88	8	0.66	0.05	Failed to reject null hypothesis
Income	13.41	12	0.34	0.05	Failed to reject null hypothesis
Educational Qualification	18.86	16	0.286	0.05	Failed to reject null hypothesis
Stream of Education	23.22	8	0.003	0.05	Reject Null Hypothesis
Nature of Employment	5.98	4	0.201	0.05	Failed to reject null hypothesis

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in Familiarity score among different educational backgrounds.

In accordance with the chi square test conducted at significance level of 0.05 the respective p value for different educational background was found to be 0.66 which is more than the level of significance

0.05 therefore, we have failed to reject the null hypothesis. It can be definitively said that there is no significant difference between familiarity score and educational background.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in Familiarity score among different stream of education

The p value between familiarity score and stream of education was found to be 0.003 which is less than the level of significance of 0.05 therefore, we have rejected the null hypothesis. It can be concluded that there is a significant difference between familiarity score and stream of education.

H₀₅: There is no significant difference in Familiarity score among different age groups

Comparing familiarity score and age groups using chi square the p value was found to be 0.66 which is greater than the level of significance of 0.05 therefore, we have failed to reject the null hypothesis hence there is no significant difference between familiarity score and different age groups.

H₀₆: There is no significant difference in Familiarity score among different income groups

In accordance with the chi square test conducted at level of significance of 0.05 the respective p value for different income groups was found to be 0.201 which is greater than the significance level 0.05 therefore, we have failed to reject the null hypothesis. It can be definitively concluded there is no significance difference between familiarity score and income level.

H₀₇: There is no significant difference in Familiarity score between private and government employees.

Analysing the familiarity score between private and government employees using chi square the p value was found to be 0.66 which is more than the level of significance of 0.05 therefore, we have failed to reject the null hypothesis hence there is no significant difference between private and government employees on the basis of familiarity score.

Chi Square Analysis between Knowledge Score and Socio-Economic Variables

Table 16: Chi Squares Scores of Knowledge Scores.

Test Variables	Value	df	p value	Significance level	Remarks
Age	15.33	20	0.757	0.05	Failed to reject null hypothesis
Income	47.16	30	0.024	0.05	Reject null hypothesis
Educational Qualification	53.58	40	0.074	0.05	Failed to reject null hypothesis
Stream of Education	45.16	20	0.001	0.05	Reject Null Hypothesis
Nature of Employment	7.99	10	0.630	0.05	Failed to reject null hypothesis

H₀₈: There is no significant difference in Knowledge score among different age groups

Comparing knowledge score and age groups using chi square the p value was found to be 0.757 which is greater than the level of significance of 0.05 therefore, we have failed to reject the null hypothesis hence there is no significant difference between knowledge score and different age groups.

H₀₉: There is no significant difference in Knowledge score among different income groups

In accordance to the chi square test conducted at level of significance of 0.05 the respective p value for different income groups was found to be 0.024 which is lesser than level of significance of 0.05 therefore, we have to reject the null hypothesis hence, it can be definitively concluded there is a significance difference between familiarity score and income level and income plays a significant role in determining the knowledge base for stock market.

H₁₀: There is no significant difference in Knowledge score among different stream of education

The p value between familiarity score and stream of education was found to be 0.003 which is less than the level of significance of 0.05 therefore, we have rejected the null hypothesis. It can be concluded that there is a significant difference between Knowledge score and stream of education. It can be further said that the stream of education plays an important role in determining the knowledge base of the stock market.

H₁₁: There is no significant difference in Knowledge score among different stream of education

The p value between knowledge score and stream of education was found to be 0.001 which is less than the level of significance of 0.05 therefore, we have rejected the null hypothesis. It can be concluded that there is a significant difference between knowledge score and stream of education. It can be further said that the stream of education plays an important role in determining the knowledge base of the stock market.

H₁₂: There is no significant difference in Knowledge score between private and government employees.

Analysing the Knowledge score between private and government employees using chi square the p value was found to be 0.630 which is greater than the level of significance of 0.05 therefore, we have failed to reject the null hypothesis hence there is no significant difference between private and government employees on the basis of knowledge base.

Discussion and Results

Comparing the familiarity score with regard to stock market among the respondents it was found that Commerce is the best performing stream so it can be concluded that people with commerce stream of education have better familiarity about the stock market Males are more familiar in stock market then women it has been observed that the respondents with higher education background have a better familiarity in stock market.

Analysis of the perceived knowledge of stock market among the respondents it was found that Commerce is the best performing stream and investors with commerce background in education have better perceived knowledge about the stock market Males are more familiar in stock market then women the respondents with higher education background have a scored better in terms of perceived knowledge in stock market.

With the help of the Mann-Whitney U test we have found that there is no statistical difference between male and female when it comes to familiarity and knowledge base of the stock market.

In accordance to the chi square analysis between various socio-economic variables and familiarity it was found that only stream of education had a significant impact on the respondent's familiarity to stock market and other socio-economic variables such as age, income level, educational qualification, nature of employment did not have any significant difference with regard to the familiarity of stock market among respondents.

Similarly, when association between various socio-economic variables and knowledge base was analyzed, it was found that only stream of education and income had a significant impact on the respondent's knowledge base with regard to stock market and other socio-economic variables such as age, educational qualification, nature of employment did not have any significant difference with regard to the knowledge base of stock market among respondent. The lack of impact of socio-economic variables such as gender may be indicative of the lack of divide on the basis of gender where 58.5% of women in Sikkim work alongside the men (PLFS, 2022)⁴ which means that they also participate in financial activities of the family. Employment in Sikkim is mostly focused around the service sector which may explain the lack of significance in the study. The lack of overall awareness which was indicated in the study alongside the lack of prevalence of credible sources as information avenues for the stock market may contribute to the lack of significance of various socio-economic variables as all groups may be equally exposed to these shortcomings.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the majority of respondents have a positive perception towards the stock market and view the stock market as an opportunity for investment with moderate risk. Most of the respondents have heard about the stock market from their friends and family and credible sources such as schools and colleges articles and newspapers have less access to people in terms of stock market which can contribute towards misinformation. The lack of respondents indicating credible sources suggests the under utilisation of these sources which showcases the lack of prevalence of schools, colleges and newspapers in providing Investment information in the state of Sikkim. The respondent has indicated the majority of their investment in banking instruments like saving schemes, fixed deposits and would prefer banking instruments over other financial instruments like stocks, mutual funds etc. thus, it

can further be concluded that stock market is not the first choice of investment for investors. The reason for the preference in banking instruments may be attributed to the lack of investment culture along with the risk averse nature of Sikkimese Investors.

It was found that among all socio-economic variables, streams of education made a significant impact when it comes to both familiarity and knowledge base as streams which taught stock market literacy in some manner performed better. Therefore, some level of stock market basics should be taught in order to increase the participation of individual investors. Lastly, it can be concluded that although perception towards the stock market is positive among investors in Sikkim, they lack adequate familiarity and knowledge base towards stock market which has hindered participation. Hence, Stock Market awareness programs along with training workshops should be implemented in the state to enhance perception and participation with regard to the stock market. Further studies can also include institutional investors as well as increase the sample base for further advancements to the study.

Endnotes

- 1 <https://focus.world-exchanges.org/issue/march-2023/market-statistics>
- 2 <https://www.investindia.gov.in/state/sikkim>
- 3 https://www.bseindia.com/markets/keystatics/KeyStat_ClientStat.aspx?expandable%20=4
- 4 <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1805783>

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Human Resources in the Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA) Era: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to conduct a Bibliometric analysis of scientific studies on “VUCA” in the fields of business and management for the period: 2014–2024. In this context, data were obtained from the Web of Science (WoS) database, and the VOS viewer program was used for the analysis. The results showed that it was determined that there were 209 studies on the concept of VUCA, and it was found that 135 of these studies were in the management, business and environmental sciences category. The findings of the analysis indicate that the highest number of studies on VUCA was conducted in the management category (64), and the most studied document type was the article (94.815%). According to the results of the analysis, which revealed that the interest in the subject had been increasing, especially after 2017, the most cited author was “V. Raja Sreedharan”; the most productive country was the Peoples R China and the most used keywords were “performance” and “VUCA”. It is believed that the findings obtained from this study will provide insights into the studies to be conducted on the subject and contribute to the research areas that are growing in the field of VUCA and the topics that will be the focus of research activities in the near future.

Keywords: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity, Bibliometric Analysis

JEL Codes: M10, M 11, M12, M13.

1. Introduction

The greatest obstacle facing the current generation is the corona virus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Businesses have been severely affected, so it is difficult to say when things return to normal. Words such as corona virus and VUCA were not widely used in the past. The term “corona virus” was once only used in scholarly or medical contexts, but the public has now come to understand it due to personal experiences with its devastating effects. Undoubtedly, COVID-19 has made the world a VUCA environment. Most academicians and executives refer to this; many sources claim that executives and academics commonly refer to this complex environment by the acronym “VUCA”. It is a military acronym; VUCA is increasingly being used to characterize chaotic commercial environments (**Bennett & Lemoine, 2014**). Due to continuous change in customers and staff because of various global financial, economic and technological changes take place and it’s become very difficult to keep an eye on them. The consequences of such simultaneous occurrences are intricate and wide-ranging (**Margolis & Turner, 2012**). Above given various things happen consecutively because of that unsystematic form taking place. Consequently, VUCA has a greater influence on business life than on other spheres of existence. It is also one of the topics emphasized by the scientific community and has drawn attention.

With Bibliometric analysis, the particular circumstances of such a vast field can be disclosed. Motive of this study gives detailed information about the given topic in the research field by showing Bibliometric analysis and it’s based on the top ten research categories contribution in the Web of science database (WoS). Starting this research study provides the basic understanding about the research topic. Next, a Bibliometric analysis of papers published in WoS on pertinent field subjects was carried out. Implications of the research outcomes identified through its ability to enable researchers to track a subject’s developmental path.

2. Conceptual Framework

The United States of America Army first used the term ‘chaotic and

dangerous environments' during the 1990s to forecast the next move of other parties because of the rising challenges and threats during the cold war. Due to the good result of VUCA it was not only useful for the army but it was started and used in various sectors such as educational, financial, political and also in the NPO (**Wolf, 2007**). Due to the financial crises in the business field this term gained more approval (**Tovar, 2016**). This term became very typical in the corporate sector so that it cannot be ignored (**Sullivan, 2013**). 'VUCA' term gained more popularity because of the rise of the global economy due to interconnection of various firms(**Humphries-Kil & Jamil, 2017**).Crux of the term "VUCA" state the effectively and efficiently performance of a business organisation in a dynamic and challenging environment.

(I) Volatility- According to Bennett and **Lemoine (2014)**, this describes comparatively unstable and occasionally surprising development. Examples of this concept include shifts in policy and consumer preferences, renewable energy, price fluctuations, lifestyle changes, and commodity pricing. According to **Sinha and Sinha (2020)**, volatility term is not only associated with a single factor which affects the business but it involves all the factors which affect business organisation directly or indirectly.

(II) Uncertainty-Is defined as a lack of particular information, a high probability of surprise, and low predictability (**Schick et al., 2017**). Large, 'dramatic' changes often occur in uncertain situations (**Sullivan, 2012**). The US terrorist strikes of 2001 are among the best examples of this element. There was a great deal of uncertainty in the world following these incidents regarding where, when, and the possibility of future attacks (**Bennett & Lemoine, 2014**). What may happen in future and not any regulation over the loss which can affect business all these are the natures of uncertainty (**Rzemieniak & Nowacka, 2022**).

(III) Complexity-Describe complexity in business structure, instability in business environment and non-association of different parts of a business unit (**Schick et al., 2017**).Complexity can be also defined as the large component and unrelatedness in among these (**Ko and Rea, 2016**). The entire ecology is impacted when any one of these elements or variables changes (**Akdemir et al. 2021**). There is some information available or predictable regarding the nature of complexity. For instance,

there is no unpredictability in the complicated laws, rules, and cultural expectations that a business must deal with when conducting business in another nation (**Kosuri & Raghuramapatruni, 2017**).

(IV) Ambiguity- Refers there is no clarity and understanding about the various conditions of a business unit (**Chakraborty, 2019**). Under the ambiguous environment it becomes very difficult to identify the problem there causes and solutions (**Sullivan, 2012**). As per **Cooke (2013)**, it breeds mistrust, hinders decision making, poses a threat, and results in lost opportunities. Increased ambiguity is mostly caused by demographic shifts, technological disruption, global rivalry and new work values.

Separate consideration of VUCA components is not always troublesome. However, sudden spikes in any one of the four VUCA components simultaneously could make this a dangerous scenario (**Prensky, 2014**). Bob Johansen introduced the “VUCA PRIME” strategy in 2007 to guard against the dangers of the VUCA world and take use of its potential. Within this framework the techniques of clarity versus complexity, comprehension versus ambiguity, vision versus vitality and agility versus ambiguity have been suggested within this framework (**Lawrence, 2013**).

3. Method

Bibliometric analysis of the ‘VUCA’ is the main base of this study which includes the top ten contributing groups on the WoS database. Findings of the study shown by visual mapping features of the VOS viewer because of its advantages, including finding the most significant scientific publications and sources, reviewing recent advancements in research, and evaluating outcomes by creating an academic foundation, Bibliometric analysis adds to the body of literature (**Martinez et al., 2015**). It serves as an objective standard and is used to assess the calibre and effectiveness of science (**Ek'i et al., 2022**).

Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative study of the database related to a specific topic which has already been done already and it provides in-depth knowledge about the future in that particular domain (**Kurutkan & Orhan, 2018**). Because Bibliometric analysis offers an infrastructure that can support thorough evaluations and reduce researcher errors, it was selected for this study (**Donthu et al. 2021**). Scopus, Web of

Science and various other databases facilitate the Bibliometric analysis as per requirement. The most popular databases for Bibliometric analysis are WoS, Scopus, Google Scholar, PubMed, and MEDLINE (**Cobo et al., 2015; Chen, 2017**). Web of Science is a very good database which comprises various research related documents and facilitate sufficient resource for study so that it was used in the study (**Martinez et al., 2015**). Furthermore, according to **Brito-Ochoa et al. (2020)**, this database offers basic metadata, including abstracts, references, impact factor of the journal, indicators of high-impact quality, different institutions, citations count, list of the authors and different nations.

Within the study parameters, data were extracted on August 26, 2024, using the keyword “VUCA” from the WoS database. 209 publications were selected using the relevant word from the WoS database as the “topic” in the initial stage. Subsequently, inclusion and exclusion criteria were used in this study. Data extracted for the research study was based on top ten discipline “Management, Business, Environmental Sciences, Environmental Studies, Green Sustainable Science Technology, Psychology Multidisciplinary, Engineering Industrial, Education Educational Research, Psychology Applied and Engineering Manufacturing” and the document types to “articles, Early access, Editorial Material, Review Article, Book Chapters, Meeting Abstract, Proceeding Paper and Retracted Publication. Data extracted for Bibliometric analysis through implementing inclusion and exclusion criteria of the study only allowed for the inclusion of studies from 2014 to 2024 (reason behind the choosing this time frame was that study in this field initially started from 2013). VOS viewer (version 1.6.20) software was used to show the data gathered in the second stage. Various types of network data are created through VOS viewer and it helps in visualising, exploring and creating the map (**Van Eck & Waltman, 2020**). VOS viewer was chosen for this study because it provides the finest quality of graphic display of the research.

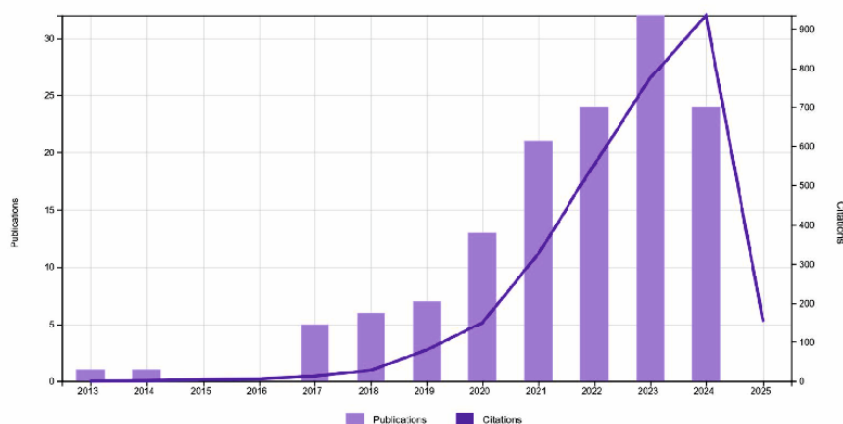
4. Findings

In this study firstly output of literature and then map and network visualisation shown as the findings of the study. Through the Table :1 it is found that most of the documents were in the category of Articles and then Early access, Editorial Materials, Review Article, Book chapters, Meeting Abstract, Proceeding Paper and Retracted publications.

Table 1: Different Types of Documents According to Publications

Different types of documents	Overall record	% of 135
Article	128	94.815
Early Access	13	9.63
Editorial Material	3	2.222
Review Article	3	2.222
Book Chapters	1	0.741
Meeting Abstract	1	0.741
Proceeding Paper	1	0.741
Retracted Publication	1	0.741

In the given below Fig 1 different categories of documents in the field of 'VUCA' are shown by number of publications and citations. In the given figure publication started from 2014 and it is increasing from 2017 after that in 2023 highest publication can be seen. In 2024 no. of publication cannot be exactly decided because we are still in the mid of the year.

**Figure 1: Citations and publications in different years**

Source: WoS

Different authors publications and citations given in Table: 2 Given below table 2 show the various authors publications and their total citations in which we found that author named **Bennett and Lemoine (2014)** was the most cited author with total no of publications 403.

Table 2: Total Citations of Different Authors

Titles	Authors	Publications Year	Total Citation
What a difference a word makes: Understanding threats to performance in a VUCA world	Bennett, Nathan; Lemoine, G. James	2014	403
Innovation, Dynamic Capabilities, and Leadership	Schoemaker, Paul J. H.; Heaton, Shovi; Teece, David	2018	311
How can SMEs successfully navigate VUCA environment: The role of agility in the digital transformation era	Troise, Ciro; Corvello, Vincenzo; Ghobadian, Abby; O'Regan, Nicholas	2022	182
Rethinking teacher education in a VUCA world: student teachers' social-emotional competencies during the Covid-19 crisis	Hader, Linor L.; Ergas, Oren; Alpert, Bracha; Ariav, Tamar	2020	118
Management Innovation in a VUCA World: Challenges and Recommendations	Millar, Carla C. J. M.; Groth, Olaf; Mahon, John F.	2018	118
Entrepreneurial team and strategic agility: A conceptual framework and research agenda	Xing, Yijun; Liu, Yipeng; Boojihawon (Roshan), Dev K.; Tarba, Shlomo	2020	77
Developing a blockchain framework for the automotive supply chain: A systematic review	Reddy, Kotha Raj Kumar; Gunasekaran, Angappa; Kalpana, P.; Sreedharan, V. Raja; Kumar, S. Arvind	2021	67
Managing VUCA: The human dynamics of agility	Baran, Benjamin E.; Woznyj, Haley M.	2021	61
Management Innovation Made in China: Haier's Rendanheyi	Frynas, Jędrzej George; Mol, Michael J.; Mellahi, Kamel	2018	61
Disruptive innovation and dynamic capabilities in emerging economies: Evidence from the Indian automotive sector	Pandit, Deepak; Joshi, Maheshkumar P.; Sahay, Arun; Gupta, Rajen K.	2018	59

On the basis of obtained data in Fig.2 we found the most productive top ten countries publications wise were as PEOPLES R CHINA 29(21.481%), USA 26 (19.259%), ENGLAND 21 (15.556%), AUSTRALIA 12(8.889%), and India 10 (7.407%) made up the top five places.



Figure 2: Most productive countries publication wise

Source: WoS

The Web of Science database is used for the collection of data to complete the study and Vos viewer was used to present the data in a diagrammatic way. In this study findings were presented in the form of Co-authorship, Co-occurrences and co-citations of the documents.

4.1. Analysis of Co-Authorship

Collaboration of authors on a specific manuscript and a very significant author is shown through the Co-authorship analysis (**Zupic & Cater, 2015**). If authors 'relationship is increasing then it will cause an increase in the network connections among the authors. Overall, 399 authors were found during co-authorship analysis which evaluated the degree of affiliation between the authors who have done most collaborative work together it was based on the top ten field of research categories (Business, management, environmental studies, environmental sciences green sustainable science technology, engineering, industrial psychology multidisciplinary, psychology applied & engineering manufacturing). Only "15" authors, however, satisfied the predetermined threshold value when the authors' total number of publications and citations was set to "2."

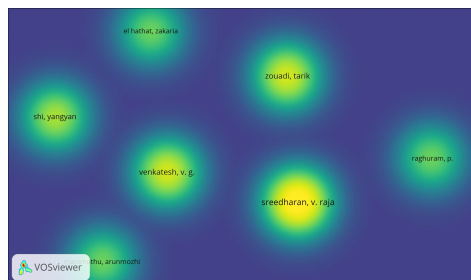


Figure 3: Co-Author Network Image

Source: VOS viewer

role, requirements, teams, transactional leadership fifth cluster absorptive-capacity, big data analytics, block chain, challenges, competitive advantage, firm performance, industry, knowledge, management, organizational resilience, VUCA world sixth cluster dynamic capabilities, dynamic capability, education entrepreneurship, firm, higher education, firm, innovation, organizations, products. Below given table 3 most often used topmost ten keywords are given.

Table 3: Most Used Keywords

Keyword	Overall link strength of the given words
Performance	203
‘VUCA’	174
innovation	135
impact	78
mediating role	76
leadership	71
capabilities	63
moderating role	61
dynamic capabilities	60
management	58

4.3. A Co-citation Analysis

To fix the relationship among various publications, co-citation analysis was conducted (**Zan, 2019**). Reaching to most significant publications and finding topic clusters are two advantages of the analysis (**Donthu, 2021**).

4.3.1 Cited References

In order to create the network map of co-cited references, the minimum number of citations was set to “4”. It was found that “43” out of 8709 references satisfied the threshold value.

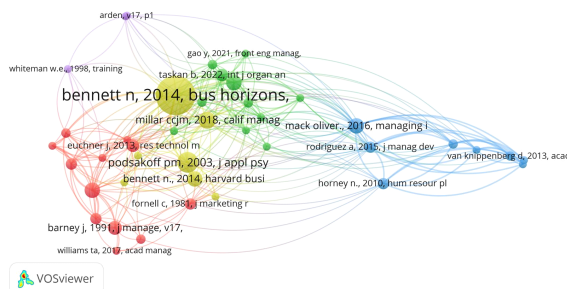


Figure 5: Commonly cited references network image

Source: VOS viewer

According to the reference-based co-citation analysis mapping, Bennett and Bus Horizons' (2014) work has received the greatest citations. Mack Oliver is one of the other often mentioned references (2016).

4.3.2. Cited Sources

Through setting a minimum number of citation '7' network map of co-cited reference & sources was created. Only '203' from 3925 references fulfilled the decided criteria.

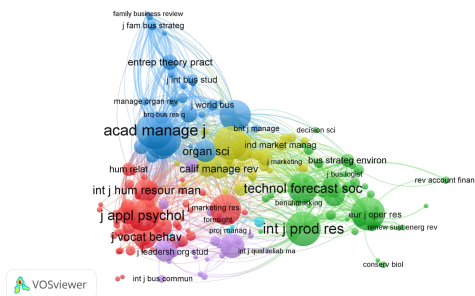


Figure 6: Commonly cited sources network image

Source: VOS viewer

The most often referenced sources are, as Fig. 6 illustrates, the Academy of management journal, international journal of production and business research, Journal of management, Journal of clean production etc.

4.3.3. Cited Authors

Minimum number of citations '5' entered to create the network of co-cited authors. After setting the given threshold limit only '121' from 6974 writers fulfil the conditions.

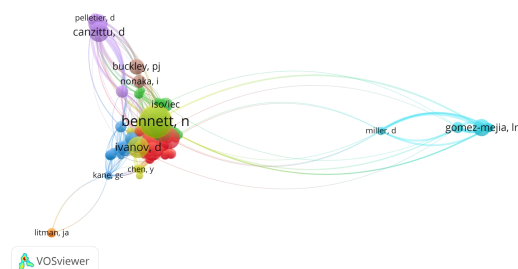


Figure 7: Co-cited authors network image

Source: VOS viewer

As per Fig.7 most cited authors are Canzittu D., Guichard, J and Gomez- Mezia, Lr.

5. Conclusion

Descriptive viewpoints offered in top ten contributors in various disciplines such as: environmental studies, environmental sciences, green sustainable science technology, business, management, psychology multidisciplinary, engineering industrial, psychology applied, and engineering manufacturing, since its goal is to monitor the growth of VUCA in different fields. Bibliometric analysis of the 135 papers published from 2014 to 2024 was done using the VOS viewer. Bibliometric analysis used to understand the available huge unstructured data related to VUCA. Based on the results, one could claim that the fact that most studies on VUCA fall under the article category suggests that this is a topic that academicians have looked into and are interested in. There should be more document kinds (early access, editorial material, review article, book chapter, book chapters, meeting abstract, proceeding paper, and retracted publication), as seen by the limited number of document types other than articles. Still, this is not something to be concerned about. Since only four studies on VUCA (all categories) were completed until 2014, it can be claimed that the notion is relatively new. Studies on VUCA (all categories) initially started in 2008.

Publication on the VUCA was irregular in spite of the fact that it followed an increasing trend. Nonetheless, the COVID-19 epidemic in 2022 is believed to be one of the primary causes of the fact that the majority of research on the topic was carried out in 2023. Because of the increased complexity and uncertainty brought about by the lack of

knowledge about the disease and the abrupt shifts in its trajectory during the pandemic, ambiguous environments were created. As a result, it made sense that interest in VUCA would rise. Furthermore, the subject's interest and fashion ability are demonstrated by the notable gains in citations over time.

The most often cited article on VUCA, as per the data collected from the WoS database published by **Bennett & Lemoine (2014)** in Business horizon journal, was "What a Difference a Word Makes: Understanding Threats to Performance in a VUCA World". After analysing the publishing distribution by nation, it becomes evident that the nations that prioritize education and development are the most productive ones: People's Republic of China, the United States, England, Australia, India, Morocco, Spain, Germany, France, and Wales. This finding suggests that there is a positive relationship between the nations with a huge number of publications and nations whose researchers made it possible for the VUCA concept to arise and flourish. Analyses of co-citations, co-authorship and co-occurrence have been shown by network mapping diagrams. By showing numerical data that was acquired as a result of the analysis, this offered a greater possibility for evaluation.

It is anticipated that this study will serve as a guide for those wishing to investigate VUCA and add to the body of literature. Researchers who wish to work on this topic can use this study to plan their research and gain an understanding of the pertinent literature. However, the study is not without its drawbacks. Within the parameters of the study, the data set is the first obvious constraint. Within the WoS categories, the 135 publications that were assessed for this study came from studies in the following categories: "Management, Business, Environmental Sciences, Environmental Studies, Green Sustainable Science Technology, Psychology Multidisciplinary, Engineering Industrial, Psychology Applied, and Engineering Manufacturing. Due to assessment of all types of publication together without any categorisation it will give a broader and multidisciplinary perspective for future research. Study analysis is restricted to the papers included in the WoS Core Collection, which is another constraint. But Bibliometric analysis is also applicable to databases like PubMed, EBSCOHost, Google Scholar, SCOPUS, and others. Furthermore, in subsequent investigations, scholars may utilize several other visual mapping applications.

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RESEARCH ESSAY

Constructing Peace and its Mechanisms

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At the beginning of the 20th century, in terms of power, Europe had it all; in terms of liberal demos of justice and popular sovereignty, Europe had it all; and in terms of interdependence, maturing laws, and regulation, again, Europe had it all. However, the circumstances produced the advent of not one but two world wars between the forces of the continent itself. The installation of a European Union and associated values of a united and pacific Europe such that it instituted an economic union (with well-defined parameters) and open borders were not predicted or even explained by the central tenets of realism or liberalism, without resorting to reductionism or truisms. This essay aims to privilege constructivism to demonstrate how the unique conditions of the 20th century led Europe to move away from war. Further, this essay makes sense of how this construction of peace in Europe may have influenced attitudes regarding the same issues in India.

The realist explanations lend themselves to explaining that the material benefits and the promise of security by the United States might have caused the union. In contrast, the liberal explanations carry the explanation that mutual interdependence fosters absolute gains and better cooperation, which led the states to form a union. However, this essay situates the explanation of this metamorphosis in the constructivist approach, which speaks to how material factors acquire meaning only through ideational factors (Wendt, 1995) and how ideational factors draw on specific conditions to create new interests constantly.

It seeks to answer questions that the realist and liberal interpretations fail to engage with by taking it as a given, such as why there was any faith in the distribution of gains, how a union of erstwhile warring nations fosters any sense of security at all, and why were the worn-torn European states so active in their commitment to this approach.

Constitutive theorising is extremely useful in putting emphasis on the ideas and values that European states identified themselves with and how they led them to act. It highlights the post-war experience of the European states, where a new superpower rivalry influenced the reconstruction processes. The subsequent elements of a shared idea of a booming civilisational past and a grim but potentially hopeful present gave rise to Europe-specific solidarity. Instead of building on multiple imperial heritages as was the case during empire-making and expansion, the identification with the idea of a civilisational Europe led to a new post-war solidarity-driven identity, providing the context where the interests of European states acquired their meanings. The new meanings led to the new interests behind the formation of the union; these interests, it can be argued, would be the growth of Europe as a whole to bring back glory and the shift away from acting to commit the Global South to acquire legitimacy and security.

So, it can be broadly established that identity, norms, and experience are prominent in how agents (here, states) shape, constitute, and reproduce the structure (here, the European Union). The best way to view and ground the aforementioned constructivist analysis that has led to a European transfiguration of sorts is represented through the study of de-Nazification and nuclear proliferation processes and the role and simultaneous creation of the overarching post-war European identity in the same.

De-Nazification

After harsh peace was established by the occupation of Germany in 1945 by the Allied forces, a judicial process was envisioned with the nature of being a cleansing process. It had two inconsistent goals: that of realizing ‘certain allied objectives’ and that of political and moral re-education. The trials were bifurcated into two: Nuremberg (with 24 high-level Nazi conspirators) and subsequent (for the low-profile yet systemically involved nazi bureaucrats) (Besancon, 2019). In practice, after the conviction of the obviously guilty prominent Nazis in the

Nuremberg Trial, there was no bona fide criteria to try or classify people under suspicion. On top of this, a resource and time crunch meant that it was easy for perhaps a non-nazi bureaucrat under the regime's duress to be convicted while some nazi profiteers or activists got off free. Such instances ensured that both sides attributed a lack of credibility to this process. The initial aims were abandoned as the Western states became wary of the communist influence of the USSR, and vice versa. This ensured that the credentials of being a communist or an anti-communist now subsumed other identities, and this led to unthinkable changes in the treatment accorded to the Germans.

Through the de-Nazification process, we see that it not only constitutes the new interests taking prominence over earlier interests of revenge or reconciliation through justice, but it also plays a role in strengthening the foundation for the union itself. The change in agents' priorities concerning the newly evolved bipolar structure led to astonishing accommodations. USSR sought the support of middling bureaucrat nazis by August 1947 itself and admitted to the need of nazi trained personnel to build its new socialist society (Kater, 1987). The Germans deemed the process of de-Nazification as unjust and faulty, and most of them were tired of war and Hitler, which resonated across Europe, so the UK and France wrapped up their trials by 1949. The new post-war indifference surrounding politics also led to a "Let-George-Do-it" plurality (Large, 1996). Secretary of Mission Brewster Morris, on behalf of the West German leaders (with the view on candidacy of Konrad Adenauer, a vehement anti-communist), persuaded the US to pursue relaxed conditions to make Germans vote "correctly" in a democratic election and the US capitulated to the demands of ending the de-Nazification. Dwight Eisenhower also accepted the newly-elected Adenauer's request to exonerate the national army. He made a statement that the great majority of the Wehrmacht had acted honourably, laying the blame solely on the SS (Bickford, 2011). This gave credibility to Germany, which allowed the rearmament to begin, with a non-ostracized, productive West Germany driving European integration in line with American plans.

The Nuclear Deterrent

As German rearmament began, the Third Reich was repeatedly called "Hitler's regime," distancing the rest of the population from the crimes committed in Hitler's name. The narratives of 'the German,' as innately

peaceful but overpowered by the fascists, began to pick up steam, too (Besancon, 2019). These narratives were used to produce conditions necessary to imply particular interests, such as revitalizing what was being identified as a largely victimised Germany. The idea of a renewed Germany, however, worried France. Moreover, the idea of a single leading force of a union would disrupt the narrative of European civilisational identity. France was also concerned by the competition between the two superpowers, for it meant that their interests identified with their chosen ideology took precedence. This led France (and perhaps others) to fear for its genuine independence, a fear boosted by its earlier occupations. There was a sense of humiliation, displayed by the fact that it was the community of leading scientists, and not military men, who rallied to urge the French state to create a ‘force de frappe’ (nuclear deterrent) (Mendl, 1965). The European states shared this experience of an abased state in fear. This was further extended by creating linkages to the ideas of an inherently peaceful German populace, which was being propagated to normalise West Germany. The French, on their part, repeatedly emphasised how the weapon was for the safety of the whole of Europe, which meant that it was seen as being sought for Europe and not their national interest. Charles de Gaulle famously quoted, “Yes, it is Europe, from the Atlantic to the Urals, it is Europe, all of Europe, which will decide the fate of the world” (Oxford University Press, 2016) to counter American Trans-Atlanticism, and furthered the idea of a united Europe, with shared aspirations and lived experience, and hence a move away from the big powers who swagger around their nuclear weapons for they worry only of their own interests.

The strategy of capitalising on the shared and experientially developed fear of war (associated with superpower interests) worked so well that there were no significant objections to France from within Europe. The continent wanted priority for their interests during reconstructions without worrying about safety, for they were hopeful of potential growth. The anti-war attitude, coupled with the narrative playing on past ideas of defenders of Europe, was identified when even the most provocative French articles supporting a nuclear deterrent ended with a non-war situation (Lieber, 1966). This attitude resonated with the war-fatigued Europe, which was also eased in by the French calls for a deterrent and not a weapon, which resulted in the nuclear “deterrent” becoming a point of unity for other states to rally under rather than the cause of

dissension of the union. There were only American objections, and they were possibly assuaged through promoting West Europe's affinity towards the US over the USSR and the propagation of the "twin pillars" concept (Bailes, 1993), an endeavor towards a more equal balance of effort between the USA and Europe, where the nuclear deterrent represented Europe taking a more active role in providing for its own security affairs in the background of the US already shelling out a fortune under the Marshall Plan.

Trickle down to India

Finally, how does this explain particular European actions concerning India? First, let us consider a reconciliatory process (along the lines of de-Nazification). India represents a diverse populace with even more diverse constraints placed through structural inequities, but we witness that attempts to address the same were few and far between. The arguments that dominated the public discourse often lent weight to a form of Samaritanism and privilege unity in the post-independence era. It can be posited that the British action was to unite India as a unique and novel proposition. The roots of these are effectively traced back to the defense offered by the British for apathy towards damages inflicted by colonial rule, which was the production of a united India (Sen, 2021). It takes a massive leap of logic in the thinking that nothing was binding the Indian subcontinent's identity together except them and delegitimises earlier empires that had ruled vast swathes of land. In doing so, it sees any form of unity as an achievement that is a first-time occurrence and a precarious notion. Thus, foregoing consideration of diverse identities and considerations, as was common during colonial rule, was encouraged. Second, if we take up the question of the nuclear deterrent, then we see India employing the same rhetoric as that opted by France, going as far as to call its nuclear tests "peaceful explosions." India emphasises its no- first -use policy and gives an example of the occupations it has faced (and faces) while portraying itself as the stabilizing force of the neighborhood, which is in the footsteps of the norms of responsibility that France evoked back in the day. This has impacted the actions of major European nations who have gone far to give veiled threats but have not taken any actions against India, in contrast to Japan and the USA (Raja Mohan, 1998).

Conclusion

The easy acceptance of the highly polarising issues of rehabilitation of former nazis, and the acquisition of nuclear weapons, displays the primacy of the agent-structure interaction. We can discern how particular identities with respect to the bipolar structure fostered narratives that eased trust and integration despite the divisive issues at hand. The result was the development of a collective union of sorts and identity to grasp space amidst two warring superpowers. The devices employed in such an integration, and hence, a move away from war, are best explained by the constructivist approach. It is so because it has a monopoly on the importance it provides to identities, narratives, and discourse, on determining and explaining material interests and state behavior. Not stopping at this, the critical constructivist approach can be used to trace how people identify with certain identities and justify things through these identities, which helps us decode the basis of actions that have significantly influenced Indian actions.

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Book Review

Harimohan Jha. (2023). *The Bride: The Maithili Classic Kanyadan* (Lalit Kumar, Trans.). Harper Perennial India, pp. 192. (Original work published 1933)

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In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, many Indian authors, including Fakir Mohan Senapati, Rabindranath Tagore Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, and Premchand captured the plight of women in their fiction and contributed to the movement aimed at the eradication of social evils. In the Mithila region of Bihar, it was Harimohan Jha (1908-1984), the acclaimed Maithili author and professor of philosophy at Patna University, who raised the issue of ill-matched marriages and the need to educate young girls of Mithila in his novels and short stories, especially in his classic Maithili novel *Kanyadan* (1933). The novel continues to mesmerize common readers, critics, film-makers, and authors, even some ninety years after its publication. But unfortunately, this classic Maithili novel remained untranslated till recently. Maithili is an ancient language with its distinct script, literary heritage, and regional consciousness and is spoken by millions in parts of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Nepal, and Maithil diaspora. Despite that, it is rare to come across a Maithili novel in English translation, which deprives English readers of the pleasure of being acquainted with the robust Maithil humour, and the vibrant world of women characterized by boisterous laughter. In 2022, Lalit Kumar addressed this lacuna by bringing out an English translation of the novel with a rich Introduction.

Harimohan Jha was a prolific short story writer, novelist, poet, literary critic and an ardent advocate of the education of women. While pursuing

his B.A. in English at Patna University, in 1930, Jha was requested to contribute a story to a monthly *Mithila*. He wrote a story around the fundamental problem of a rural household in the Mithila region in Bihar – the difficulty of finding a suitable groom for a 13-year-old daughter (31). This became the first chapter of the novella *Kanyadan*. Its English translation *The Bride* (2022) by Lalit Kumar opens with the following lines:

Once a boy learns English and goes away for higher studies, his father doesn't accept anything less than a thousand rupees in dowry. How can a poor bride's family pay so much money? (33)

The story opens in the same manner as Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* establishing the centrality of an advantageous marriage as the fundamental social ethos of Maithil society in colonial India. The name of the thirteen-year-old girl is Buchia. Her mother is highly sceptical about getting a worthy groom (most preferably English-educated). She keeps reprimanding Buchia for not behaving like a mature girl, fearing that a prospective groom might reject her. Her fears turn out to be true when the English-educated groom, C. C. Mishra, abandons Buchia on the "night of Chaturthi" (the night of consummation). He holds a B.A. in English from Banaras Hindu University and has been cut off from the traditional cultures of rural Mithila. He dreams of having a wife, who is proficient in English and Hindi, and who looks like the film star Devika Rani. He could not have married Buchia if he had not been persuaded by Buchia's elder brother, who is also Mishra's college friend. Buchia, as the name itself suggests, is unschooled and therefore unlettered in either English or Hindi, but she can read *Mithila Mihir*, a Maithili-language magazine, as claimed by her brother. By its author's admission, this novella apparently takes up the cause of female education:

Dedicated to... the custodians of society, who shell out thousands of rupees on the education of a boy, but considering it utterly useless to spare even four annas on buying a slate for a girl. (29)

However, the 'dedication' is partially misleading (as becomes evident from the ironic tone of its expression), for education is just one of the themes the story deals with. Harish Trivedi, in the 'Foreword' to this

novella, shows that Indian writing, in the late nineteenth century, abounds in purposive texts advocating social reform. *Kanyasulkam* (Bride Price), a highly influential play in Telugu by Gurajada Apparao, *Kanya Vikraya* (Sale of Girls), a play in Kannada by Dhakeshwara Shivarao Naranappa and *Vidhava Kumari* (Virgin Widow), a Marathi novel by Mama Varerkar are some of the texts on a similar theme. Even before him, Rabindranath Tagore and Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay had published numerous works depicting the oppression and suffering of women (x).

But, Harimohan Jha in *The Bride* is more concerned about the vulnerable state of human beings possessing the inherent flaw – hypocrisy – as both the prime cause and consequence of decadence. He develops the background through conflicts between tradition and modernity, contrasts education against illiteracy, and depicts the differences in gender roles. He uses the backdrop of colonial India getting churned between the binaries of education-illiteracy, tradition-modernity, and men-women under the force of capitalist exploitation. However, he is different from the above-mentioned writers in the treatment of his story, for he uses hypocrisy as the motif to develop the plot.

This novel is an emotional roller-coaster of hilarious episodes, in which double standards of characters have been vividly depicted. Even the authorial voice, though inclined towards the bride and critical of the traditional habits of people in the first half of the story, seems to become sympathetic towards the groom and critical of the modern ways of thought towards the end. The earnestness with which Harimohan Jha articulates his reformist sentiments, organically blends the content with the form. The author's impeccable craftsmanship draws readers towards the text.

There is a letter written by the groom before he abandons the bride and runs away through the window (as the doors were locked from the outside for the newlywed couple to enjoy their privacy) on a rainy night:

Dear Revati Babu, it was unfair on your part to deceive me so blatantly.... I have reached the conclusion that your sister is not fit to be my wife.... Your sister doesn't understand literature nor can she have discussions with me on politics... my soul will be restless to share the higher pleasures with someone....

I admit that your sister could cook lunch and dinner for me. But this work can be done by a cook for five rupees a month.... She can satisfy the hunger and thirst of my body but not that of my soul.... I know it's not your sister's fault.... Your father adorned her with ornaments and worshipped her as a goddess but failed to make her erudite and proficient.... I promise to remain a lifelong celibate. As long as I live, I will strive to reform the lives of women. (152-155)

The excerpt shows that a tragedy happened to the groom in no less a degree than it happened to the bride. The Greek philosopher Aristotle says that tragedy befalls those who have a tragic flaw. Was Mishra so stupid to get persuaded? Harimohan Jha's answer is 'no'. The groom is deceived into marrying partly due to his unrealistic desire of marrying a modern woman and partly due to his lack of knowledge about the marriage rites and customs of Mithila. Buchia, for her part, suffers due to her lack of knowledge about the lifestyle of an English-educated person. The story ends with a question – who is responsible for it? This question compels the reader to analyze the situation from different perspectives. With his ironic style of narration, Harimohan Jha points out to the reader to look within, before looking for an answer outside.

Lalit Kumar's translation is eminently readable. In the words of Harish Trivedi,

“[W]hen the bridegroom lifts the bride's veil, he expects to see a real peach” – an idiomatic English phrase used by Lalit Kumar which surely matches or even exceeds whatever Maithili phrase Jha might have used. (xvi)

One of the characteristic features of *The Bride* is its multivocality – the dialogue between local and global, Maithili and English, author and translator, tradition and modernity, educated and unlettered, men and women, author and reader, translator and reader, and so on. It is indeed a timeless story. The pace of the story increases in the second half or it might be that we start getting engrossed in the story.

The book cover, designed by Amit Malhotra, is attractive enough to catch the attention of both common readers and critics. It shows a sketch art, by Aaryama Somayaji, of a bride in yellow paint with the

title of the book printed in red ink against a purple background. The three colours used have both traditional and modern connotations symbolizing the theme of the story.

Harimohan Jha wrote this story in his mother tongue language, Maithili. His decision to write in Maithili instead of English (he was a graduate in English) or Hindi (in which his contemporaries were writing) is a point worth noticing. The reason is simple; his intended readers are women. This novella is in the form of a social satire. The satire is on the condition of women in society. Women were mostly not trained in formal education, but they subscribed to the magazines available in their regional language. *Mithila Mihir*, for instance, is one such magazine mentioned in the book itself (103). This book also had a reputation of being given as a gift to newlywed brides among the Maithili-speaking people. The hypocrisy and the psychological depth of female characters, who are shown to be vulnerable and yet ignorant of their ruined situation as compared to that of men, suggests that the irony is intended more towards women than men.

The translator seems sensitive to the fact that the condition of women has improved remarkably in recent decades – the ratio of girls to boys is higher at least in English classrooms. Being a professor of English, the translator might be aware of this development. The translation successfully attempts to introduce readers to culture-specific expressions from quotidian life such as homemade eatables like ‘adauri’, ‘amaut’, and ‘patua saag’, marriage rituals like ‘chumaon’, ‘kanyadan’, and ‘naina-jogin’. This book includes a detailed ‘Introduction’ at the beginning and a brief ‘Translator’s Note’ at the end of the book to help the reader, both those belonging to the Mithila community and unfamiliar with it, to understand the background as well as the meanings of cultural expressions used in the novella. This is a great book for researchers interested in the Mithila culture and society as well as for those interested in a riveting tale.

Book Review

Max Weber. 2020. *Charisma and Disenchantment: The Vocation Lectures* (Damion Searls, Trans.). Paul Reitter & Chad Wellmon (Eds.). New York Review of Books, pp. 176.

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Charisma And Disenchantment is a concise record of the lectures given by the economic historian and sociologist Max Weber during the early years of the 20th century. These lectures were delivered in Munich upon students' requests from the Bavarian chapter of the 'Free Student Alliance'. In their introduction about the aims of these lectures, Paul Reitter and Chad Wellmon delineate the principles that underlined Weber's academic conviction, quite evidently influenced by his interpretations of the relationship between the state and modern society with a distinctive capitalist orientation. Weber's lectures draw heavily from Western Europe's past, and historical developments have been utilized at several junctures. The coexistence of disciplined practice – 'moral asceticism' – along with passion and social attitudes towards one's vocation has been espoused by him and is the driving force of his academic work. It surfaces in his lectures as well and is very difficult to overlook. In the social sciences, the scholar cannot do without moral judgments. The same condition applies to the politician's realm as well. It was seen as ideal for these values to be counterbalanced with an objective and political outlook.

In 'The Scholar's Work', Weber grapples with the changing state of affairs inside the avenues of scholarship while using explanatory aids from religious precepts. The scholar must be prepared to answer the needs of the scholarly 'calling' that he receives towards the direction of an academic profession. An unadulterated passion for scholarly life

and all that it entails must be the norm of the willing. Weber concedes that a solid profession in the realm of academia is a matter of luck. The contingencies that determine the entry of a young scholar into this field are fraught with hurdles often put forward by the administrative structures of several universities. He observes that scholars are expected to be both - good teachers and good researchers. This is a rarity, according to Weber. He goes on to explain the different academic structures of universities found in the West and compares those found in the United States and Germany, respectively. He examines the impact of having a strict scientific orientation and how science tends to be 'meaningless' as it fails to ask pertinent questions about the alternative goals that it helps people achieve. It fails to inquire about the meaning of life beset in the clutches of a disenchanting (i.e., spurring of dogma and superstition) modern nation-state. While everything can be known in the new intellectually rationalizing structures of modernity, what one chooses to know and specialize in must also go beyond societal constraints and question the meaning and ramifications of the chosen goal.

Weber had no intention of giving a monologue about the nature of politics and issues contemporaneous to his time. Like a true sociologist, he expresses his desire to reflect upon the structure of political institutions from which politics emanate(s). The modern state encompasses all these elements, and its specialized apparatuses impact the organization and execution of political activity. He traces the history of state structures found in the West and how they give way to the modern, highly specialized bureaucratic states. It is an extremely complex mechanism that depends on the exercise of authority and power to attain a more coherent (and coercive) form. It legitimizes the use of violence and virtually monopolizes it. Out of the three forms of authority described by Weber – traditional, charismatic, and legal – it is the second form that is given more time and emphasis. Dependent on the personal gift of charisma bestowed upon the political leader, charismatic authority paves the way for the emergence of a vocation solely dedicated to politics. The modern bureaucratic state, along with the modern party structure, leads to an increased dependence on civil services to carry out everyday tasks and fulfill political needs. Education and specialized training are prerequisites for entry into the bureaucracy. Benefactors of the modern state structure have counterparts in political parties as well. The political party structure was also dependent on the workings

of political officials and the journalist emerged as a type of professional politician who straddled the spaces between the ruling powers of the state and dominant political parties. There is also raging insecurity when it comes to the control of power and its distribution among other political beings. Power not only strengthens those who wield it but can make them feel vulnerable due to the demands imposed by other, smaller political entities. All of these developments are compared and contrasted with a highly developed business model found under complex capitalistic conditions. These structures started to resemble a well-oiled machine and opened the doors to ‘plebiscitary democracy’, based on mass suffrage and a need for leadership. A complex division of labor found within political edifices demands the presence of political actors who are attuned to the importance of taking responsibility for their decisions while also maintaining a distance from people and political excesses. Politicians have a duty to tell the truth and uphold the sanctity of ethics in disenchanted modern states. The alienation and incoherence experienced in life under the presence of such entities are exactly what Weber wants his audience to be aware of – a new philosophical and psychological trend that seems to have been embedded in the capitalist world order of the West during the beginning of the 20th century. Dependent on this development is modernity and the way it rationalizes everything that it holds within itself, a significant issue dealt with by Max Weber throughout his life.

If there is one major lesson that can be taken away from Max Weber’s lectures, then it is how the intermingling of different academic disciplines becomes the need of the hour to understand how societies and economies take shape. Weber has utilized history and sociology, in tandem, to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the modern society, that he found himself in. Therefore, the issues that he addressed are something that all of us must take heed of, for we, too, are the denizens of a rapidly changing modern society.

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