



AL-SHODHANA

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- ❖ Digital Media and Rural Development: A Case Study of Padupanambur Gram Panchayat in Coastal Karnataka - **Smitha Shenoy**
Rose Veera D'Souza

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Editorial

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Dr Joyce Sabina Lobo critically analyses one of India's ambitious foreign policy measures with Myanmar. The paper extensively uses documents from the Ministry of External Affairs, along with accounts related to trade and commerce. 'Act East' policy that was signed in 2014 identifies 3C's, namely commerce, connectivity and culture to boost India's relationship with Myanmar. The policy, however promising it may appear, has lost necessary focus due to skewed bilateral trade, continuous ethnic clashes, lack of investor confidence among Indian entrepreneurs, incomplete infrastructure projects etc. Despite the challenges, the paper hopes that India's soft power approach might yield positive result for both the countries in the times to come.

Advocate Rushila Rebello deals with the social problem of domestic violence against married women during the imposition of nation wide lockdown due to Covid 19 in 2020. Using the statistics from National Legal Service Authority (NLSA) and National Commission of Women (NCW) the paper highlights the seriousness of the issue that usually occurs within the four walls of the home. The researcher appeals for a multi-sectored response to eliminate the evil and argues that through civil action, legal support, political will, involvement of people belonging to education, health and judiciary the cases of domestic violence against women can be reduced.

Situating Imtiaz Dharker, primarily as a postcolonial poet, Dr Anvar Sadath studies the themes of cultural displacement and alienation that emanate in her poetry due to geographical displacement, muslim origins and gender identity. The study reveals a sustained treatment of estrangement and self abnegating awareness of half-heartedly involving herself in the places she lived in and an urge to question the status quo and transcontinental identity. The poetry of Dharker has

also been viewed as a celebration of imagined release from the clutches of androcratic order and traditions.

In the case study of Padupanambooru village panchayat, Smitha Shenoy demonstrates a considerable progressive and developmental trend in the use of digital technology in the said village panchayat. She argues that village panchayat can be more effective and efficient by using ICT tools, and calls out to build 'a digitally inclusive society' to benefit the rural population.

Analysing *Sprawl Trilogy-Neuromancer, Count Zero* and *Monalisa Overdrive* of William Gibson in the context of cyberspace, Ashwin Mendonca assesses the way Gibson's cyberpunk novels provide an imaginative framework to think about the present globalised world governed by computer technologies that have the power to transform the societies and cultures. Exploring the motif of 'cyberspace', the paper deals with the implications of technological transformations facilitated by the globally networked power relations enabled by ubiquitous electronic communications.

I profusely thank the Principal of St Aloysius College (Autonomous), Rev Dr Praveen Martis SJ for his support. I'd like to thank all the contributors and all the members of the editorial board for their continuous support in publishing this issue.

Dr Girish N
Editor-in-Chief

CONTENTS

Title	Page No
1. India's 'Act East' Policy: Strategic and Economic Reach in Myanmar <i>Joyce Sabina Lobo</i>	1-21
2. Domestic Violence against Married Women: A Serious Social issue in Contemporary Society <i>Rushila Rebello</i>	22-36
3. Negotiating the Strain of Cultural Displacement and Alienation: A Reading of Imtiaz Dharker's Select Poems <i>V P Anvar Sadhath</i>	37-51
4. Digital Media and Rural Development: A Case Study of Padupanambur Gram Panchayat in Coastal Karnataka <i>Smitha Shenoy</i> <i>Rose Veera D'Souza</i>	52-71
5. William Gibson's Sprawl Trilogy: Cyberspace as a Literary Motif <i>Ashwin Loyal Mendonca</i>	72-80

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INDIA'S 'ACT EAST' POLICY: STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC REACH IN MYANMAR

Joyce Sabina Lobo

Abstract

End of the Cold War forced India to change its perspective on foreign policy towards the east of Asia. Hence 'Look East Policy', now renamed as 'Act East Policy' was conceived. In this regard, Myanmar, the immediate neighbour and a member of the ASEAN that India calls as the 'gateway to South-east Asia' becomes the focus of this paper. As a part of this, the existing relations between India and Myanmar—commerce, connectivity and culture—is examined. The analysis intends to gauge how much India has 'acted' in terms of building strong bilateral relations and particularly in seeking to connect its border states with Naypyidaw to further connect with rest of the South-east Asian states as a part of the Act East Policy. Documents from the ministries related to foreign affairs, trade and commerce and culture are utilised while drawing on diplomatic accounts of those who have served in Myanmar. Some of the works are drawn from the think tanks that are exclusively focused on topics of connectivity, North East Region, commercial activities.

Keywords: act east, look east, commerce, connectivity, culture

Introduction

India's geopolitical location—flanked by the neighbouring countries in the north-west and the north-east and a peninsula to reckon with offers it a position and leadership that stands unparalleled with its immediate neighbours in South Asia. This is further boosted with its emerging economic status as the fastest growing economy in terms of GDP. Naturally, this lets other countries in the neighbourhood, extended neighbourhood, West or from the *Quadrilateral Security Dialogue* to expect that India plays its role of taking the lead in providing security architecture in Asia. India has exhibited grand ambitions through the announcement of policies like 'Act East', 'Link West' or as the 'net security provider' in the *Indian Ocean Region* (IOR). One that is receiving the maximum focus especially since 2018 is the 'Act East' policy. With regard to this the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has seen a yearlong activity (2017-8) that got culminated in New Delhi with a "Commemorative Summit" celebrating 25 years of bilateral ties.

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Democratic India's position of 'not being able to engage' (from 1960s due to Myanmar's isolationist policy) and 'not engaging' (especially after the 1988 uprising in Myanmar) with the authoritarian military junta-led government, has led New Delhi to 'miss' opportunities especially with an immediate neighbour and a member of the ASEAN whom it calls as the 'gateway to South-east Asia' i.e., Myanmar. The paper focuses on the relations between India and Myanmar, particularly in three areas: Commerce, Connectivity and Culture (3Cs). Though the relationship between both the countries has been diversified, the 3 Cs will be examined to draw the extent of India's reach in Myanmar in light of New Delhi's policies of 'Look East' and largely on 'Act East'.

'Act East' of India: objectives in Myanmar

Look East Policy became a major pillar of India's foreign policy which was a prudent step after India embraced globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation at the end of Cold War. The foreign policy component had heavy leaning on economic cooperation. The 'Act East Policy' of 2014 brought in other components to complement the 'Look East Policy' through political, strategic and cultural dimensions including establishment of institutional mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation, not that the other components were absent in the previous policy. However, Act East Policy intends to act in a more robust manner. In short, this new policy carries forward the role that was set through the Look East Policy. In the absence of any white paper, the Ministry of External Affairs of India in 2016 explained the principles and objectives of the policy

is to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationship with countries in the Asia-Pacific region through continuous engagement at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels thereby providing enhanced connectivity to the States of North Eastern Region with other countries in our neighbourhood.

Hence, it can be inferred that India intends to carry robust ties in all fields of bilateral as well as regional level of relations within Asia. However, the geography that the policy intends to cover under Act East Policy tilts largely from India's eastern flank to the Pacific region. The rivalry that has ensued between Beijing and New York after the rise of China has further added to the security complex

and protracted trade wars. The close relations that India shares with the USA post-Cold War leads to a new expectation. The realpolitik USA desires that New Delhi play an important role in the security architecture within Asia while containing China. India has tried as much to maintain its 'strategic autonomy' as much to avoid becoming a vehicle to deliver the foreign policy of USA in Asia. The importance that India has given in terms of the 'Act East Policy' is to the economic component that suggests as to where the current meaning of this policy lies.

Second, India has given importance to the Association for South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) 'centrality' that found reflection during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's keynote address at the Shangri La Dialogue, July 01, 2018. The Prime Minister referred to this regional organisation as "leading the process" of broad regional integration and thus laying the "foundation of the Indo-Pacific Region" (Ministry of External Affairs of India, 2018). ASEAN becomes an important link for India to connect with the South-east Asian countries both through land and sea, thus giving heft to the Act East Policy.

Third, from the above two points Look East Policy/Act East Policy are linked to the broader goal of ensuring free, open, stable, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific Region within the international system. Here definitely Southeast Asia will be at the centre of India's vision for Indo-Pacific Region with ASEAN at the core. This vision, hence guides India's idea for cooperation with South-east Asia for an architecture for peace and security within the broader region of Indo-Pacific. The October 06, 2020 Second Ministerial of the Quadrilateral or Quad meeting and also the first standalone meeting, found all the four nations (Australia, India, Japan and USA) emphasising on ASEAN's centrality to the peace, security and prosperity to the Indo-Pacific region was emphasised.

Fourth, the mechanisms and principles to realise cooperation with the countries that become part of the Act East Policy are dialogue; a democratic and common rules-based order that respects sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as equality of all nations; equal access as a right under international law to the use of common spaces on sea and in the air that would require freedom of navigation, unimpeded commerce and peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law. Most of this language finds consonance with

nations who believe in the Indo-Pacific policy, albeit in their respective terminologies— ‘free’, ‘open’, ‘inclusive’, ‘stable’, ‘secure’, or ‘prosperous’.

Fifth, as pointed, the Act East Policy is anchored more on the economic component. Hence connectivity is given more importance to enhance trade and prosperity in the region. India’s need to develop its North East Region and connect it to the Southeast countries becomes important. Connectivity via Southeast countries particularly through Myanmar can cut down distance, cost, and procedures. Trade via land routes through road and railways can bring much of the commerce through these routes. These routes will lead not only to establish physical and commercial connectivity but also social and cultural connectivity. Thus, relations will not remain bilateral in nature in the realm of foreign affairs alone, but can create long term impressions on India’s state, identity, and culture on these nations.

And lastly, India emphasises on the need for peace and dissuades the formation of alliances for sake of containment or promote great power rivalry. Therefore, the Second Ministerial Quad meeting did not see the issuance of joint declaration but separate readouts which did not refer to any particular state and especially China (though discussed) as threats. Out of the Quad members, the USA is more vociferous in pointing to China as belligerent. The 2019 Indo-Pacific Strategic Report (USA Department of Defence, 2019) echoes the 2018 National Defense Strategy and 2017 National Security Strategy of the USA by referring to China as a “revisionist” power. Therefore, it suggests that it would counter those nations upsetting the “free and open order” in the Indo-Pacific Region along with its allies and partners. However, India has refrained from such hard language or issued any white papers.

So, these various above aspects give the essence of India’s Act East Policy that today has to be understood along with India’s stance on the Indo-Pacific Region. The speech delivered by the Indian Prime Minister Modi at the Shangri La Dialogue of 2018 became a kind of blue print, in the absence of a white paper, for the enunciation of India’s policy towards East Asia.

In this context, an attempt has been made to understand Myanmar as India’s immediate neighbour and a member of the ASEAN who is called as the ‘gateway to South-east Asia’ or ‘land bridge to South-east Asia’ for New Delhi. Myanmar

becomes an important component to give necessary attention to the Act East Policy particularly in connection with Southeast Asia region.

Compatible Political Systems or Realpolitik?

The religious-ethnic ties between India and Myanmar have been there through Vaishnavism and later through Buddhism. These affinities that were established in the pre-Buddhist era would spoil with the colonisation and particularly through the divide and rule policy of the British (Malik 2016). Myanmar was ruled by Britain from 1886 to 1937. Due to the contempt in which the Burmese society looked upon the British, the latter utilized the services of Indians in administration and in the security system of Burma. Over a period of time, many Indians came to dominate not only the administrative services but also established strong business entities and owned huge swathes of land in Myanmar. This led to the impression among the Burmese that Indians, along with ethnic minorities were the reason for their domination within their own land (Malik 2016).

However, the relations between India and Myanmar even before both the nations became independent, in 1947 and 1948 respectively, were promising given the affinities between Jawaharlal Nehru and Aung San, and later between Nehru and U Nu till General Ne Win established the military rule. The like mindedness among Nehru, Aung San and U Nu held much promise for better relations not only at the bilateral level but also for the rest of Asia. However, Ne Win's coup and the isolationist policies along with aggressive nationalisation did not yield place for normal ties with a democratic India. Former Indian diplomat Rajiv Bhatia (2016, 96) says the relations since Myanmar's independence to the end of military rule before 2010 reforms were marked by "limited institutional underpinnings". This meant that relations were managed at the top leadership level without much involvement of ministries, consultation groups, summits, or joint working groups.

Myanmar's nationalisation policy under Ne Win saw the Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) losing their land, business and political-social holdings within Myanmar which resulted in their second-class citizen status. India did not interfere much during this time period. Ne Win's military ideology 'Burmese way to Socialism' and the isolationist policy that his regime followed in foreign affairs saw the

country moving away from neighbouring countries like India and from others. Unlike India, Myanmar moved away from the non-alignment movement.

Indira Gandhi's tenure as Prime Minister of India saw relations with Myanmar at the top leadership level only that was driven by realpolitik. The Chinese support to insurgency in both India and Myanmar saw the signing of 1967 border agreement and joint patrolling which included pursuit of insurgents. Though normal ties were restored to ensure counter insurgency activities between the India-Myanmar border during Indira Gandhi-Ne Win period, the political relations sank unconditionally during 1988-1992 period. India condemned the ruthless suppression of civilian protests by the military junta in 1988 and the nullification of the 1990 democratic elections.

The incidents of 1988 saw India support the pro-democracy movement within Myanmar that led to a lull in the bilateral relations till 1992. The 1988-1992 events in Myanmar brought the condemnation of the world that saw the warming of ties between Naypyidaw and Beijing. This also gave ample space for China to make huge forays into Myanmar given the deepening isolation of Myanmar that was exacerbated by Western powers in particular.

However, the post-Cold War period brought a new dawning within the Indian administrators. Political relations were reset by the then Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao through the 'Look East Policy' in 1991. This would include economic cooperation while resuming counter insurgency activities. The realpolitik of India was thus revived by PM Narasimha Rao who not only liberalised the Indian economy but tailored the Look East Policy that enabled India to open to military junta ruled state like Myanmar.

Therefore, the present configurations with Myanmar are guided by realpolitik and not completely by democratic goals. The 2017 Rohingya crisis saw India dismissing the incident as an internal matter instead of condemning or imposing sanctions on Naypyidaw. Realpolitik guides the Prime Minister Modi's government, albeit with a tendency to look at the Rohingyas from a communal angle similar to the ultra-nationalist Buddhist forces (Yhome 2018) in Myanmar's *Rakhine* state. Realpolitik took over humanitarian-democratic approach given the reasons of not letting Naypyidaw slip back into the Chinese influence, to protect the Indian companies having stake in Shwe Gas field off the coast of Rakhine State, to take

off the Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project that would connect Kolkata in India to the Sittwe Port and the north east region to South-east Asia, and the continuation of cooperation in dealing with border insurgency (Yhome 2018).

India's dealt with Myanmar through the 2015-17 Rohingya crisis keeping in mind the quasi-civilian government which resembled the democratic system emerging since the 2010 reform period. The year 2015 saw Aung San Suu Kyi's party—the National League for Democracy (NLD) win majority. India had condemned the 1988 military reprisals, the refusal of the junta to accept the 1990 electoral victory of NLD, and the house arrest of Suu Kyi. Indian administrators must have factored the time required for the quasi-civilian state to develop into a full-fledged democratic republican state. Myanmar's independence history and its political stability saw the involvement of the Burmese Independence Army (BIA) and the *Tatmadaw* (armed forces) respectively. Hence the role of the *Tatmadaw* is finely engrained within the political system of Myanmar. The current process will take some time for the firm establishment of complete civilian rule. This calculation must have gone into India's show of tolerance during the 2017 crisis to ensure that there was no role reversal from quasi-civilian to military rule.

The influence of *Tatmadaw* is there to remain for some time. Göran Therborn (1978, 242) pointed that that within the state apparatus the ruling class “ensures that its dominant positions in the economy, state apparatus and ideological superstructures are reproduced by the state”. Here, in this case, the 2008 Myanmar constitution drafted by the *Tatmadaw* under the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) was passed through a fraudulent referendum process. This constitution finds the military having a civilian cum constitutional role in governance and administration of Myanmar. Hence, institutionally, the military still controls the parliament, the ministries (Defence, Home Affairs, and Border Affairs) and the office of vice president, thus enabling the survival of the *Tatmadaw* (Croisaant and Kamerling 2013). Through this, the *Tatmadaw* has been able to ensure its dominant position through the constitution that provides for a quasi-civilian rule.

India's 'Act East Policy' replaced the 1991 'Look East Policy' and in the context of Indo-Myanmar relations anchored more in the realpolitik than idealism. Second, while supporting democratic aspirations within Myanmar, India refused

to overtly show support in favour of complete civilian rule. Third, since the adoption of 1996 Gujral Doctrine in neighbourhood policy, India has tried as to stop interfering in internal matters of its neighbours but positively engages through quiet diplomacy rather than megaphone diplomacy (Yhome 2018). Apart from the bilateral relations, India engages with Myanmar through India-ASEAN summit dialogue, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC). The institutional mechanisms like Foreign Office Consultations; National Level Meeting (NLM) at Home Secretary/ Dy. Home Minister-level is the main forum to discuss security cooperation, consular issues, drug trafficking and liaison between agencies; Regional Border Committee Meeting that discusses counter insurgency and border security; Joint Boundary Working Group; and Joint Trade Committee being the others.

When 'Act East Policy' was endorsed in 2014, the Prime Minister Modi government identified 3 Cs in India's engagement with Southeast Asia and ASEAN: commerce, connectivity and culture. The 3 Cs have to be understood along with the ideas enunciated by the Prime Minister Modi at the Shangri La Dialogue of 2018 to understand the depth of Indo-Myanmar relations.

First C: Commerce

Trade relations suffered the most when Indians in Myanmar were driven out without just compensation or return of belongings during 1962-64. The autocratic measures and isolationist policies of General Ne win led to the weakening of trade agreement that was signed in 1970.

Bilateral trade relations with Myanmar, since India's adoption of Look East Policy saw trade move from US\$ 328mn in 1997-98 to US\$ 557.6mn in 2005-06. India is the fifth largest trading partner of Myanmar. The growth rate in terms of trade has been at 5.85% in 2016-17 and 7.55% in 2018-19. There has been steady increase albeit slow and with a tendency to be more skewed since 2017. The total trade since the last three annual years has not crossed 2 billion mark (See Table 1). The introduction of quotas on pulses imported by India, and hikes in duty prices of about 40% on imports of betel nuts from Myanmar since 2016 have hindered the bilateral trade. Betel nuts are one of Myanmar's largest exports and due to the imposition of heavy duty, they are explored through illegal means into

India. The composition of trade in terms of exports from India to Myanmar is more diversified in a descending order: pharmaceutical products, iron and steel, electrical machinery and parts, vehicles and parts, sugars and sugar confectionary, etc. Edible vegetable and roots, and wood and articles of wood dominated the imports from Myanmar by more than 75% of the share (Dept. of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India). In terms of investment, India stands at 11th position with an approved investment of US\$ 771.488 million by 33 Indian enterprises as of November 2019. Myanmar’s investment in India is US\$ 8.97 Million (Ministry of External Affairs of India, 2020).

Table 1: Bilateral trade between India and Myanmar from 2015-2020 (Values in US\$ billion)

Annual year	India’s Export	India’s Import	Total trade	Growth (%)
2015-16	1.07	0.98	2.05	NA
2016-17	1.11	1.07	2.17	5.85
2017-18	0.97	0.64	1.60	-26.17
2018-19	1.21	0.52	1.73	7.55
2019-20	0.97	0.55	1.52	-11.93

Source: Dept. of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Govt. of India

As pointed, ‘Look East Policy’ since 1991 and now the ‘Act East Policy’ favour the Southeast Asian region with enduring focus on ASEAN centrality. India and ASEAN trade amounts to US\$87 billion in 2019-20 which is small compared to China’s US\$ 641 bn (Global Times, 2020), Japan’s US\$ 214 bn (Alberti, 2020), the EU’s US\$ 280 bn (ASEAN, 2020), etc. Within ASEAN, Myanmar is the seventh trading partner of India yielding the sixth position to Philippines since 2017 (See Table 2). This clearly proves that Myanmar does not appear to be a significant neighbouring country for India even within the ASEAN given the data in Tables 1 and 2. Rajiv Sikri (2009) calls Myanmar ‘a somewhat underrated neighbour’.

India’s trade with ASEAN and particularly with Myanmar within this association depicts that Myanmar as the gateway to Southeast Asia sounds as a rhetoric. However, given the disparate political systems and the kind of economic models

that both nations established, the trade relations could not have been robust. The long spell of military rule with autarkic measures and isolationist policies endorsed by the junta did much disfavour to the commercial relations. Therefore, the blame on India having missed opportunities would be entirely unjust if Myanmar is not equally or held more liable.

Table 2: India’s total trade with ASEAN member states (2015-2020) (Values in US \$ billion)

Annual year	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Singapore	15.03	16.65	17.67	27.85	23.67
Indonesia	15.95	16.92	20.40	21.13	19.19
Malaysia	12.79	14.16	14.71	17.25	16.15
Vietnam	7.83	10.11	12.83	13.70	12.34
Thailand	8.50	8.55	10.79	11.88	11.09
Philippines	1.90	1.98	2.46	2.32	2.05
Myanmar	2.05	2.17	1.60	1.73	1.52
Brunei	0.58	0.67	0.50	0.65	0.64
Laos	0.22	0.23	0.19	0.04	0.28
Cambodia	0.20	0.14	0.18	0.24	0.23
Total	65.05	71.58	81.33	96.79	87.16

Source: Dept. of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Govt. of India

However, certain aspects have to be kept in mind to show that a robust bilateral trade is not the only indicator to prove that relations are deep. The border problems, ethnic problems, connectivity issues etc have to be connected to understand the depth of Indo-Myanmar economic relations in the context of ‘Act East Policy’.

As part of ‘Act East Policy,’ Myanmar is the only country within ASEAN which has a connected and long land border of over 1643 kms with contiguous states of India—Arunachal (520 km), Nagaland (215 km), Manipur (398 km) and Mizoram

(510 km) and 725-km maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal. Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram are part of the North East Region. The international border between India and Myanmar was laid through India–Burma Boundary Agreement of March 10, 1967. While few aspects like disagreements on the alignment of the border (Das 2018) and the nine unresolved Boundary Pillars (BP) along the India-Myanmar Border in Manipur sector remain (Ministry of External Affairs of India 2013). Das (2018, 580) points out that the international border between both countries is porous and “cuts across the sociocultural and economic landscape of the region” leaving many communities like Nagas, Kukis, Mizos, etc “to live as citizens of two different countries”. Hence through the Free Movement Regime (FMR) both nations have tried to accommodate the ‘single socio-economic space’ (Das 2018) of the ethnic people divided on border lines. The difficult terrain in addition to lack of transportation and communication has led to underdevelopment of the areas and as drug transit route. Insurgents indirectly support drug trade by providing transit protection (Das 2018).

Arms that form the core of insurgents fight against the Indian state are procured largely from China, Thailand, Cambodia and even through insurgent groups in Myanmar (Das 2018). Officially, Moreh in Manipur, Zokhawthar in Mizoram and Pangsau Pass in Arunachal Pradesh allow cross border traffic of people and goods. Peoples’ movement is also facilitated through Free Movement Regime (FMR) that accommodates the socio-ethnic relations across the border through relaxations on visa and passport restrictions.

Border trade was established for the first time in 1995 between both countries which has been carried in informal manner through barter trade and traditional/free exchange apart from normal trade. Through this the governments on both sides accommodated the economic space along with Free Movement Regime (FMR). Border trade grew from US\$ 1.19mn in 2011-12 to US\$ 24.3mn in 2014-15 through normal trade. Border trade was shifted from barter trade to normal trade by the Reserve Bank of India in 2015 due to the establishment of banking system and diversification of commodities. Since this policy came into effect, trade plummeted to US\$ 0.02mn in 2017-18 largely due to increase in documentation and custom duties on imports from Myanmar (Taneja, N et al, 2019).

Also, discrepancies are reported in trade statistics that show variation between Landing Custom Stations (LCS) at Moreh and Zokhawthar, Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S under India and Ministry of Commerce), and Government of Myanmar. For example, for 2017-18, India reported US\$0.02mn, LCS at two points as US\$0.4mn while Myanmar reported it as US\$91mn as normal trade at the borders (Taneja, N et al, 2019).

Apart from these issues, smuggling of contraband articles, forest products, and essential products has taken place through the border trade routes (Das 2018) and continues to do so. Streamlining of procedures is required on both sides. The integrated check post (ICP) at Moreh (Manipur) that was inaugurated in January 2019 is yet to take off the formal trade that does not find similarities on the Myanmar side at Tamu. The ICP modernises custom clearance, foreign currency exchange, immigration clearance etc and India is currently assisting Myanmar in constructing the modern ICP at Tamu.

The drawbacks in restrictive border-trade policy framework along with “poor connectivity, lack of quality infrastructure at border crossing points, limited trade financing instruments and rampant extortion of informal/side payments” (Taneja, N et al, 2019, p. 15) stifles the border trade.

Second C: Connectivity

Trade between India and Myanmar has been slow and askew both at the border and otherwise, with connectivity and upgraded border administration it can be turned around. However, the terrain and ethnic clashes have led to the under-development of the land border areas of India and Myanmar. Connectivity between ethnic groups of North East Region and Myanmar has been established through the Free Movement Regime (FMR) regime. FMR has accommodated social and economic linkages by relaxing visa and passport restrictions for specified distance, hours, and luggage/goods that can be carried (Das 2018).

India wants to connect India’s North East Region with other ASEAN countries in South-east Asia and thus connect its ‘Act East Policy’ with its perception of Indo-Pacific policy. According to the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCIS) under the Government of India, more than 90% of the total

trade between India and Myanmar is seaborne while airborne is about 8% and less than 1% through the land route (Taneja N et al, 2019).

When it comes to land route, the India-Myanmar Friendship Road starting from Moreh/Tamu to Kyigone and Kalewa is in good condition which is not the same from Kalewa to Mandalay within Myanmar. The completion of four laning of Imphal-Moreh Section of NH-39 (NH-102) from km 330 to km 350 km will lead to better trade facilitation and increase the vehicle speed (De, Dash and Kumarasamy 2020) by four to six times the current speed. India is upgrading 69 bridges and approach roads on the Tamu-Kyigone-Kalewa (TKK) road section of 150 km. It is constructing the 120-km Kalewa-Yagyi road to the highway standard. These two projects India has undertaken connects Moreh to Kalewa and Kalewa to Yagyi. Apart from land acquisitions, lack of cooperation from state departments (De, Dash and Kumarasamy 2020), insurgency, (Das, 2018), steep gradients and sharp curves become the impediments for expediting the works. For upgrading of bridges, contractor problems along with assessment and revision of technical and cost parameters are yet to be ascertained. From Mandalay this will connect with Mae Sot in Thailand as part of the 1,360-km India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) trilateral highway. The trilateral highway project, inaugurated in 2001, when completed will connect North East Region of India with Southeast Asia while enhancing border trade and trade in general in the ASEAN-India Free Trade Area. India attempts to connect the IMT trilateral highway to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. This will boost also the Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) that comprises all these five countries (Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam) along with India. The signing of Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) and its operationalisation between India, Myanmar and Thailand will cut down cost and time involved in transshipment process.

There is no direct railway connectivity between both countries. As part of this India is attempting to complete railway line from Jiribam (Assam) to Imphal (Manipur) by 2020 while the survey work on Imphal-Moreh-Tamu Kalay stands completed. This comes under the Trans Asian Railway Network (TARN) under the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP). If these lines are completed then Assam would be connected with Yangon in Myanmar.

The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (KMMTTP) is an important project, started in 2008 under the 'Look East Policy' of the United Progressive Alliance government, that connects India with Myanmar through sea and land routes. This will connect India via sea from Kolkata to Sittwe seaport in Myanmar to Paletwa town to the India-Myanmar border and then to Mizoram's Lawngtlai. This 930km journey reduces the distance of 1880 km that connects Kolkata to Mizoram via Siliguri Corridor. The last phase of the Kaladan project is to connect Paletwa to Zoripui in south Mizoram. The work here is affected both India and Myanmar that face issues of forest and environment clearances, compensations, local political unrests, insurgencies, extortion, harsh geographical realities, incessant rains etc (Datta 2020). The project runs through the Rakhine state that witnesses clashes between the Tatmadaw and the insurgents from the Arakan Army. Also fuel and spare parts including machinery comes from distant places of India. The covid 19 pandemic has also added to the recent problems in the form of labour that comes from different parts of India (Bhattacharyya 2020).

India within its North East Region has to improve and expedite connectivity that will in turn bolster the economy of the region. The economy is largely service driven that accounts for 62% of North East Region's GDP while agriculture accounts 27% and industry only 10% (De, Dash and Kumarasamy 2020). There is a need to build large-scale industries that can utilise the rich resources of the North East Region. Without these changes like physical and institutional infrastructural changes which includes logistics and industrial cum transport corridors, the 'Act East Policy' will not reach its true strategic and economic depths. Neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and especially Myanmar that connects with the Southeast Asian states will not find India attractive economically and connectivity-wise.

Improvement of border infrastructure has been pointed by those dealing with studies related to North East region with neighbouring countries. Also, the North East region per se needs to improve and invest in physical and institutional infrastructure, capital accumulation and technological progress (De, Dash and Kumarasamy 2020). If such improvement is not attained in a piecemeal fashion, then the contraband articles procured from China and Thailand will continue to pass the borders bringing no commercial gain to India. Much of the contraband

articles that cross from Myanmar to India are goods coming from China or Thailand using the Indian border routes. The manufacturing base needs to be strengthened within North East Region while improving infrastructure that can facilitate smooth transport of people and goods from other parts of India through this region. India therefore has to factor along with the leaders of the North East Region the impact of China's trade prowess and its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in order to promote the formers' interest while countering the latter's. Also, the Southeast Asian states may look at relations with India as a comparison with countries (Blank 2016) such as China, Japan or Thailand.

Third C: Culture

India and Myanmar have had close linkages of trade, maritime, religion due to the shared affinity in the form of geography, Buddhism, culture and ethnicity long since. The Indian influences of Vaishnavism were long felt before Buddhism made its permanent entry into Myanmar's society (Malik 2016; and Bhatia 2016). However, there is a yawning gap in these affinities since the British colonisation to independence of both nations stretching into the Cold War period without being antagonist to each other's interest. The British rule over Myanmar particularly erased the cultural ties that were present since early period, leading to a cultural disconnect between 18th and 20th centuries. This got overextended with the isolationist and the severe socialist policies that Myanmar adopted since 1960.

The cultural component of bilateral relations between India and Myanmar saw manifestation through usual activities such as cultural exchanges when normal relations were reset in the 1990s. The 'Act East Policy' continues the trajectory of the 'Look East policy' by giving it a cumulative effect in all areas of bilateral relations. The 'Look East Policy' was tailored to respond to the harsh realities of structural changes brought about by the post-Cold War. And the consequent economic systemic change in India led New Delhi in not only having diversified partners but also in conducting consistent, composite and enhanced relations.

Under the 'Act East Policy', we see the continuation of relations in a consistent manner while new aspects like cultural diplomacy got new moorings between both India and Myanmar. Connectivity with Myanmar got enhanced that accommodated the social space by enabling traffic of people and trade across

the borders to a certain distance. In this manner ethnic groups could continue their social and cultural ties.

However, cultural ties or cultural diplomacy could not take deep roots. Today Buddhism is Myanmar's state religion and India being a majoritarian Hindu state practices a secular policy. Buddhism does not give the Indian state any identity other than historical connection of the land of its birth. However, the 'Act East Policy' of 2014 is a continuation of the 'Look East Policy' regime led by the Congress Party and initiated by the then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao. This saw the involvement of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) conducting major restoration projects across Asia. The 'Act East Policy' led by the Bharata Janata Party (BJP) continues this cultural diplomacy wherein it has added the 3 Cs (commerce, connectivity and culture) in terms of cooperation. Under the 'Act East Policy', India's involvement in Myanmar continues in restoration works. For example, restoration of Ananda Temple and the five Pagodas at Bagan that belong to the 11-13th centuries.

India can contemplate on creating cultural circuits outside India. It can connect Buddhist religious/pilgrim places of India to Myanmar (Maini 2017). Already Buddhist circuits have been established within India. With the railway line connecting India and Myanmar and the road connecting North East Region with Mandalay right up to the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway can revive historical-religious-cultural ties.

Conclusion

Despite the creation of 'Look East/Act East' policies, the engagement with Myanmar has lost the necessary focus. This is largely due to the weak trade at the border and the skewed bilateral trade with delays in connectivity projects on the both sides. India has often utilised its narrative of sharing deep 'cultural ties', 'civilizational relationship', 'shared history' or 'common heritage' in explaining its present relations with countries in the neighbourhood and the extended neighbourhood. This may not be the way states like Myanmar look towards India. Myanmar's interest in India is only restricted to economics and security concerns (Blank 70). Hence, there is a 'great expectation' in the form of funds building infrastructure through aid. India today provides these by going one step further by constructing shelter homes in the Rakhine state for the displaced people. This

is in a way of assuaging the ethnic tensions within the Myanmar state without condemning the quasi- civilian regime.

There are several aspects that need attention in terms of strengthening relations between India and Myanmar. It needs to build investor confidence among Indian private entrepreneurs in Myanmar. Also border trade requires more land custom stations that are in the form of integrated check posts (ICP) to facilitate better border trade while easing procedures which curtails distance, time and resources. This can counter the passage of contraband articles, drugs, etc.

Also expediting the setting of border *haats* or markets/bazaars on the lines of Indo-Bangladesh would help in the economic development of both border areas generating employment and income. The signing of Motor Vehicle Agreement by Myanmar will enable free passage of persons and goods without transshipment between countries like India, Nepal, and Bangladesh. Here India needs to pursue the early conclusion with Myanmar on the agreement.

While work on different projects like Kaladan project, trilateral highway along with improvisation of border infrastructure is ongoing, more focus is required in the area of activating railway lines connecting the neighbouring countries not only in terms of freight, but also passengers. So far, it is available only with Bangladesh. India like China needs to provide assistance to these countries and particularly to Myanmar, being a least developed economy, to construct railway line to connect with the rest of Myanmar and with Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. This is a tall order considering that apart from financial resources, internal or domestic constraints in the form of precarious geographical conditions, ethnic tensions, land and contract problems, etc have to be considered along with political will on both sides. So, expecting India to achieve the goals of 'Act East' policy sounds unfair when it is dealing with a state whose political-economic system is different. The isolationist policy along with the hostility that Myanmar faced after the 1988 uprising aided the robust relations between Naypyidaw and Beijing. India has to take into consideration China's strong and competing presence in Myanmar.

The uprising of Nagas (1956), Manipuris (1964), Mizos (1966) were followed by Hmars, Kukis, Bodos, Assamese, etc. has created ethnic clashes that have led to great insecurity within both nations. The provision of FMR arrangement between

India and Myanmar has indirectly facilitated Indian insurgents from adjoining north eastern states enter Myanmar “to receive training in arms, establish safe havens and re-enter India to carry out subversive attacks” (Das, 2018: 581). Mostly Indian insurgents have settled in the Sagaing region and the border of China. China has established better relationship with the insurgent groups of India and Myanmar with the ulterior motive of spreading Maoist-Communist ideology. The counter-insurgency operations require military support to Myanmar from India in the form of arms and training.

What is positive to note about India is that despite not criticising Myanmar for the Rohingya crisis, it is indirectly tackling the problem. It is working on the socio-economic development of the Rakhine state through the ‘Rakhine State Development Programme’ that was signed soon after the crisis started to unfold. For instance, the building of pre-fabricated houses and relief materials for displaced persons, the proposal to build training centres so that people in the Rakhine state find employability in the upcoming industries etc. This work is in progress as part of long-term solution to bring peace and stability in the Rakhine state if connectivity projects have to remain stable and successful.

The success of ‘Look East’ or ‘Act East Policy’ depends not on how quick these are achieved. These policies are carved in the national interest of India. They will take a long time to achieve. These policies, especially in the context of Indo-Myanmar relations, have not remained commercial alone, but components relating to peace and stability are being worked between both countries in a piecemeal fashion. The component relating to connectivity is gaining traction as the projects arrive a point of conclusion. However, the cultural component is yet to make its mark. The same three components along with the overall bilateral relations have to be built with countries in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Far East in terms of the ‘Act East Policy’. So far, the three areas of Commerce, Connectivity and Culture are not on the lines of what Joseph Nye, political scientist, would call as soft power approach. India has attempted fledgling steps in this direction. The tough competition in Myanmar in terms of India’s soft power approach is from China which has made steady forays into the Myanmar society, the military and the government. India has tried to understand the predicament

of the nascent democratic government under Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy within Myanmar and strike a balance with the Tatmadaw.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST MARRIED WOMEN: A SERIOUS SOCIAL ISSUE IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Rushila Rebello

Abstract

Domestic violence has been one of the most overlooked social problems. It is often ignored, thinking it to be a private issue to be dealt with behind closed doors. However, abusing a partner is never a private matter. It is a major social concern. The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of the endemic problem of domestic violence, in particular, domestic violence against married women. This research paper has been classified into three major sections namely; Domestic violence against married women: A serious social issue, Domestic violence against married women; A contemporary social problem amidst the nationwide lockdown imposed due to COVID-19 and Social factors contributing to the social evil of domestic violence against married women. This paper also highlights the underreporting of the incidences of domestic violence and recommends having an effective multi-sectoral response to domestic violence which would help women to enjoy their full human rights and freedom in a contemporary democratic India.

Keywords: domestic violence, married women, social issue, socialization, underreporting.

Introduction

Domestic violence is a broader term and focuses on violence within the domestic sphere, including relationships 'such as' between, roommates, parent-child, siblings, cohabitating partners or intimate partners, and married couples. Domestic violence is essentially violence perpetrated by persons in intimate family relationships. Women are vulnerable to this violence at all stages of life. This type of gender-based violence mostly occurs in the private sphere- within families, inside homes and out of sight. Although domestic violence implies the use of physical force to harm someone in the family by another member of the family, in this article, it refers to any form of violence by an intimate partner or by other family members against married women (Chauhan, 2003).

Definitions of Domestic Violence

The World Health Organization (WHO) considers family and intimate partner abuse as any form of interpersonal violence which causes physical, psychological or sexual harm. Acts of abusive behaviour include:

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(a) Physical aggression—hitting, kicking, beating; (b) Psychological abuse—intimidation, belittling and humiliating; (c) Sexual abuse—forced intercourse and sexual coercion; and (d) Controlling— isolation, restriction of movements and access to family, friends, information or support (Women’s Commission, 2006).

The most comprehensive legal definition covering marital violence is that proposed in the “Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005”. As per this Act domestic violence includes, “any act, omission or commission or conduct of the respondent shall constitute domestic violence in case it:

(a) Harms or injures or endangers the health, safety, life, limb or wellbeing, whether mental or physical, of the aggrieved person or trend to do so and includes causing physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse; or (b) Harasses, harms, injures or endangers the aggrieved person with a view to coerce her or any other person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any dowry or other property or valuable security; or (c) Has the effect of threatening the aggrieved person or any person related to her by any conduct mentioned in Clause (a) or Clause (b); or (d) Otherwise injures or causes harm, whether physical or mental, to the aggrieved person” (Bare Act, 2019).

Domestic Violence against Married Women: A Serious Social Issue

Traditionally the home has been idealized as a place of safety and security. The relationships between members of the family were also idealized as respectful and supportive. However, the reality is quite different, studies suggest that domestic violence is not unusual or an exception to normal private family life; the vast majority of crimes against women occur in the home and are usually committed by a spouse or relative in the form of murder, battery, or rape; and, domestic violence is endemic to all societies (Thomas & Beasley, 1993). Therefore the concept of ‘home, sweet home’ is no more since many married women suffer violence against themselves by the members of their family. The battering of various forms occurs within the four walls of the house. The issue of violence in the home has been a complex and troubling issue for women making the family a site of great vulnerability for married

women. Although both men and women can be abused, in most cases, the victim is a woman. Research from several parts of the world indicates that the perpetrators of domestic violence are predominantly male on his female sexual partner (Mitchell & Hodson, 1983).

Singh, K. & Singh, A. (2017) explains that domestic violence is a form of harassment of married women by way of physical and psychological abuse from the in-laws or husbands inside and usually it happens among the women who are normally staying in the in-laws' house. A large number of women in India are suffering these kinds of abuse on a long-term basis and they are suffering various types of abuse without complaining to the authorities who are capable enough to take the right action against the abusers. The victim is always binding up with the psychological attachment towards her husband and in-laws, moreover the concern towards the future of children. Steinmetz & Straus (1973) described the family as "cradle of violence". Straus drawing from incidences of violence between spouses called "the marriage license as a hitting license".

Chauhan (2003) points out that the issue of domestic violence is not peculiar to any particular part of the world. It occurs in both developed and developing countries. It also cuts across societies, regardless of age, wealth, geographical location among others. In recent years there has been increasing concern about gender-based violence in general, and domestic violence in particular, in both developed and developing countries. Research by the United Nation Population Fund shows that domestic violence is a problem throughout the world (UNFPA, 2005). Singh, K. & Singh, A., (2017) asserts that domestic violence against women is a universal social problem. Prior to 1970, domestic violence was both, a legally and socially acceptable practice, as such considered a private matter. Domestic violence is no longer viewed as just a family matter, but as a serious crime, which holds enormous consequences for both the survivor and society. As a result, of which criminal justice legislation was designed to address the issues of domestic violence. The problem of domestic violence is pervasive in virtually all countries, cultures, ethnic and racial groups, social classes, religious groups, socio-economic groups, as well as within heterosexual, lesbian and gay relationships (Sumter, 2006). It is the most common form of violence against women and is evident, to some degree, in every society in the world (Kozma & Dauer, 2001). According to Grover (2010) domestic violence is

the most universal, yet one of the most invisible forms of violence against women. No country or society is free of domestic violence. The patterns and trends may vary across regions and countries. Many women believe that such violence is “normal” and “inevitable”.

According to the analysis of domestic violence myths, violence against women recognizes no social and economic differences. It happens everywhere and on all social levels and groups. Apart from that, women’s education also makes no difference when it comes to violence. Women’s professions do not change their partner’s violent behaviour. These mentioned myths characterize all states around the globe and domestic violence exists in all countries in the world (Cejvanovic, Kovacevic, Grgic, Maksimovic & Miletic, 2015). Sararwat (2009) asserts that if violence against women in the home is inherent in all societies, then it can no longer be dismissed as something private and beyond the scope of state responsibility. It is a global issue reaching across national boundaries as well as socio-economic, cultural, racial and class distinctions. It is the most common form of violence against women. It affects women across the life span from the sex-selective abortion of female fetuses to forced suicide and abuse and is evident in every society in the world.

The Magnitude of Problem

The United Nations estimate that globally between 20% and 50% of women have at some point been the victim of physical violence inflicted by their (male) partner (Bonnet, and Whittaker, 2015).

The World Health Organization, in its first ‘World Report on Violence and Health’ in 2002, revealed that between 40 percent and 70 percent of women who die due to homicide are killed by current or former partners (Amirthalingam, 2005). World Health Organization (WHO) (2004) estimates that one in three women worldwide will suffer from violence during their lifetime. The Council of Europe Europe’s leading human rights organization has shown that 12-15 percent woman in Europe faces violence in the home every day. Therefore It is one of the most widespread violations of human rights worldwide and must be combated (Singh, K. & Singh, A., 2017). In European countries, domestic violence is a major cause of death and disability for

women ages 16 to 44 years and accounts for more deaths than cancer or traffic accidents (Davis, 2013).

Evidence from developing countries suggests that anywhere from 10% to 60% of married women of reproductive age report having ever experienced some form of domestic violence, with some of the highest recorded levels coming from South Asia (Stephenson, Koenig & Ahmed, 2006). According to the United Nation Press report two-thirds of married Indian women are victims of domestic violence. Seventy percent of married Indian women between the ages of fifteen and forty-nine were proven victims of ugly incidences like rape, beating, forced or coerced sex and each incident of domestic violence led to the loss of seven working days for a woman in India. The study found that the percentage of domestic violence that is pervasive in rural India is 42.9 and urban India is 32.7 (Barik, 2011; Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, & Ellsberg, et al., 2006). International Institute for Population Sciences (2017) reports, approximately one out of every three women in India report experiencing violence at the hands of their spouse at some point in their lifetime.

The National Health Family Survey (NFHS-4) conducted in the year 2015-16, surveyed 572,000 households in 640 districts of India (as per the 2011 Census). NFHS-4 covered all 29 States and 7 Union Territories in India. According to the NFHS -4 data, every third woman in India suffers sexual or physical violence at home. It brings havoc on women's physical, mental, and emotional health. The NFHS-4 data reveals that 26% of urban poor women are more prone to domestic violence by their spouses, partners, or other relatives as compared to 12% in better-off urban women (Ravichandran, Shah, Ravichandran, 2020). An article on "Domestic violence tops crime against women in 2018: NCRB" published in Outlook on 9 January 2020, sheds light upon the data released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for 2018 which reveals that domestic violence against women is the top gender-related crime. As per the data, a total of 89,097 cases related to crimes against women was registered across India in 2018. Out of the total crimes registered under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) against the women, the majority of the cases were registered under the "cruelty by husband or his relatives" at 31.9 per cent. This shows that in India, the actual prevalence of domestic violence against women is high.

Domestic Violence against Married Women: A Contemporary Social Problem amidst the Nationwide Lockdown Imposed Due To Covid-19

Stay Home, Stay Safe; this slogan is trending everywhere during the Covid-19 pandemic. But, for many women around the world, staying at home is no longer a safety aspect. Globally, several countries like United States, United Kingdom, France, China, and India have reported an increase in domestic violence during this Covid-19 pandemic. The United States National Domestic Violence Hotline received about 2,000 calls during this lockdown. On April 6, 2020, United Nation chief António Guterres insisted the countries take steps on addressing the horrifying global surge in domestic violence that occurred as a result of lockdown.

The implementation of lockdown to combat with this pandemic has documented a profound impact on the entire human environment. Domestic violence due to lockdown in India as well as all over the world has emerged as a big public health threat. The implementation lockdown due to the outbreak of COVID-19 not only restricted the spreading of infection but also a new public health crisis has appeared as a negative consequence of lockdown that is Domestic Violence. It was well documented that domestic violence has increased in many COVID-19 affected countries such as Germany, Italy, Brazil, China, USA, UK respectively. In India also, several domestic violence cases have been reported during the lockdown period. As per the report published by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2013, about 35 % of women of the world are subjected to violence by their life partners or husbands. More than 80,000 women killed in 2017 and most of them were violated by intimate or family members. But after the implementation of lockdown, domestic violence increased extensively across the world. But still, now very few studies have been performed to assess the impact of lockdown on domestic violence. In many reports, newspapers, organizations, it was well-demarcated that the rates of domestic violence have increased after a lockdown in India. According to recent data of the National Legal Service Authority (NLSA), the rates of domestic violence have increased all over the nation after lockdown (Das, Das & Mandal, 2020).

Bodh (2020) points out that during the lockdown due to COVID 19 pandemic, many instances of domestic violence/abuse are being reported in Himachal

Pradesh since the perpetrator and the victim have confined in the same physical space. The number of domestic violence cases has witnessed a spurt in Punjab after the curfew was imposed from March 23. Manisha Gulati, the chairperson of the Punjab women commission, said the commission has received at least 22 complaints through email since the curfew came into effect. The complaints being received by the commission are from well-educated women. In the capital city of India, Delhi, it has been reported that about 2500 women calls have been received from emergency helpline number out of which 600 calls have been classified as women's abuse, 23 calls have been recorded as rapes and most of the calls 1612 have been accounted as domestic violence (Verma, 2020). As per NALSA's report, the maximum number of domestic violence cases have been received from Uttarakhand (144) followed by Haryana (79), Delhi (63) respectively. The crimes against women have increased by 21 % and out of these 700 cases have been reported as domestic violence. The crimes against women have increased from 4,709 to 5,695 since March and the domestic violence cases have increased from 3,287 to 3,993 during lockdown (Das, Das & Mandal, 2020).

The National Commission of Women (NCW) reported that the cases of domestic violence had doubled during lockdown compared to pre-lockdown days. Between March 23 and April 16, the commission received 239 complaints, mainly through email and WhatsApp number messages. The most important reason for domestic violence is domestic labour. During the lockdown, there is a clustering of all the family members at home. The burden of household chores falls under the women's shoulders. There is more work at home and if the chores are not divided between family members, puts pressure on the women. The men either don't go to work or have lost jobs during this time leading to poverty, frustration, and violence. Not only men but, women also lose their jobs during this lockdown, further increasing the chances of getting abused. Some alcoholic husbands don't get alcohol during this time and due to that frustration, they abuse the women in an intimate relationship. Most of the times, it is the husband who is responsible for the violence which can be either physical (27%) or emotional (13%) (Ravichandran, Shah, Ravichandran, 2020).

Social Factors Contributing To the Social Evil of Domestic Violence against Married Women

Domestic abuse is a social ill, understood to be rooted in the historical inequalities between men and women and recognised as an obstacle to equality, development and safety (Thiara & Gill, 2010). Thus factors that perpetuate domestic violence are vast which have their roots in the socio-cultural value system, political and administrative environment and traditional patriarchal familial relationships. Women are considered inferior in Indian society. They are always considered as physically & emotionally weaker than males. Any traditional custom that places women in a subordinate position within a society or the family has the potential to turn violence (Bhattacharya, 2004).

Bag (1999) states that the process of socialization always aims at reinforcing the values justifying and strengthening the power relations in the social system. Women are expected to conform to society's ideals. In almost every society, the husband enjoys a higher status than the wife. Social pressures force women to maintain the status quo. A woman who does not accept the traditional role of submissiveness and subordination needs to be tamed into accepting this position and any means especially violence is justified in achieving this goal. Women themselves are passive victims (Saxena, 1995). All too often women believe it is a sign of commitment, an expression of love, to endure unkindness or cruelty, to forgive and forget. There is a legitimization of intra-familial violence and the victimization of women. The Indian society is a traditional society where women have been socially, economically, physically, psychologically and sexually exploited, sometimes in the name of religion, sometimes on the pretext of writings in the scriptures and sometimes by social sanctions. In this cultural context, domestic violence is regarded as 'natural' or as part of a woman's fate.

Visaria (2000) in her article 'Violence against women: A field study' mentions that male patriarchy is defined as a system of male dominance legitimated within the family and the society through superior rights, privileges, authority and power. It involves socialisation of women into subordinate positions, and of men into thinking that they are superior to women and have a right to control women's behaviour. This process of socialization leads both men and women to internalise

their respective positions within the society and define their role vis-à-vis the other sex. The powerlessness of women stems from such a process of socialization, which ultimately leads to violence and the inability of women to defend themselves. Indian girls, who are brought up in cultures where sons are favoured, contributes to women accepting beatings at the hands of their husbands. Low esteem is also reflected in the behaviour of women who are socialised to serve others first and accept themselves as receiving or deserving the lowest priority even in the most basic expenditures on food and healthcare. Indian women have internalised inferiority to such an extent that some even feel that they deserve to be beaten when they have done something wrong, such as not cooked meals on time or cooked them badly. Women, therefore, accept beatings as part of their subservient roles.

In their book titled “Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse”, Yllo & Bograd (1988) stated that social structural factors leading to wife abuse and maintaining wife abuse at the personal level. According to them, the social structure contains two analytically distinct elements:

1. Social organization, or the patterns of relationships among groups, and
2. Culture, or the norms and values guiding behaviour.

Yllo & Bograd (1988) further mentions domestic violence as a pattern that becomes understandable only through an examination of the social context. The society is structured along the dimension of gender. Men as a class wield power over women. As the dominant class, men have differential access to important material and symbolic resources, while women are devalued as secondary and inferior. The reality of domination at the social level is the most crucial factor contributing to and maintaining wife abuse at a personal level.

Under Reporting of Domestic Violence against Married Women

According to Harwin, Hague & Malos (1999) the incidences of domestic violence are difficult to measure, by the very nature of domestic violence. Offences often have no witnesses or other corroboration and many women for various reasons do not or cannot tell others about their experiences thus promoting and maintaining a ‘culture of silence’. This type of violence is unreported and even

deliberately disguised by both the survivors and society. Singh, K. & Singh, A. (2017) asserts that it is difficult to measure the actual extent of domestic violence. It may be much higher than what the reports indicate because many incidents of domestic violence against women are not reported. The research studies and survey conducted by individuals generally produce higher estimates of violence than official records. However, they are also assumed to undermine the actual extent of domestic violence against women. For a variety of reasons women fail to report violence that takes place in the family, however, various studies highlight the enormity of the problem.

Khuraijam (2017) points out that domestic violence is almost always shrouded and concealed by the myth of 'family privacy'. Even the victims of such violence hesitate to speak about it and seek redress because they find it humiliating and disrespectful. Women have been conditioned into playing their accepted submissive role by the socialization process. Domestic violence is part of this scenario of upholding socially sanctioned norms and practices. Karp, Marwah & Manchanda (2015) states that underreporting tends to occur because women are hesitant to approach the police, feel inhibited by social mores, or fear demands for bribes or abusive treatment. Police may be uninterested or unwilling to investigate allegations and are often under pressure to suppress the reported crime rates of their districts. The resulting underreporting has been widely acknowledged, including by an official of the National Crimes Record Bureau.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Domestic violence is a multifaceted and disturbing problem which occurs within the four walls of the home, unseen to the outside world. It is the establishment of control and fear in a relationship through violence and other forms of abuse. Chauhan's (2003) study reveals that domestic violence has emerged as a serious human rights threat to women in every society rich and poor, developing and industrialized. It makes a serious impact on the quality of human life and broader development. Domestic violence infringes upon an individual's right to life, to the security of the person, and to freedom from torture, cruel, or inhuman and degrading treatment (The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2002). Kozma & Dauer (2001) asserts that domestic violence is torture. States that fail to take basic steps to protect women from domestic violence or allow

these crimes to be committed with impunity are failing in their obligation to protect women from torture.

Krizsan, Bustelo, Hadjiyanni and Kamoutsi (2007) points out that according to the 'Failing State Frame', violence against women is considered an issue of public responsibility and relates to the organization of citizenship since violence threatens the institutions of democracy. This frame strongly argues for domestic violence being a public matter that has to be addressed as such by the state. The state and its different branches, including different ministries and departments, police, the judiciary, child-care, healthcare, and welfare administrators and educators, are seen to fail in recognizing the problem, handling the problem, and preventing the problem from reoccurring. Part of this failure is explained by ignorance and a lack of information, and inadequate communication, cooperation, and coordination are also seen to cause the problem.

It is shameful for the states that fail to prevent it and societies that tolerate it. It is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position when compared with men. Even though women's organizations, feminists and researchers have initiated paradigm shifts in understanding and ending domestic violence against married women in India, it remains one of the worst forms of oppression faced by women. Prevention of gender-based violence will require innovative approaches. Domestic violence prevention requires more focus on the research, policy, and programme levels. It must be eliminated through political will and by legal and civil action in all sectors of society. An effective response to violence must be multi-sectorial. Understanding the cultural norms, the attitudes that promote acceptance of and even encourage domestic violence against married women and undermine women's enjoyment of their full human rights as well as freedom is essential. For this, all sectors including education, health, legal, and judicial must work in liaison.

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NEGOTIATING THE STRAIN OF CULTURAL DISPLACEMENT AND ALIENATION: A READING OF IMTIAZ DHARKER'S SELECT POEMS

V P Anvar Sadhath

Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to situate Imtiaz Dharker as a postcolonial poet of Indian sub-continent origin who, in her early collections of poems, prioritised articulating the dimensions of geographical and cultural displacement, alienation and gender politics that amount to resisting her gender identity and personal convictions on tradition and culture. It can be argued that the strain of cultural displacement comes automatically to Dharker owing probably to her complex cultural identity as a Muslim of Pakistani origin who migrated to England, with experiences of living in the political climate in the scenarios of the growing suspicion against the members of her community in the post 9/11 context, and the still-deepening political ill-will pervading between India and Pakistan. Her consciousness of being born in a predominantly androcentric culture has resulted in her producing poems that present female subjectivities that are at odds with the value system. Through her poems, she reiterates the persistence and pugnacity of the androcentric system, the still pervading obstacles to women's liberationist aspirations, and the need to explore possibilities of developing counter-cultural discursive practices in poetry as a means of self-expression. The paper attempts to discern strains of displacement and alienation through a close reading of her select poems.

Keywords: *alienation, displacement, gender, Muslim, postcolonial women poets*

Postcolonial poetry in English has been replenished by a group of reputed contemporary women poets of Indian subcontinent-origin who, despite their scarce physical presence in the sub-continent, kept returning to their homeland through their poetic ruminations on its culture, politics, and lived experiences. Poets like Moniza Alvi, Imtiaz Dharker, Meena Alexander, Sujata Bhatt and Bhanu Kapil, whose "expatriate status is constituted of certain experiences of multiple border crossings" belongs to this category of writers (Choudhury R., 2016, 15). Despite being citizens of their adopted nations, most of these poets have been keeping alive their roots and connections in the Indian subcontinent through their poems. Probably because of the intricate subject positions they occupy, the

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postcolonial poets who are living either in the canopy of their erstwhile colonial masters or elsewhere, often use poetry to negotiate their cultural displacement, despite the fact that poetry as a genre is rarely looked into for critical examinations of such negotiations. According to Akshaya Kumar,

It is presumed that poetry is a discourse of un-negotiated rootedness and centripetal belonging. The implied distrust on poetry stems from two a priori notions—one, that poetry is hardly a discourse of negotiation and exchange that any multicultural situation entails, and two, that poetry is more a discourse of a cohesive and rooted vertical self, than of the horizontally proliferating selves. The spatial strengths of poetry have always been ignored in favour of its temporal depth. (2009, p. 11)

As a poet with a complex cultural identity - born of Pakistani Muslim parents, having a daughter from an Indian partner (Anil Dharker), and dividing her time between places like Mumbai, Scotland and London - Imtiaz Dharker's poems are arguably replete with strains of cultural displacement and alienation that emanate from diverse factors including her gender identity, geographical displacement, Muslim origin, and her retention of bonds with India while being conscious of her Pakistani roots. A close look at her poems, particularly the early poems, would reveal the sustained treatment of a sense of estrangement and a self-abnegating awareness of half-heartedly involving herself in the places she lived and represented seemingly because of her urge to question the status quo and transcontinental identity. Commentators, like Bruce King (1989) and Akshaya Kumar (2009) and compilers (like Eunice D'Souza) of Indian poetry approached her as an Indian woman poet, owing to her Indian subcontinent origin and the thematic closeness of her poems to India; they often enlisted her alongside well-known post-colonial women poets like Kamala Das, Melanie Silgado, Mamta Kalia, Sujata Bhatt, Smita Agarwal and Tara Patel. Dharker has brought out seven books of poetry, viz., *Purdah* (1989), *Postcards from God* (1994), *I Speak for the Devil* (2001), *The Terrorist at my Table* (2006), *Leaving Fingerprints* (2009), *Over the Moon* (2014) and *Luck is the Hook* (2018). Her popularly anthologised poems give the impression that throughout her poetic oeuvre, Dharker consciously journeyed through thematic terrains like geographical and cultural displacement,

communal conflict, and gender politics. While her earlier collections indicate her rootedness in India, there appears a thematic shift from the collection *Over the Moon* with most poems set in London. Interestingly, the collections that present the poet's negotiations with tradition and her rootedness in the Indian subcontinent contain a large number of poems that deal with gender issues, as well. This is probably because of the consciousness of the patriarchal foundations of her native culture. According to a commentator, "[a]s forms of power, native patriarchal and religious traditions colluded with colonial practices to add to woman's domination and internal exile" (Shehata 1989, p. 425). The present paper traces the subtle and ostensible articulations of displacement and alienation with reference to select poems of Imtiaz Dharker from different anthologies.

Although it is difficult to convincingly demarcate dominant thematic directions taken by the women poets like Moniza Alvi and Imtiaz Dharker, these poets are visibly thrown between the East and the West and their poems pertinently display longings and impressions on the places they left behind on the one hand and a perceived entrapment between feminism and femininity, on the other. Besides, mixing of memory and desire, old and the new, and the issues pertaining to the new urban women are some of the consistent thematic focuses in their poems. According to Eunice De Souza, "[w]omen have been writing in India since about 1000 BC on religious and secular themes, and it is among these rather more distant ancestors that contemporary women writers are likely to find congenial voices and styles" (1997, p. 1). The new poets have stamped a niche for themselves by developing a diction and style of their own, which distinguishes them from their male counterparts. The new women poets often seem to outnumber and outperform their counterparts from the opposite sex considering the number of poems by women that have recently flooded literary journals and new anthologies of poetry. Their poems, in general, can be viewed as celebrations of their imagined release from the clutches of androcratic order and traditions. However, as a famous critic of Indian poetry in English noted, "[p]oetry in Indian English by women has been seen at odds with traditional culture. This is another issue overtaken by modern society in which what is supposedly traditional is often a guise for gaining or keeping power when faced with the liberating effects of democracy, education and urbanization" (King, B. 1987). In his view, unlike the previous times when women writers were generally questioned for their relation

with the feminist movement, the new free women writers were helped by the feminist movements “to express a narrow range of opinions” and “the feminist ideology has taken its place within a broad spectrum of topics including the complications of single life, problems of marriage and life abroad” (King B., 1987, p. 312). It is also significant to note that,

Poetry in English by women writers is part of the modernization of Indian society including its participation in a global system of education and economics which has replaced the older colonial and imperial networks. For urban middle class women, this meant education at good schools and universities, some experience of a liberated life, time abroad, careers, and either a single life or a marriage in which both husband and wife work. It is very different from being raised among women followed by a traditional marriage and serving one’s husband. (King B., 1987, p. 312-13)

Considering Imtiaz Dharker’s tryst with India, she enjoys the new women poets whose poems present how the perception of women changed discernibly, notably after the revolutionary female as well as feminist energies unleashed by Kamala Das through her poems. However, as explained by Bruce King, perhaps the main challenge of the new women writers of poetry here is to escape the stereotyped expressions of womanhood, where poems that celebrate women often become apologies for womanhood, where issues other than breaking the orthodoxy, presenting a more liberated, urbanized women, gap between generations, and so on can never be expected from a woman writer. In other words, while challenging various orthodoxies of the times and androcentric orientation of the respective societies of the writers, the woman writers apparently created a bunch of stereotypes about the liberated women that kept repeated making such expression a kind of obsession in their poems. Thus, it appears that poems like “Tribute to Papa” by Mamta Kalia, Sujata Bhatt’s “The Women of Leh are such,” Charmaigne D’Souza’s “When God First Made a Whore,” and Tara Patel’s ‘Woman’, to name a few, although celebrate the new and empowered women, are confessions and extended pictures of women that make one feel that these poets really feel apologetic about themselves. However, this is not to forget some of the critically acclaimed poems that these poets brought out during their long career as poets.

Imtiaz Dharker was arguably one of the first Indian women writers to break the stereotypes of womanhood in poetry by bringing out more serious issues concerning women in particular and humankind in general. Unlike many of her contemporaries and predecessors, Dharker brought in newer dimensions of Indian sensibility by broadening her perspective, and by not writing as a woman writer per se. According to Bruce King,

Dharker brought to Indian poetry a different background and political commitment...Her poetry is consciously feminist, consciously political, consciously that of a multiple outsider, someone who knows her own mind, rather than someone full of doubt and liberal ironies [...] Her poems have both an argumentative and dramatic structure, in examining the personal she becomes political. (King B., 1987, p. 321)

Dharker's poetry dealt with a series of subjects from the strain of cultural exile and alienation to a celebration of temporary unsettlements. This is evident in almost all her collections, right from her most celebrated *Purdah* (1989). It is to be noted that "Beyond the poise, balance and intricacy of her poems more generally, there is a darker, more enigmatic symbolism that is uncannily echoed in her slightly menacing portraits. Typically, these images show blurred, scribbled, indistinct faces peering at us through blackened, and lifeless sockets" (Procter, 2010, n.d.). Some of her images and symbols unambiguously present the sense of loneliness the poet appears to have encountered as a person and as a poet.

Dharker's first collection, *Purdah*, takes its title from the traditional Muslim women's veil that often is a bone of contention in gender-related discussions about Islam. In fact, Dharker's intention here is not to problematise or politicise purdah, rather she takes it as an icon of adulthood. In the case of Muslim women, starting to wear purdah is associated with a woman's reaching puberty. In a broader sense, purdah stands for a reminder to adulthood provided to young women in general at a particular age, which understandably is the time when a woman starts feeling alienated from herself, her body, and the world outside. These meanings of purdah are incorporated in the two title poems, 'Purdah I' and 'Purdah II', from this collection. Rajeev S. Patke who categorise Dharker among the writers of postcolonial protest poetry views the veil in the poems as "emblematic image for [the] double circumscription of female identity"

which “becomes symbolic of how shame is enjoined upon women as a concomitant to modesty (Patke, 2017, p. 190). Through these two poems, the poet powerfully expresses the mindset of a woman who is reaching adulthood. After having conferred the status of being an adult, these women become spectacles for the opposite sex. As the poet says: “They make different angles/ in the light, their eyes aslant,/ a little sly” (Dharker, 1989, “Purdah 1”). The realization of being a spectacle apparently foreshadows their inner as well as the outer selves, making them more introspective that they often look at themselves and their bodies in an effort to deal with the strain of alienation coming along adulthood. In another sense, androcentric societies give diverse signals/warnings to their young women reminding them of the onset of adulthood, that in a way are directions to keep them away from the lustful eyes of the onlookers. This biological warning which emanates from within as well as outside constrains their normal existence. The poet is ironical in referring to purdah thus:

One day they said
she was old enough to learn some shame.
She found it came quite naturally.
Purdah is a kind of safety.
The body finds a place to hide.
The cloth fans out against the skin
much like the earth that falls
on confines after they put the dead men in. (Dharker, 1989, “Purdah 1”)

The poet probably presents the onset of adulthood as a ritual burial, “much like the earth that falls/on confines after they put the dead men in” (Lines 7-8). Once entering the domain of purdah, “she half remembers things/ from someone else’s life” (14-15) as she is entitled to carefully carry “between her thighs, a sense of sin” (18). As a critic pointed out “Purdah is an alienation from one’s own self, a doing of what is expected rather than what one feels. And this is, in Dharker’s view, resulting from the shame women are taught early on about their gender and sexuality” (King B., 1989, p. 321). The poet indirectly tells that the impositions and restrictions that accompany the reaching of puberty make a woman feel that virginity is something like a bag of explosives that may go off at any time, or that the watchdogs of the society are much bothered about a woman going to ‘sinful’ ways. Looked from this perspective, making a woman withdraw into herself is to

ensure her absence in areas dominated by men, on the one hand, and to make her a readily available spectacle on the other, “passing constantly out of her hands/ into the corners of someone else’s eyes” (Dharker, 1989, “Purdah 1”). The alienation caused by the societal pressure on a woman’s public appearance/behaviour (the enforcement of which differs in different communities) owing to her entering adulthood makes “her inching past herself” “wherever she goes...” (Dharker, 1989, “Purdah 1”). It is probably this secluded stature of women that Nilufer Barucha refers to as “biologically recessed” space (Bharucha, 1998, p. 93).

A female space is biologically recessed. The enclosure of the womb affords protection to the growing foetus and is therefore a positive factor. An androcentric world, however, has extended the analogy of biological female inwardness to create a feminine reductiveness. This has turned a biological virtue into a societal and cultural handicap. The female world, after having imposed this limitation onto women, has celebrated it in song and dance. Literary discourse has been utilized to bear witness to the circumscription of women’s worlds. (Bharucha, 1998, p.93)

Another poem from *Purdah* that articulates the theme of alienation is ‘Battle-line’. In fact, Imtiaz Dharker sounds a little more serious in ‘Battle-line’. The poem opens with a question, “Do you expect dignity” and it unfolds something like an answer to this question. Outwardly, the poem deals with the tension erupting out of a conflicting pair of lovers, or husband and wife. The poet suggests that in spite of the parties involved one cannot expect dignity once battle-lines are drawn. Battle-line can also be taken as a metaphor for territorial distrust among countries and individuals. From the broad sense of a battle-line that causes irreparable damages to hostile or warring nations, the poet seeks its applicability in a man-woman relationship where the body becomes a territory. The speaker in the poem is presumably a woman who describes her daily encounters with her man as a meeting at a battle line with which territories of each are defined. Here again the poet hints at the individual’s predicament of being thrown to alienation and despair, where even lovers become strangers to each other, and where a home is a place that divides with barbed wire. Once these everyday battle-lines are drawn “the place in the throat/where words are halted” and “space on the

skin that others cannot touch” become checkpoints (Dharker, 1989, “Battle-Line”). A person entangled in this kind of situation feels free when leaving home, although it is not a solution to the sense of alienation looming large within the individual.

In ‘Words Find Mouths’ from the collection, *Postcards from God*, Dharker tracks down the course of the alienating troubles that an individual bumps into in his/her day to day existence. She reflects that one reason for things to fall apart is the loss of wholeness “when words find mouths”.

Things were meant to flow
one another.
They were meant to grow
into one another; to know
the taste and feel of
being part of one vast whole.
All that stopped
when words found mouths,
when tongues wagged their way
into minds,
and each object shrank, suddenly,
to fit its own precise outline. (Dharker, 1997, “Words Find Mouths”)

The poet perhaps means to say that the withdrawing syndrome displayed by objects and people resulted from the alienation of the individuals from themselves and from the organic wholeness of their surroundings.

Imtiaz Dharker reiterates the anxieties of existence mainly caused by the sense of being cut off from the total frameworks of things in society in several of her poems. In other words, the anxiety of surviving in a second home and a recurring consciousness of the poet’s feeling of being an outsider is a significant motif in Dharker. A picture of a cultural outsider is what one finds in ‘Living Space’, from *Postcards from God*. The poet metaphorically presents the predicament of such a person as similar to the state of someone living in an unstable structure or building surviving on rough frames and leaning towards the miraculous. The metaphor of the brittle living space is extended further when she says that

someone has hanged eggs in a wire basket under the rough structure – a fragile thing under a fragile structure. In a wider sense, every cultural outsider feels the fragility of existence, where what makes her/him continue is the “thin walls of faith”. Pictures of the communal clashes that followed certain eventualities in Indian history as presented in such poems as ‘8 January 1993’ are also indicative of the angst that the poet shares on the predicament of those treated as ‘others’ by the dominant groups. In fact, such marginalized groups also encounter identitarian issues that lead to a sense of alienation.

The title poem in *Postcards from God* is probably a more powerful articulation of the problem of displacement and alienation. Here, the poet presents the Creator making a visit to the created world, where the Creator is presented to be feeling like an outsider. The poem is a first-person rendering by God. The opening lines read thus:

Yes, I do feel like a visitor,
a tourist in this world
that I once made.
I rarely talk,
except to ask the way,
distrusting my interpreters,
tired out by the babble
of what they do not say.
I walk around through battered streets,
distinctly lost,
looking for landmarks
from another, promised past. (Dharker, 1997, “Postcards from God 1”)

By presenting the estrangement felt by God the poet probably talks about those people who live like exiles in their own lands. Individuals feeling alienated from the land of their survival feel like being visitors there, meaning that it is not unlikely that their ‘departure’ from this place is imminent. The poem presents a sarcastic situation where even God has to prove God’s existence, in a place where identity is constructed in different historical times differently. God’s feeling of displacement is sketched thus:

Here, in this strange place,
in a disjointed time,
I am nothing but a space
that sometimes has to fill.
Images invade me.
Picture postcards overlap my empty face
demanding to be stamped and sent. (Dharker, 1997, "Postcards
from God 1")

The strange personal history of Dharker often gets mixed up with her poetic articulations of displacement and alienation. Dharker's life as an outsider wherever she lived her mature years – as a foreigner in England, as well as in India – is beautifully reflected in 'Minority' from *Postcards from God*. Here the poet treats the issue of alienation in terms of the experience of a minority, "I was born a foreigner. / I carried on from there / To become a foreigner everywhere/ I went..." ('Minority'), and suggests that for an alien language tastes different as it acts like a tripwire in the tongue:

There's always that point where
the language flips
into an unfamiliar taste;
where words tumble over
a cunning tripwire on the tongue;
where the frame slips,
the reception of an image
not quite tuned, ghost outlined,
that signals in their midst,
an alien. (Dharker, 1997, "Minority")

The poet compares the short span of survival of a member of a minority group to plants of tubers that do not run deep roots, and that is not greater than the recently sprouted shoots of such plants. The speaker in the poem relates her predicament of displacement to an ill-fitting, clumsily translated poem, and goes on to say that her condition is similar to that of a recipe with replacement ingredients:

I don't fit,
like a clumsily-translated poem;
like food cooked in milk of coconut
where you expected ghee or cream,
the unexpected aftertaste
of cardamom or neem. (Dharker, 1997, "Minority")

Poetry gives the poet the desired relief from this sense of alienation, and poetry is a kind of reassuring abode for her to withdraw when entangled in thoughts of displacement. She feels that "Everyone has the right / to infiltrate a piece of paper. /A page doesn't fight back" (Dharker, 1997, "Minority"). The feeling of alienation ultimately reaches in the poet's meeting with people who are in the same boat as hers.

The intense sense of being an alien acquires more precise political dimensions in poems like "They'll Say: 'She Must be from Another Country'" from *I Speak for the Devil*, where the growing intolerance displayed by a section of the dominant group in India recently is openly articulated. This intolerance of the minorities is what worries the poet and makes her sense that one day such extremist elements would find out her roots and openly declare that she is from another country. In "They'll Say: 'She must be from Another Country'" the poet's worries are cemented by the incidents of artists being attacked in India for 'improprieties' in their portrayals. The poet seemingly hints at the attack on M F Hussain's paintings and Deepa Mehta's films for affecting the religious or cultural sentiments of certain groups. Thus, one immediate aftermath of an alien's lack of a sense of belonging is his or her fear of an impending attack or a kind of paranoid reaction to anything happening anywhere against similar groups or individuals. However, the poet justifies her worries thus:

When I can't comprehend
why they're burning books
or slashing paintings,
when they can't bear to look
at god's own nakedness,
when they ban the film

and gut the seats to stop the play
and I ask why
they just smile and say,
'She must be
from another country.' (Dharker, 2001, "They'll Say: 'She Must be
from Another Country'")

It is probably to escape the innate fear of a pogrom against 'outsiders' by sections of the dominant groups in her host culture that Dharker often wears the gown of an ultra-secularist, and internationalist, where she is seen claiming an identity which is 'broader' than her religious and cultural identity as a Muslim woman of Pakistani origin who married an Indian Hindu and living in India. In "Not a Muslim Burial" for instance she declares that no single group can claim her, intriguingly using a defence mechanism:

No one must claim me.
on the journey I will need
no name, no nationality.
Let them label the remains
Lost property. (Dharker, 2001, "Not a Muslim Burial")

By despising the origins and culture, and by becoming a free individual Dharker appears to appease the potential enemies not to unleash an attack on her when an occasion arises. In fact, minority writers tend to engage in such verbal gymnastics to safeguard themselves from being branded as belonging to or advocate of one or another group. In "Honour Killing" from the same collection, Dharker declares her complete abstention from the culture of her roots in an apparent attempt to liberate herself from its clutches, in order to plot and craft a geography for herself. The poem presents a list of items she resolves to denounce. These include the country which she considered hers, the veil of faith that made her faithless, the lacy silks, the mangalsutra and rings that stand for marital ties in her culture, and finally her, skin, face and womb representing her constrained femininity in an androcratic order of things.

I'm taking off these silks,
these lacy things

that feed dictator dreams,
the mangalsutra and the rings
rattling in a tin cup of needs
that beggared me.
I'm taking off this skin,
and then the face, the flesh,
the womb. (Dharker, 2001, "Honour Killing")

Her hope of negotiating the new geography is evident in the lines, "Let's see / What I am in here / When I squeeze past / the easy cage of bone" (Dharker, 2001, "Honour Killing"). However, the poet's perplexed mindset, and an apparent sense of loss, while leaving her country is presented ostensibly in the last stanza of "Here": "Whether I stand on this side / of the borderline, or that, / the colour keeps sliding / off my face" (Dharker, 2001, "Here").

Dharker's engagements with the devil in a series of poems in *I Speak of the Devil* can also be looked at from this vantage point. Thus, it can be argued that the poet's resolve to be the devil's advocate is owing to her need to establish the larger framework of secular ideals that she wanted to select for herself. However, a few poems from *The Terrorist at my Table* indicate the poet's tremendous courage to speak on such sensitive issues as terrorism. She lets loose sarcastic attack on branding people as terrorists in the light of the instances of terror incidents allegedly purported by Muslim groups. She makes one feel that in the post-9/11 scenario certain words and expressions like a terrorist, freedom fighter, guerilla warrior, and so on are used to brand people, where language creates people's identity. While portraying the loneliness experienced by people who are wounded with words, perhaps, the poet tries to remind herself of her own loneliness and her own chances of being branded with 'words of mass destruction' In, 'The Right Word' she beautifully sketches the changing perceptions of people with varying uses of words. The poem begins with, "Outside the door/lurking in the shadows,/is a terrorist" and goes on to ask "Is that the wrong description?" The poet tries to fit in a number of words like a terrorist, freedom fighter, guerilla warrior, martyr, and hostile militant, to fit in the person outside the door, wondering, "Are words no more / than waving, wavering flags?", and finally comes to the concluding recognition:

No words can help me now.
Just outside the door,
lost in shadows,
is a child who looks like mine.

One word for you.
Outside my door,
his hand too steady,
his eyes too hard
is a boy who looks like your son, too.

I open the door.
Come in, I say.
Come in and eat with us.

The child steps in
and carefully, at my door,
takes off his shoes. (Dharker, 2006, "The Right Word")

The identification of the suspected, differently labelled person as one like her or anybody's son makes the poet get united with all those who are branded as different and excluded. She tries her hands on including people from the excluded sections and marginal spaces. In her latest collection, *Leaving Fingerprints* she continues to engage with the question of identity. As a critic commented, "In this collection, they are almost a part of the same vehicle, charting, by turns, the passage of people, and the policing of identity, through text and texture." (Procter, 2010, n.d.). Imtiaz Dharker's poems can be read as ways she adopts to negotiate her feeling of being an alienated cultural outsider. Like the purdah clad woman in her poem, Dharker looks at herself from different corners, in an introspective effort to position herself in the ground and establish a sustainable identity for herself, in the midst of the images of alienation and loneliness surrounding her. Like the black and white images that accompany her poems that "reinforce the imagery of mixed guilt and glee with which dispossession is spoken of" she expresses mixed feelings of glee, loneliness, loss and so on, all of which point to multiple dispossessions (Patke R. S., 2006).

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DIGITAL MEDIA AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF PADUPANAMBUR GRAM PANCHAYAT IN COASTAL KARNATAKA

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Abstract

Digital communication is the hallmark of 21st century. With the support of government and business interventions of private players, digital media devices have reached the people of all ages and income groups. People's participation has a lot of potential for rural development and a lot can be achieved when media is easily accessible. Mobile phones are present even in the remotest villages and they are increasingly becoming the most sought-after tools to browse the contents of digital media, so much so that they are preferred over computers or laptops. Apart from entertainment, knowledge enhancement has been the significant fallout of digital media usage. Social inclusion is also being achieved through the access to digital media which promotes people's participation in developmental activities in rural areas. This article is an attempt to assess the ways in the use of digital media in Padupanambur Gram Panchayat of Mangaluru Taluk, situated in the rural district of Dakshina Kannada in coastal Karnataka. Padupanambur Gram panchayat demonstrates a considerable progressive and developmental trends in the use of digital technology and could be an example given its progression and lucidity in pursuing the goals of development utilising digital technology.

Keywords: communication, digital media, gram panchayath, rural development, social media

Introduction: Digital Media and Rural Development

Digital media uses web-based tools and it allows users to personally and informally interact, create, share, retrieve, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. It includes applications (Apps), social networking sites, blogs and micro-blogs, online forums, discussion boards and groups, Wikipedia, socially integrated text messaging services, videos and podcasts etc. The sharing of information that relies on a networking of citizens to share goods, spaces, tools and knowledge can enhance the widespread use of digital technology. The interactive, easy to use and personal nature of digital media can efficiently connect the citizens and the governments.

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In the present, the ability of people to access, collect and refine digital data increasingly determines the effectiveness of the digital technologies that can be deployed to support the Sustainable Development Goals. (UN Conference on Trade and Development, 2019). The widely recognized digitalization has released a new wave of innovation and has profound implications for humanity, changing relationships between citizens, local governments and has the capacity to alter the structure of societies and economies.

The growth, productivity and human development in the rural areas have enhanced the level of integration into the digital economy and governance. Being interactive and personalised in nature, digital media has effectively connected the citizens' developments in a few gram panchayats of India. However, their number is just a handful and would be a very good path indicator. Social media, one of the significant components of digital media characterised by connectedness and collaboration, promotes sustenance of communities to create awareness about various issues, building goodwill or even seeking feedback into delivery of public services.

Objectives

There is a need to study the models of inclusive development of Gram Panchayats which are located in the remote parts of the district and to assess the progress that they have made in using Digital Media in the growth of Gram Panchayats. The researcher has the following specific objectives:

- 1) To verify whether information, communication and entertainment functions of mass media are utilised by people
- 2) To assess whether villagers are savvy in using Digital Media
- 3) To know whether any personal gratification (socializing, feeling equal, happiness etc) is attained by the people of Padupanambur
- 4) To understand the obstacles in using the Digital Media
- 5) To assess the correlation between digital media usage and rural development

Methodology

This study was conducted to know the digital media usage in Padupanambur Gram Panchayat. 100 internet using respondents above the age of 18 years were

chosen by random sampling and were given questionnaire to fill. The questions were read out to get information from the respondents who could not read due to different reasons.

Primary data was collected from the following respondents i.e., gram panchayat members, gram panchayat secretary, PDO, zilla panchayat case worker, leaders of community-based organisations. The education level, income level, occupation, village of residence and other details relating awareness and the use of digital media was gathered using a questionnaire. Secondary data was collected from the newspaper reports, government web site, Face book page and periodicals and from the RDPR, Karnataka.

Padupanambur GP's Progression to Digital Media

Dakshina Kannada district situated in coastal Karnataka is known for its competence in various sectors and is one among the 15 developed districts of India. The urban and rural divide is considerably less; the average literacy rate is 92% while that in rural areas it is 83% and the total literacy rate in Dakshina Kannada district is 88.57%. The high literacy rate is an indicator of better media consumption rate. According to an estimate, two third of total circulation of dailies in the district is from rural parts of the district. The human development index of the district (2015) has recorded total life standard as 0.708, health at 0.767, education at 0.809, and total human development index as 0.687. Dakshina Kannada district is divided into seven taluks of Moodbidri, Mangaluru, Bantwal, Kadaba, Belthangady, Puttur and Sullia. Mulki and Ullal will be declared as taluks soon. The district has 230 gram panchayats, 331 villages with a total population of 20,89,649 (Statistical Department Report 2017-18).

Mangaluru taluk covers an area of 834 square kilometres. It is made up of Mangalore City Corporation, Ullal City Municipality that govern the Mangaluru urban agglomeration. There are 49 panchayat villages in Mangaluru taluk. Mangaluru, Ullal and Moodabidri are the three highly populated towns of Mangaluru Taluk.

The present study concentrates on Padupanambur gram panchayat in Mangaluru taluk. It has 1871.36 acres of land area and about 3,400 people living here in three villages namely, Hattane Thokur, Bellayru and Padupanambur. There are three Government higher primary schools, six anganwadi centres and two private schools in GP. Five temples, one Jain Basadi, a Church and a Masjid with Madrsa

are located in the Padupanambur Gram Panchayat jurisdiction. A total of eight youth organisations are functional here.

Services Offered at the GP's Administrative Office

The services specified by Rural Development & Panchayat Raj Department (RDPR) are being offered by Padupanamboor gram panchayat. MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee) is the popular program being successfully conducted. Under MGNREGA in the year 2019-20, 38 infrastructural projects were taken up at the cost of Rs. 12.10 lakh. Pension programs, scholarships, door number and various other Government approved certificates, Swachh Bharat, Aadhaar and Ayushman card, Manaswi program are some of the services for which the villagers approach the GP office.

Padupanambur Gram Panchayat has adopted many progressive and pro-development strategies and is well known for its healthy practices. The office holders especially the President, Secretary and Panchayat Development Officer (PDO) have established a development-oriented drive. Following are the indicators explaining its progress.

1) Computerised Gram Panchayat Office:

A computer was procured at the Padupanambur Gram Panchayat office during 2003-04 and was not in use for the next two years. However, during 2006-07, based on the direction given by RDPR to hold trainings for panchayat secretaries at Zilla Panchayat office, online submission of progress reports started. Initially, reports of only Nirmal Gram Yojana (Total Sanitation Project) of Central government were uploaded. Since 2013, computer with internet is used. Staff has been trained at the GP level. Five personal computers and two laptops are in use in the Padupanambur Gram Panchayat office presently. The paper work is minimal indicating an orientation towards paperless governance.

2) Trained Staff: Full-fledged staff strength is assured and graduates with basic knowledge of computer operation are appointed. They are all reasonably well paid (Rs. 18,000/-). Staff are given uniforms and are trained in soft skills. (2 men and 3 women and the Secretary).

3) Solar Electricity Enabled GP Office: All electrical and electronic gadgets run with the help of solar energy. The system was installed using funds received under 'Gandhi gram Puraskara' in 2017-18.

4) E-Governance: e-governance procedures are followed. Geo tagging using the Bhuvan Application for MGNREGA and SBM projects. Gandhi Sakshi Kayaka software is used to update all the developmental works carried out in the GP. *Panchatantra* application is used to connect the concerned Departments.

5) Facebook Page: A Facebook page is maintained for connecting the people and to share the latest information regarding the developmental works. Likes and comments are observed. There are 1355 followers.

6) Ombudsman: An ombudsman at the District level receives complaints and queries. Solutions to problems are worked out with a team consisting of Secretary, President and Panchayat Development Officer (PDO). People so far have lodged five complaints using Sakala digital portal in gram sabha since 2018.

7) Whatsapp Groups: The gram panchayat has created and runs three WhatsApp groups – one with elected representatives and GP office staff, other with interested citizens for general information sharing and a third group exclusively caters to COVID19 issues. WhatsApp groups for solid waste management are created by youth organisations. WhatsApp groups performing weekly Shramadaan for Swachh Bharath are in place. MRPL and Sri Ramakrishna Mission have donated a water purifier to the Padupanambur Gram Panchayat office as a reward for active involvement in Swachh Bharat Mission. For the last 5 years, about 300 Shramadaan sessions have been conducted with the participation of volunteers. The Padupanambur Gram Panchayat has also received Nirmal Gram Puraskara in 2007 for being ‘open defecation free.’

Review of Literature

The study ‘Impact of Social Media in Rural Development’ conducted by Swati Gupta (2016) argues that, the social media network has changed the lives of rural people. As far as agriculture is considered, social media has provided opportunities to the farmers and made the process of selling the crop easy through online platforms. Introduction to information and communication technology has come to occupy a major source of development in India. In order to accelerate rural growth, it is essential to learn new ways of integrating social and human infrastructure development into the installation of basic information and communications infrastructure. However, the paper does not explain the total pattern and effect of digital media usage by villagers.

A secondary data based study 'Digital Media Reach: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban People in India' by Kaur & Marwaha (2016) explains that the reach of digital media is increasing in rural and urban areas. It argues that Indian media industry is shifting from traditional media to digital media with the increase in the use of mobile and internet and also with its progression in the rural India. Reach of digital media and increased access to internet has brought awareness among the rural people. Still, there is a gap regarding digital media in rural household that figures in millions. There is a difference regarding mobile growth and access to internet in rural and urban parts. Lack of infrastructure, awareness, technical skills, illiteracy etc. are some of the reasons for this media reach gap. However, the study lacks empirical prognosis.

'Impact of Social Media on Rural India' (Ekta Bansal, 2015) focuses on the relationship between social media and rural India. The study concludes that there still remains a lot of room for improvement for social networking services as with better technology and the geographical connectivity in order to secure economic opportunity. It is important that social media does not influence the people in a way that alienates them from the real potential of these platforms. The study does not include the other (than agriculture) sectoral developments if any, due to social media usage.

The study 'Digital India Programme: A Vehicle for Rural Development' by Bhanti & Prajapati, 2018 concludes that there are number of schemes which government has started for the poor and rural people. Out of them some schemes had failed due to the lack of monitoring and proper data collection. It argues that the nine pillars of Digital India Programme will not only elevate the standard of living of rural folks but will also have an impact on poverty alleviation. Use of ICT for various programmes expected to increase the reach, minimize the processing cost and reduce corruption.

The study 'Digital Inclusion in Rural Areas: A Qualitative Exploration of Challenges Faced by People from Isolated Communities' by Correa & Pavez, 2016 explores the interplay between contextual and individual factors related to internet adoption in isolated rural communities. By investigating 10 remote villages throughout Chile that received Internet access infrastructure in 2010–2011, the authors have identified that the geographical isolation shaped people's personality

and attitudes towards new experiences, including digital technologies. Even the communities' aging population also represented a strong challenge due to lack of young people around and a relevant technology socialization.

Analysis

Table 1: General Information: Number of Respondents

Sl.no	Male	Female	Total
1	54	46	100

54 men and 46 women, a total of 100 adult (18 years and above) respondents were chosen using random sampling. A questionnaire of 14 questions was given to them. Respondents were briefed about the study and the questions were readout wherever required to facilitate adequate response.

Table 2: Income

Income	Male	%	Female	%	Total (%)
Less than 2 lakh /annum	26	48	28	60	54
2 to 3 Lakh /annum	19	35	10	21	29
More than 3 lakh /annum	09	16	08	17	17
Total	54		46		100

48% men and 60% women have income lower than 2 lakh. 35% of men and 10% of women have income between Rs 2 and 3 lakhs per annum, while 17% of the sample size belong to income group of Rs 3 lakh and above out of which 16% are men and 17% are women.

Table 3: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Education Qualification	Male	%	Female	%	Total
Up to S.S.L.C	24	44	23	50	47
P.U.C	08	14	07	15	15
Degree	17	31	15	32	32
Post-graduation	03	05	01	02	04
Professional Education	02	04	00	00	02
Total	54		46	100	

Table 3 shows 24 (44%) men and 23 (50%) women, a total of 47 (50%) of total number of respondents have an education level of SSLC and below, while, 17 (31%) men and 15 (32%) women, and a total 32% of the total respondents are degree holders. Four were postgraduates and 15 had PUC level of education and as less as 2% had professional qualification.

Table 4: Age Group

Age	Male	%	Female	%	Total (%)
18-25 years	19	35	12	26	31
26-35	21	38	10	21	31
36-45	04	07	11	23	15
46-55	06	11	07	15	13
56-65	03	05	04	08	07
66 and more	01	02	02	04	03
Total	54		46		100

Table 4 shows equal number of respondents, that is, 31% from 18-25 and 26-32 years age group. Hence, it can be arrived that a considerable share of respondents were young social media users.

Table 5: Participations From Village

Villages in the GP	Male	Female	Total (%)
Hattane Thokuru	23	18	41
Bellairu	21	16	37
Padupanambooru	10	12	22
Total	54	36	100

Padupanambur gram panchyat has three villages, namely Hattane Thokuru, Bellairu, Padupanambur. The number of respondents took part in this study from each village is shown at the table 5. Among the total number of respondents 41% are from Hattane Thokur village. From Bellairu village 21 men and 16 women have responded and from Padupanambooru 22% have taken part.

Specific Information:

Table 6: The Gadgets Used for Internet Browsing

Sl.no	Equipment	Male	(%)	Female	(%)	Total (%)
1.	Mobile	54	100	46	100	100
2.	Laptop	05	09	03	06	08
3.	Computer	17	31	07	15	24
4.	Tablet	01	02	00	00	02

Table 6 shows 54 men and 46 women, that is, all the men and women who responded were using mobile phones while 17 men and 7 women among them also used computers to browse digital media. Only 8 people used laptops and only 1 male respondent used tablet to connect to the internet.

Table 7: Using Digital Media Number of Hours in a Day

Sl.no	No. of Hours/day	Male	%	Female	%	Total
1.	Less than 1 hour	06	11	09	19	15
2.	1 to 2 hours	09	16	12	26	21
3.	2 to 3 hours	21	38	10	21	31
4.	More than 3 hours	18	33	15	32	33
5.	Total	54		46		100

33% of respondents use digital media for more than 3 hours per day, they can be called heavy users of digital media. 31% use it for 2 to 3 hours a day; and 21% use between 1 to 2 hours daily. They can be called moderate users, and 32% of them use less than an hour, as indicated in table 7.

Table 8: Number of log-in's per day

Sl.no	Account of no. of times logging on /day	Male	%	Female	%	Total
1.	Less than 5 times	19	35	11	23	30
2.	5 to 10 times	15	27	23	50	38
3.	More than 10 times	20	37	12	26	32
4.	Total	54		46		100

Most of them (38%) log in more than 5 to 10 times a day while, 32 of them more than ten times log on to internet daily. 30% of respondents log in less than 5 times About 50% of female respondents log in 5 to 10 ten times a day.

Table 9: Service Provider

Sl.no	Service provider	Male	%	Female	%	Total(%)
1.	BSNL	08	14	07	15	15
2.	Jio	24	44	15	32	39
3.	VI	09	05	03	02	04
5.	Airtel	24	44	36	78	60
6.	Others	0		0		0

Table 9 explains the most used and least used service of telecom companies. *Airtel* is used by 60% and *Jio* stands next i.e., 39%. And 15% use *BSNL*. When some respondents were enquired, they had confirmed that *Jio* and *Airtel* have better signal reach and used by the most. An opinion that *BSNL* has more subscriber friendly plans was also expressed on enquiry.

Table 10: Uses of Digital Media

Sl.no	Details	Male	%	Female	%	Total (%)
1.	Entertainment	46	85	41	89	87
2.	Information	28	51	29	63	57
3.	Conversation	50	92	46	100	96
4.	Banking	20	37	18	39	38
5.	Buying & selling	13	24	10	21	23
6.	Others	10	18	20	43	30

As shown in table 10, when the different types of use and gratification were looked into the following facts were found. A great majority that is 96% people use mobile-digital media for conversation that includes speaking, SMS and voice records. A total of 87% use it for entertainment and 51 of men and 63% women use it for gaining information. This suggests that more percentage of women use digital media for information than men. 38% use digital media for banking

transactions and 24% men and 21% women use for online buying and selling. 30% of the respondents also said they use it for photo and video shoot.

Table 11: Accessing Government Information

Sl.no	Application	Male	%	Female	%	Total
1.	Gramavani	10	18	16	34	26
2.	Facebook	30	35	25	54	55
3.	What's App	40	74	41	89	81
4.	Panchamitra	03	05	01	02	04
5.	Sakal	01	02	00	00	01
6.	Mobilevani	00	00	00	00	00
7.	NIL	06	11	05	10	11

While gathering information about government's instructions and programmes 55% said they come to know it from Padupanambur Gram Panchayat's *Facebook* page. WhatsApp was the highest in spreading the information because 40 (74%) men and 41 (73%) women got information from various WhatsApp groups created by the GP members, officials and 'shramdaan' volunteers. Much discussed NGO app Gramavani is used by 26% and only 4% use *Sakal* and *Mobilevani* had no users (Table 11).

Table 12: Accessing News and Current Affairs

Sl.no	Application	Male	%	Female	%	Total
1	Google	25	46	16	34	41
2	You tube	10	18	22	47	32
3	Online papers	04	07	02	04	06
4	Nil	20	44	06	15	26

Table 12 shows, 41% use the search engine 'google' to get news and information on current affairs. 32% browsed *YouTube* for the same. Only 4 men and 2 women read online newspapers. While enquiring about why they do not read online papers, a common reply was that they preferred printed newspapers to online media which is a matter of habit. Some said using printed newspapers was

easier. Those watched *YouTube* saw news channels and other videos which gave explanation of current news. The audio visual along with portable nature of mobile phone was responsible for this choice.

Table 13(A): Participation in Developmental Work Through Social Media Groups

Sl.no	Yes/no	Male	%	Female	%	Total (%)
1.	Yes	32	59	20	43	52
2.	No	05	09	17	36	22

TABLE 13 (B):

Sl.no	Project	Male	%	Female	%	Total (%)
1.	SBM	30	53	15	32	45
2.	NAREGA	08	14	01	02	09
3.	Health projects	11	20	03	06	14
4.	SHGs	06	11	22	47	28
5.	Other	00	00	00		00

About the participation in social media groups, it was ascertained that 59% men and 43% women took part in developmental activities through social media groups. It was encouraging to observe that 52% of total number was actively taking part in such activities. 56% of men and 32% of women took part in Swachh Bharat Shramdan through WhatsApp groups. 28% of total respondents took part in SHG related work. 6 out of 54 men and 22 out of 46 women were found active in SHG work through social media groups (Table 13 A&B).

Table 14(a): Dependency in Using the Digital Media Equipment

Sl.no	status	Male	%	Female	%	Total (%)
1.	Dependent	28	51	25	54	53
2.	Independent	26	48	21	45	47
	Total	54	46	100		

Table 14 (A) shows 51% of men and 54% of women are dependent in using digital media by taking help from others, in comprehending messages, operating certain applications, downloading and making payments through internet. 47% have told they can use digital media equipment on their own.

Table 14(b): Help sought for the use of Digital Media

Sl.no	Details	Male	%	Female	%	Total (%)
1.	Relatives	05	09	12	26	17
2.	Neighbouring people	03	05	20	43	23
3.	Friends/acquaintance	11	20	04	08	15
4.	Colleagues	06	11	03	06	09
5.	People related to GP office	07	12	10	21	17
6.	School/college teachers	02	03	08	17	10

As seen in table 14(B) women are more dependent on their neighbour, family and relatives and men depend more on friends. 17% of the total respondents are dependent on gram panchayat officers or members. 10% are also dependent on school/college teachers.

Table 15: Problems in Using Digital Media

Sl.no	Details	Male	%	Female	%	Total
1.	Fear/hesitation	11	20	19	41	30
2.	Lack of training	09	16	13	28	22
3.	Financial problems	08	14	12	26	20
4.	Physical problems	03	05	00	00	03
5.	Power/charging	26	48	18	34	44
6.	Semantic/language	10	18	13	28	23
7.	Signal/reach	37	68	32	69	68
8.	Time	07	12	15	32	22
9.	Other	00		00		00

Table 15 shows problems in using digital media. 30% of total respondents were defensive, fear struck, hence defensive and hesitant while using electronic gadgets for digital media. 28% women felt they lacked training in using them while 16% men also subscribed to the same feeling. 44% reported the problem in charging due to power cuts in villages and a considerable 68% complained of connectivity problem due to inadequate signal. As much as 18% of men and 28% of women, a total of 23% had semantic or language problem in comprehending the messages on digital media and would deter them from using it effectively.

Table 16 (A): Development Support in terms of personal benefit

Sl.no	Yes/no	Male	%	Female	(%)	Total (%)
1	Yes	48	88	36	78	84
2	No	06	11	04	08	10

Table 16 (B): Details of Personal Benefit Drawn From Digital Media

Sl.no	Details	Male	%	Female	%	Total (%)
1.	Information gaining	40	74	32	69	72
2.	Improvement in knowledge	41	75	30	65	71
3.	Helps in joining main stream	25	46	22	47	47
4.	Monitory benefit	03	05	00	00	03
5.	Easy transactions	28	48	22	47	50
6.	Recreation	41	75	35	76	76
7.	Social service	24	44	26	56	50
8.	Association activities	25	46	20	43	45
9.	Ability to help people around	10	18	15	32	25
10.	Ability to help children and family with information	12	22	16	34	28
11.	Others	00		00		00

Table 16 (A) shows details of respondents considering digital media helpful in personal development. 84% of total respondents feel it has helped in development. The subsequent table-16 (B), shows 72% feel that they have gained information using digital media, 71% feel it improves knowledge, 76% feel it is useful in recreation, 50% feel it eases transactions and 50 also feel it helps them to involve in social work.

Table 17(A): Personal Experiences about losses caused by digital media use

Sl.no	Yes/no	Male	%	Female	%	Total
1.	Yes	31	57	30	65	61
2.	No	23	42	16	34	39
3.	Total	54		46		100

Table 17(B): Ill Effects of Digital Media

Sl.no	Details	Male	%	Female	%	Total (%)
1.	Monetary loss	12	22	16	34	28
2.	Wastage of Time	14	25	34	73	48
3.	Unnecessary communication	06	11	12	30	20
4.	Wrong information	13	24	19	41	32
5.	Over entertainment	10	18	17	36	27
6.	Dissatisfaction in relationships	03	05	12	26	15
7.	Association with anti-social groups	01	01	00	00	01
8.	Addiction to media	04	07	10	21	14
9.	Others	00		00		00

The ill effects of digital media use were also assessed by asking the respondents about their experience and opinion. A total of 61 respondents and 65% women felt it has some ill effects, based on their personal experience. About 48% users felt that it leads to wastage of time. Whereas 32% opined that it gives wrong information. 14% said that unhealthy attachment to digital media is possible due to its overuse, and 28% say digital media causes monetary loss.

Findings

1. Majority of respondents are from family income group of less than Rs 2 lakh per annum. Nearly half of the respondents have studied till SSLC. Two men among them are professionally qualified while one woman is a postgraduate. 31% of men and 32% of women were graduates. Equal percentage, i.e., 31 of respondents are in the age-group of 18-25 and 26-35 years.
2. All respondents use mobile phones, a common gadget through which villagers browse digital media.
3. 33% use it more than 3 hours a day while half of the women respondents log on 5 to 10 times in a day.
4. *Airtel* is the most popular among users of Padupanambur Gram Panchayat. Study shows that 60% of respondents use *Airtel*. *Jio* is next in line of popularity with 39% and *BSNL* is used by 15%.
5. A great majority (87%) uses digital media for entertainment. Almost all use it for conversation and SMS. More than half the respondents use it for gathering information. 38% use digital media for banking.
6. 55% of respondents use *Facebook* for getting government updates. 81% get it from *WhatsApp*. *Gramavani* is used by only 26%. Women use it more than men. Lack of motivation and training in accessing government informational and project related apps are responsible for low usage. Even in the case of Sakal portal; it was found that GP has not promoted its use by citizens but it is uploading their information etc., on their behalf.
7. *Facebook* and *WhatsApp* are the most popular social media tools used by villagers. 45% are active on *WhatsApp* groups participating in Swachh Bharat. 28% are active in group related to self-help and micro financing.
8. More than half of both men and women are dependent on others in one or other way in using digital media. 23% are dependent on neighbours. More women depend on neighbours while more men depend on their friends. 10% depend on teachers and 17% on those who work at GP office.

9. A majority (68%) have signal or connectivity issues (68% men and 69% women) in using digital media. 44% have power/charging problems. Fear or hesitation, lack of training in using digital media, language and understanding problem are also indicated by some respondents.
10. About 84% of respondents find digital media useful in personal development. Majority use it for information gaining (72%), 71% use it for improvement of knowledge, and about same percentage of them use it for recreational purpose which they say help them find joy amidst daily activities. About half of them say digital media has made financial transactions easy. 28% feel it helps them in taking part in teams that do community and social work.
11. When asked about the ill effects of digital media 48% felt it leads to wastage of time and 32% opined that it gives wrong information. 14% said unhealthy attachment to media is possible due to its over use. All respondents agreed that the digital media can harm them in different ways.
12. It is becoming increasingly important to utilize the latest technology in rural development, in popularising and sharing information related to the government in order to benefit citizens.

Suggestions

To promote capacity building for the usage of digital media following measures could help:

1. Workshops to train the people to use government and NGO apps can be organised. Villagers can be prompted to apply, pay or receive messages directly than through GP officials.
2. Training programmes to use mobile phone with digital media applications can be imparted to the needy.
3. NGOs can be involved in promoting capacity building of villages in the use of digital media.
4. Since the GP is in suburban area, more connectivity can be demanded from the service providers in the interior areas of GP through more towers.

Conclusion

It is found that there is an increased use of mobile phones in the rural areas to actively browse the content of digital media. Many have more than one mobile data connection though signal problems are common in the pockets of the Padupanambur Gram Panchayat jurisdiction. Entertainment is the top priority of users though information gathering and knowledge enhancement is also the result of digital media usage. Social media groups are also helping people to take part in developmental activities. Besides, information is readily and equitably available without discrimination.

If Gram Panchayats are to perform efficiently and effectively, there is a need for extensive use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). It can promote a "digital inclusive society" where large sections of the rural population benefit from new technologies and people can access and share information and services freely and effectively to participate in the development process.

Digital media is certainly going to be the future apparatus for rural development. It needs to be popularised to impart information related to the government for the benefit of its citizens. The welfare schemes of the government will be better applied for development if the citizens learn, involve and utilize them. Digital media is easy and interactive. With recent strides in its proliferation, it can turn out to be a facilitator in building rural India for growth. A greater participation can be achieved through better training and support systems.

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Interviews of officials and Padupanambur Gram Panchayat heads:

- 1) Ms Anitha Catharine, Panchyat Development Officer
- 2) Mr Lokanath Bahndary, Panchyat Secretary
- 3) Ms. Manjula, Panchyat President
- 4) Ms Kusuma, Vice President
- 5) Mr Abhijith, Data Entry Operator

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WILLIAM GIBSON'S SPRAWL TRILOGY: CYBERSPACE AS A LITERARY MOTIF

Ashwin Loyal Mendonca

Abstract

Cyberpunk fiction, considered a subgenre of science fiction, was a part of the cyberpunk movement that came into existence in the eighties. The Cyberpunk movement was a cultural, political and literary response by a group of people, especially teenagers and young adults, to the contemporary social and cultural reality marked by the phenomenal changes that were happening due to modernization and globalization in the areas such as technology, science, and commerce. Cyberpunk led to the flourishing of literary and pop-cultural art forms such as digital art, movies, music and video games. The Cyberpunk movement came into existence in North American and European countries during the heyday of the cold war years—the seventies and eighties. Because the ideas and views of cyberpunks were radical and extreme, the movement remained as a subcultural and underground phenomenon for several years until it became mainstream due to the popularity of cyberpunk fiction of William Gibson and other writers such as Bruce Sterling, Lewis Shiner, Rudy Rucker, John Shirley and Pat Cadigan. By analysing William Gibson's concept of cyberspace in his Sprawl Trilogy—Neuromancer, Count Zero and Monalisa Overdrive—this paper assesses the way Gibson's cyberpunk fiction provides an imaginative framework to think about the present globalised world governed by computer technologies that have the power to transform the societies and cultures around the world. By exploring the motif of 'cyberspace', this paper also makes an attempt to understand the implications of the technological transformations facilitated by the globally networked power relations enabled by ubiquitous electronic communications.

Keywords: *cyberpunk, cyberspace, science fiction, technology.*

The phrase 'science fiction' has become synonymous with world-building and thought experiments. Momentous technological progress in recent years has created a favourable environment for the growth of science fiction. The awe and wonder that we felt, while being a part of the massive economic growth and technological progress, have made us resort to science fiction to seek answers for questions such as: Where this technological progress is going to take us? Is

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there a limit to such progress? Are there alternative mediums of progress that are more “human” than technology? Science fiction has been exploring possibilities and opportunities which are assumed to be the outcomes of scientific inventions and discoveries. The complexity of the modern world has given scope for the development of new sets of theories that have found expression in imaginative literary forms such as science fiction.

William Gibson, a Canadian-American science fiction author, made use of underground subcultural motifs and tropes in his narratives that challenged the mainstream fiction prevalent at the time—he published his famous Sprawl trilogy in the eighties. His experimental and inventive style charted a new path for science fiction stories. Gibson’s writings took science fiction publishing on an alternative course by unsettling the established notions of science fiction as being a fixed genre that focused on a few unchanging writing conventions that captured the fancy of the writer based on a preconceived cultural understanding. His thought-provoking, unconventional and experimental writing style teaming with futuristic neologisms changed the perception of science fiction narratives.

By analysing William Gibson’s concept of cyberspace in his classic cyberpunk novels in his Sprawl Trilogy—*Neuromancer*, *Count Zero* and *Monalisa Overdrive*—this paper assesses the way Gibson’s cyberpunk fiction provides an imaginative framework to think about the present globalised world governed by computer technologies that have the power to transform the societies and cultures around the world. In exploring the motif of ‘cyberspace’, this paper also makes an attempt to understand the implications of the technological transformations facilitated by the globally networked power relations enabled by ubiquitous electronic communications.

Themes and motifs derived from science and technology feature extensively in science fiction narratives: the term ‘science fiction’ with the word ‘science’ in it is itself is a testament to its affinity to science and technology. Veronica Hollinger, analysing the complex relationship between humanity and science and technology in science fiction narratives, in her essay “Posthumanism and Cyborg Theory”, in the monograph *Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, remarks that “at the intersections of science fiction, critical studies of science and technology, and cultural theory, there is a complex and fascinating on-going debate about the

nature of human nature in an increasingly pervasive technoculture” (Hollinger, 2009, 267).

In recent years, science fiction narratives have increasingly veered towards exploring alternative realities due to the ubiquity of techno-culture. Science fiction literature has derived inspiration from the technologically driven globalised world. Virtual reality and cyberspace as forms of alternative realities have facilitated the emergence of hyper-reality. The current world dominated by advanced communication technologies such as the global Internet has brought phenomenal changes in the routine life of the people. Instant access to information everywhere and at any time and breaking up of the barriers for education due to the implementation of citizen-friendly democratic policies has spurred the growth of knowledge economies that compete with other fast-developing nations in a bid to out-compete each other. Easy availability of information in an accessible, structured and machine / human-readable form and also the availability of massive computing power to crunch numbers and data at a phenomenal speed and affordable price have made computers an indispensable part of our life.

All these developments have further complicated the life of the common man. Most people who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of the fruits of this progress are in total confusion as to how far technology can take control of their life. The same technologies have given more and better tools for governments and corporations to monitor and control the citizens. A sort of Orwellian scenario haunts the world of Gibson’s novels. In all his writings, Gibson explores the role played by technology in bringing about social and cultural change. In his essay “My Own Private Tokyo” published in the *Wired Magazine*, Gibson stated that he believes that “...all cultural change is essentially technology-driven”. (Gibson, 2001)

Cyberpunk fiction, considered a subgenre of science fiction, was a part of the cyberpunk movement that came into existence in the eighties. The Cyberpunk movement was a cultural, political and literary response by a group of people, especially teenagers and young adults, to the contemporary social and cultural reality marked by the phenomenal changes that were happening due to modernization and globalization in the areas such as technology, science, and commerce. Cyberpunk led to the flourishing of literary and pop-cultural art forms

such as digital art, movies, music and video games. The Cyberpunk movement came into existence in North American and European countries during the heyday of the cold war years—the seventies and eighties. Because the ideas and views of cyberpunks were radical and extreme, the movement remained as a subcultural and underground phenomenon for several years until it became mainstream due to the popularity of cyberpunk fiction of William Gibson and other writers such as Bruce Sterling, Lewis Shiner, Rudy Rucker, John Shirley and Pat Cadigan. Cyberpunk fiction is well known for its distinct “neologisms, idiosyncratic vocabularies and jargons” (Cavallaro, 200, 10). According to McHale, despite there being criticism within the SF community about “cyberpunk propagandists’ excessive claims for the novelty and ‘breakthrough’ character of cyberpunk”, there is “an important sense in which cyberpunk is innovative despite the familiarity or formulaic character of its SF motifs” (McHale, 2010, 6).

Several critics and writers have credited Gibson for his timely conception of the idea of cyberspace in his fiction. Calling him the “poetic futurologist of cyberspace”, Whittaker observes that, by inventing the literary motif, Gibson “provided a vision of the matrix that was much more than the bare technical bones of the putative Internet” (Whittaker, 2003, 4). Pointing out the usefulness of cyberspace as a motif for effective narration, Katherine Hayles argues that “cyberspace is created by transforming a data matrix into a landscape in which narratives can happen” (Hayles, 1999, 38). Dodge and Kitchen write that “cyberspace refers to a navigable, digital space of networked computers accessible from computer consoles; a visual, colourful, electronic, Cartesian datascape known as ‘The Matrix’ where companies and individuals interact with, and trade in, information” (Dodge and Kitchin, 2001, 1). Noting the popularity of the term, they observe that “since the publication of *Neuromancer*, the term cyberspace has been re-appropriated, adapted and used in a variety of ways, by many different constituencies, all of which refer in some way to emerging computer-mediated communication and virtual reality technologies” (Dodge and Kitchin, 2001, 1).

Neuromancer, the first novel in Gibson’s *Sprawl Trilogy*, is a critically acclaimed seminal work in the cyberpunk genre of science fiction. It opens with the famous lines that indicate a typical cyberpunk style: “The Sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel” (Gibson, 1984, 1). Case, the

protagonist of the novel, a cyberspace cowboy and a thief, has been neurologically maimed, for stealing from his employers, who are wealthier thieves, with “a wartime Russian mycotoxin”, a powerful nerve agent that has inhibited his ability to jack in to cyberspace (Gibson, 1984, 6). In his search for a cure for the nerve damage, he arrives in Chiba, a city in Japan, allegedly the heaven of cyberpunk culture. A man named Armitage offers him a cure for his neural damage, and in return, Case is forced into a deal, an ultimate job, to fight the most powerful artificial intelligences (AIs)—Wintermute and Neuromancer. The novel makes an attempt to question the possibility of human beings coexisting with machines in the form of AIs. *Neuromancer* features the conceptualisation of cyberspace, a term invented by William Gibson to represent the virtual or the digital realm facilitated by global connectivity made possible by electronic networks. Gibson first used the word ‘cyberspace’ in his short story *Burning Chrome* written in the year 1982. ‘Cyberspace’ emerged as a more inclusive and meaningful alternative term for the Internet when it came into prominence in the late eighties and the early nineties. In the novel, Gibson describes cyberspace as:

Cyberspace. A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts . . . A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding.... (Gibson, 1984, 51)

The use of cyberspace as a motif is an interesting and noteworthy aspect of William Gibson’s cyberpunk fiction. It’s both a trope and a central narrative device that makes it stand out among other science fictional narrative devices. Adam Roberts observes that it is a premise derived from the movie *Tron* (1982) which he describes as “a consensual computer-generated virtual reality or cyberspace” and calls it an “intriguing titular metaphor” (Roberts, 2006, 440).

In *Count Zero* and *Monalisa Overdrive* Gibson uses the fragmented narrative technique of multiple story-line threads that converge at the end of the novel. Although Gibson ascribes a prominent place to cyberspace in the plotline of *Neuromancer*, in *Count Zero* and *Monalisa Overdrive* Gibson focuses more on the

people than on the virtual realm. Both cyberspace and AIs have limited scope in the development of the plot. In *Count Zero*, Gibson introduces the element of myth in the form of voodoo gods into the cyberspace realm. Voodoo Gods represented in the form of sentient beings are found in cyberspace. Gibson presents powerful AIs in the form of Gods. In *Neuromancer*, cyberspace is depicted as a purely techno-sphere—it exists in the virtual realm made possible through technological and scientific advancements. Bobby and Jackie jacking in to the cyberspace with the trodes attached to their foreheads is depicted as follows:

[Bobby] followed Jammer's instructions, secretly grateful that he could feel Jackie beside him as they plunged down into the workaday depths of cyberspace, the glowing Basketball dwindling above them. The deck was quick, superslick, and it made him feel fast and strong. He wondered how Jammer had come to have the Yakuza owing him a favor, one he'd never bothered to collect, and a part of him was busily constructing scenarios when they hit the ice. (Gibson, 1986, 210-211)

In *Monalisa Overdrive* Angie's encounter on the Malibu beach with voodoo God's, who inhabit cyberspace, is depicted in the following way:

The dream architecture of the Colony rose to Angie's left, a riot of form and ego. Frail-looking neon-embedded replicas of the Watts Towers lifted beside neo-Brutalist bunkers faced with bronze bas-reliefs.

Walls of mirror, as she passed, reflected morning banks of Pacific cloud. (Gibson, 1988)

As quoted above, Gibson's depiction of cyberspace in *Count Zero* and *Monalisa Overdrive* is not as sophisticated as in *Neuromancer*: it functions as a passive motif featuring as an obscure device. Since he invented cyberspace as a literary motif in his short story "Burning Chrome", it was diligently employed in his cyberpunk fiction to represent a technologically augmented fictional virtual realm that came to be associated with global data networks collectively known as the Internet. Though Gibson attempted to infuse mythological and spiritual elements

in his second and the third novel of the Sprawl Trilogy, the notion of cyberspace depicted in *Neuromancer* caught on the popular imagination. It could be argued that Gibson gained popularity due to his timely invention of neologism which is extremely apt in capturing the meaning of ideas that are going to be invented or conceptualized by scientists and technologists in the near future. With the commercialization of the Internet in the 90s, the term 'cyberspace' was able to encapsulate what the Internet was capable of doing in its early days.

What constitutes cyberspace in Gibson's narratives appears crude to us now as we have witnessed the emergence of the Internet and also we have a clear idea of the virtual reality technologies that have become hallmarks of the postmodern world. In the eighties, Gibson was trying to extrapolate from what was postulated by contemporary scientists and futurists on how the world would be when computing technologies reach the critical mass. Gibson, as a storyteller, without any practical experience in the functions of computers, would not have had the required expertise to accurately represent cyberspace and other computing technologies in his fiction. However, he was able to achieve a convincing representation of the future world through the ingenious extrapolation of scientific knowledge prevalent at the time and mixing it with counter-cultural streaks he was familiar with being a member of the heady cultural scene of the day. Long before virtual reality became commonplace in the real world as well as in the fictional world, Gibson was able to artfully represent it in the fictional medium that awakened people about the complexities and nuances of the technology yet to be conceptualised and designed in the real world. Thus, cyberspace, as a literary motif, has been remarkably effective in furnishing a mode for people to imagine and explore the ramifications of new technologies on the eve of the dawn of the computing revolution.

In this way, William Gibson examines the perennial questions concerning the future of humanity against the backdrop of a world riven with technological advancements through a notoriously upbeat genre of cyberpunk in the postmodern stream of science fiction. He is responsible for injecting cyber-culture into the popular conscience, for speculating on the idea of living within cyber-culture, for demolishing the experimental nature and "ghetto" status of counter-cultural streams such as cyberpunk and steam-punk and thereby drawing the attention of

mainstream science fiction fans to his hallucinatory futuristic visions. In mapping the influence of Gibson's novels on culture, Lance Olsen notes how his narratives transcend "academic and generic boundaries." (Olsen, 1992) Lance Olsen states that:

Gibson speaks powerfully to a large part of our culture's desires, fears, and obsessions about such things as multinationals, global politics, computerized data, genetic engineering, cybernetics, techno-angst, and, ultimately, what it means to be human in an age that is infinitely complex, unnerving, and possibly posthuman. (Olsen, 1992)

Gibson's adoption of cyberpunk, an obscure genre of science fiction, was occasioned by his interest in the counterculture, which had a pervasive influence on destabilizing the post-war status-quo and technology, which was soon becoming an inseparable feature of contemporary social reality. The unpredictable but inevitable consequences of developments in technology, culture, and socio-economic organization in the last decades of the twentieth century have made Gibson's novels archetypal examples of contemporary socio-cultural predicament.

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Author/s should carefully read the entire submission guidelines before submitting the manuscript for publication.

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The objective of the Journal is to provide a forum particularly for the young faculty members, research scholars and students of the college in particular and the teaching and research community in general for disseminating their research findings to a wider audience. Besides, it also offers an opportunity to contribute to knowledge development and trigger further research among readers.

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Narrative citations:

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End Text Citation:

Jackson, L. M. (2019). *The psychology of prejudice: From attitudes to social action* (2nd ed.). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000168-000>

Sapolsky, R. M. (2017). *Behave: The biology of humans at our best and worst*. Penguin Books.

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2. Journal article

In Text (Parenthetical) citation: (Grady et al., 2019)

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Grady, J. S., Her, M., Moreno, G., Perez, C., & Yelinek, J. (2019). Emotions in storybooks: A comparison of storybooks that represent ethnic and racial groups in the United States. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 8(3), 207–217. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000185>

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In Text (Parenthetical) citation:

(Aron et al., 2019; Dillard, 2020)

Narrative citations:

Aron et al. (2019), Dillard (2020)

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Aron, L., Botella, M., & Lubart, T. (2019). Culinary arts: Talent and their development. In R. F. Subotnik, P. Olszewski-Kubilius, & F. C. Worrell (Eds.), *The psychology of high performance: Developing human potential into domain-specific talent* (pp. 345–359). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000120-016>

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	g) Comp. Science	Electronics	Mathematics
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	l) Chemistry	Microbiology	Botany
Konkani	j) Chemistry	Microbiology	Zoology
	k) Bio-Chemistry	Botany	Zoology
Addl. English	l) Bio-Chemistry	Chemistry	Zoology
	m) Bio-Chemistry	Chemistry	Botany
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