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List of Abstracts

Adopting a Zetetic Framework	7
Reclaiming Detachment: Anāsakti, Care Ethics and the Emotional Foundations of Well-being...	8
Between Rules and Reality: Revisiting the Formalism-Realism Debate in Formal Modeling of Law	11
The Extended Cognition Thesis: Resurffing the Waves and resolving the differences	14
Transnational Narrative Traditions and the Maternal Epistemology: Reading the Poetic Oeuvres of Adrienne Rich and Mamoni Raisom Goswami.	17
“To Die or Not to Die”- Unveiling Death as a Catalyst and Catharsis in Shakespearean Tragedy, Hamlet.....	20
Power, Gender, and Resistance in Sanskrit Satire	21
Examining Networks of Care in Charlotte Yonge’s "The Pillars of the House"	23
Turner’s Seas: Maritime Heritage, Imperial Identity, and the Politics of Memory.....	26
Documenting Dominance: Reflections from a Brahmin Caste Publication Kanyakubj Manch ...	30
Studying Muslim Caste in ‘Unpleasant Times’: Challenges and Contestations of a Muslim Research Scholar	32
Local Practice, Global Stage: Tuluva Identity-Making in the Wake of Kantara	33
Culture, Heritage, and Economic Survival: An Ethnographic Study of Dhokra Artisans of Bastar, Chhattisgarh	36
Nexus between Climate Change and Yield Variability in Hill Regions of North-East India: Evidence from Quadratic Production Function	41
Crop Diversification as a Climate Adaptation Strategy: Implications for Farming Livelihoods in Assam.....	42
District-level agricultural risk analysis of a north-east Indian state (Assam), using entropy-based-TOPSIS and latest IPCC risk framework.....	44
‘Token Fatigue’: Queer narratives of workplace discrimination in India.....	48
Women and the Urban Commons: The Stewardship of Shared Spaces in Varanasi.....	50
Fatherhood 2.0 : Exploring the Masculinities of 'stay-at-home' fathers in Urban India	53
A Cultural History of Conquest: Fathiyā-i Ibriyā and the Mughal Expansion into Northeast India	56
Imperial Indian Capital: Constructing New Delhi Amid Unhealthiness, 1911-1932.....	58
Pir Katha Literature of Bengal in the Domain of Islamic Literature: Historiographical Trends and Present Challenges	61
Literary Memes: A Categorical Estimate and Analytical Framework.....	64
Genius, Exclusivity, and Institution: Michael Faraday’s Rise as a Nineteenth-Century Science Hero.....	65
Digitising the Margins: Responsible AI and Digital Humanities for Cultural Archives in North-East India.	67

Post-historicizing Literary and Cultural Studies: The Problem of Explanatory Underdetermination in a Post-Artificial Academe.....	70
Digital Panopticons and Necro Technics: Gendered Memory and Carceral Control in White Christmas.....	73
Waiting Cost, Contract Incompleteness and Mode of Organization across Time Zones	76
Impact of economic crime on economic growth: Evidence from India.....	78
Mental health and employment in India: A gendered analysis.....	81
World Order Beyond Dualism: Towards Global International Relations.....	86
Customary Institutions, Gender Norms, and Climate Justive: Women's Agency in Local Climate Governance in Nagaland	87
Between Development and Dispossession: The Politics of Resource in Assam.....	88
Representation of Women's Issues in Print Media: A Study of Editorial Columns and Opinion Pieces Published in Selected Bengali Daily Newspapers.....	92
Exploring the effectiveness of a web-based ACT intervention on well-being indicators among Indian college students.	96
Algorithmic Storytelling: How Media Platforms Shape Human Narratives and Psychological Selves.....	98
Neurocognitive and Emotional dysfunction in Chronic Substance Users: Investing Associate Risk Factors Through Empirical Evidence	101
Echoes of birhor: an acoustic analysis of speech signals in an endangered austroasiatic language	105
Rain and Time Use in Bangladesh: Gendered Impacts and Vulnerabilities	107
ESG and sustainable finance in india:trends and challenges.....	110
Exploring Consumer Willingness to Utilize Solar Energy: An Empirical Study in Selected Districts of Assam	111
A Methodological Exploration of Realism(s) in Philosophy and its Relevance for Feminist Theory.....	116
Situated and Storied Selves: Reconfiguring Cross-Cultural Identity through Schutz and Ricœur	118
Aesthetic Creation as Existential Rebellion Through the Lens of Camus	120
Reading Kafka's Fiction through Agamben's Biopolitical Paradigm	121
Capital, Nature and Ecosocialism: A Critical Analysis and Commentary.....	126
Modelling Cooperation through Shared Prosperity: An Economic Perspective on the Assam-Nagaland Border Dispute	129
Cranial Dimensions and Environmental Adaptation: A Study Across Altitudinal Gradients in Uttarakhand, India	132
Modelling Future Urban Land-Use Dynamics under Alternative Scenarios: A Case Study of Indore, India.....	133
Reimagining Digital Inclusion for Students with Disabilities in Indian Higher Education.....	137
Perceptions of Academicians on Open Science and Intellectual Property in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: A Survey at the Central University of Jammu	140
Understanding Gender, Livelihood and Conservation in the Fringe Villages of Kaziranga National Park, Assam	142

Contesting Development: Informality, Exclusion and State-Society Negotiation in Assam-Arunachal Pradesh Border Region	145
Surveillance in the Digital Age: Privacy, Power and Human Rights Challenges.....	147
Reclaiming the City: Environmental Racism and Indigenous Resilience in There There	153
Spectral Narration, Narrative Prosthesis and Ethics in Postwar Narrative: A Reading of Shehan Karunatilaka's The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida (2022)	154
Undoing the Self: Cognition, Language and Memory in the Urban Imaginary of Jeet Thayil's The Book of Chocolate Saints (2017)	157
Double or Nothing: Reading Bollywood's Double Roles Queerly	159
Rethinking Ecocriticism: Interrogating the Crisis of Meaning and the Persistence of the Nature-Culture Binary	161
Colonial Railways and the (Re)Production of Space in Lucknow through a Lefebvrian Lens (1867-1930)	163
The Landscape in the Playground of (Post)modernity: Geo-Cinematic Politics and the Making of Subaltern Spatiality in the Oeuvre of Satyajit Ray.....	166
Friendship, Power and Politics: Autobiographical Perspectives on Friendship in Baburnama and Tuzuk -i Jahangiri.....	167
In a State of Suspicion: Criminal Tribes, Knowledge Production, and the Politics of Rehabilitation in Colonial and Postcolonial India.....	169
Unlikely Liaisons: Indians & International Networks Inside Internment Camps in Germany & Italy (1939-1945)	171
Pedaling Toward Better Health: Evidence from a Bicycle Program in India.....	175
Cultural Narratives of Vaccination : How Parents Talk about Cervical Cancer Prevention in Rural Bihar	178
A Lopsided Bargain: Women's Employment and the Persistent Gender Gap in Unpaid Work in India	184

DAY 1

Session A1

Philosophy

Chair: Dr. Abhishek Kashyap

Adopting a Zetetic Framework

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Rudolph Carnap in his influential 1950 paper titled “Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology” talks about the ontology of abstract entities. In this paper, his distinction of internal questions and external questions points to this idea of adopting frameworks in which certain abstract entities would be more clear and understandable. To clarify, in the framework of, say, numbers, internal questions could be something like “Do you have five fingers?”, “Is seven greater than two?” etc. The internal questions assume the existence of the entities to be true. External questions, on the other hand, question the existence of the framework itself. The answer to external questions is sought keeping in mind, practicality. The process of answering the external question is thought to be far more interesting. It defines not only what presently seems to be the most appropriate alternative to choose, but also in doing so, defines in a greater sense, the future of the field. The adoption of a framework involves a set of rules which are not only necessary but also sufficient.

In this paper, I explore Carnap's idea of adopting frameworks with respect to the shifting paradigm from doxastic to zetetic in contemporary epistemology. Doxastic relates to belief as zetetic relates to inquiry. Many proponents of this shift like Jane Friedman, Christopher Kelp among others have discussed the importance of introduction of zetetic norms and that this shift will lead to a more coherent, effective and holistic approach to epistemology. I defend the claim that adopting a zetetic framework fits well with Carnap's idea that in order to make sense of certain abstract (epistemological, in this case) entities, we need to adopt certain frameworks, and the validity of that can be proved practically, not metaphysically. I will attempt to answer (internal) questions like “What is Inquiry?”, “What should one do during the process of inquiring?” and the (external) question of “Why adopting the zetetic framework is desirable?” or “Is worrying about this zetetic framework even worth our time?” or “What is it that the zetetic framework provides us that the epistemic framework fails to provide?”. I will also look at the criticisms posed against the adoption of such a framework holistically considering the negative consequences and attempt to pose solutions, if any possible.

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There are a great many cultural and social factors that I see relevant to the zetetic framework and wish to dive into in this topic regarding inquiry. Social epistemologist Emily C. McWilliams talks about how decentering inquiry in our lives is moving our world towards a dystopic future epistemically, because if one's belief in the practice of inquiry is deemed unnecessary or superficial, one will not be able to make sense of their experiences (of injustice). She builds on Miranda Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice highlighting the injustices that impede on even the possibility of inquiry such as dialogic silencing, structural exclusion or disruptions to joint questioning. Further, another scholar David Ebrey directs our attention towards the virtue of inquiry itself as held by Socrates. Plato's dialogue brings out how reaching the answer or the solution is only the secondary concern, the primary concern being the process of inquiry itself. The goal of inquiry is given less importance than the process of inquiry itself. Susan Haack, with her theory of foundherentism combining the elements of foundationalism and coherentism leading to a new direction given to evidence in epistemology. Evidently, she too is interested in a reconstruction of epistemology. My paper gives not only a theoretical and conceptual but rather also a practical reimagining of the practice of epistemology. I believe this holds a great impact on belief formations and decision making. In this paper, I have argued that a zetetic framework, one that centers inquiry rather than belief or knowledge, in epistemology, is as necessary as it is justified.

Keywords: Inquiry, zetetic epistemology, frameworks

Reclaiming Detachment: Anāsakti, Care Ethics and the Emotional Foundations of Well-being

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The research explores the philosophical concept of detachment, or anāsakti, as articulated in the Bhagavad Gītā and reinterprets it through feminist and care-ethical frameworks, particularly drawing on Carol Gilligan (1982) and Virginia Held (2006), to recover its moral vitality for contemporary life. It begins by situating detachment

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within the Gītā's moral vision, where Krishna's exhortation to Arjuna: "Your authority is in action alone, and never in its fruits" (Bhagavad Gītā; Chapter 2 Verse 47), frames detachment as the inward freedom to act without attachment to outcomes. In this ethical context, detachment is not renunciation or indifference but a disciplined clarity that anchors one's moral agency. It unites self-discipline with compassion, enabling a person to act with composure and sincerity even amid uncertainty. Among commentators on the Gītā, figures such as M. Hiriyanna and Eknath Easwaran, similarly emphasise that detachment is not world renunciation but the ethical refinement of intention, a moral steadiness that makes action free of ego, greed or fear. This ancient vision, rooted in samatvam, or equanimity, values emotional balance rather than emotional suppression, aligning inner clarity with outward engagement.

However, the paper argues that historical reception of this virtue became gendered and hierarchical, losing its liberatory potential. Within Brahmanical patriarchy (Chakravarti 1993), detachment which is originally a universal discipline of self-knowledge and moral clarity, has been transformed into a gendered moral demand. For men, it was valorised as self-mastery, rational restraint, and public authority; for women, it was moralised as silent endurance, emotional erasure, and service. Uma Chakravarti's notion of Brahmanical Patriarchy illuminates how women were excluded from philosophical and spiritual disciplines such as sannyāsa and confined to strīdharma, their ethical worth defined through relational subservience rather than reflective agency. This distortion turned detachment from a virtue of freedom into an instrument of control, while men too were constrained by ideals of emotional austerity. As Bregas Maulana (2025) and others observe, the injunction that "boys do not cry" misrepresents detachment as emotional denial rather than moral clarity, mirroring similar distortions in professional contexts where "rational detachment" is idealised as suppression. These gendered interpretations hollowed out the philosophical depth of detachment, replacing discernment with denial and transforming an ethical discipline into a social performance of superiority.

In response, the research turns to Carol Gilligan's feminist critique to expose how moral philosophy itself has privileged abstraction, autonomy, and detachment over care, responsiveness, and relational ethics. In *In a Different Voice* (1982), Gilligan demonstrates that dominant models such as Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development marginalise relational reasoning by equating moral maturity with impartiality and independence. Gilligan's empirical findings reveal that many women articulate moral dilemmas through a language of care, by attentiveness to relationships, prevention of harm, and responsibility for others, rather than through abstract principles of justice. This so-called "different voice" is not a sign of moral deficiency but of a distinct moral rationality grounded in context and connection. Her insight exposes that moral detachment, celebrated as neutrality, often masks the

exclusion of emotional and relational intelligence. When moral maturity is equated with distance, the moral imagination shrinks, silencing voices that reason through empathy and lived experience. This feminist intervention reopens the philosophical question of what counts as ethical discernment, suggesting that genuine clarity may emerge not from abstraction but from relational presence.

Building on this, Virginia Held's ethics of care provides a framework to reconstruct detachment as a relational virtue rather than an isolated stance. In *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global* (2006), Held describes care as both a practice and a value, grounded in trust, attentiveness, and mutual concern. As a practice, it evolves through lived relationships, refining itself through responsiveness; as a value, it recognises human interdependence as a moral foundation rather than a constraint. Within this framework, detachment can be reimagined as the discipline within care: the capacity to remain present and discerning amid emotional intensity without collapsing into reactivity. Such detachment sustains care rather than negating it. It is not cold impartiality but composure without compassion, a moral steadiness that allows care to remain effective and wise. Held's vision dissolves the binary between care and reason, enabling detachment to appear as reflective strength that steadies care without silencing feeling. When detached awareness and relational responsiveness cohere, ethical life gains both clarity and warmth. This synthesis allows detachment to recover its original philosophical depth while addressing its gendered distortions. Reinterpreted through care ethics, detachment ceases to be masculine-coded virtue of control and becomes a shared human capacity for discernment and inner steadiness. It is the freedom to act responsibly without possession or ego, to feel deeply without being consumed. This reclamation bridges the Gītā's ideal of acting without attachment to results with the feminist insight that ethical agency is relationally constituted. Detachment thus becomes clarity within connection, in terms of freedom not from action, but within it.

The paper concludes by extending this redefined detachment into contemporary moral life, where emotional burnout, moral fatigue, and ethical paralysis are pervasive. In caregiving and healthcare ethics, for instance, professionals often face "moral distress," that is the suffering that arises when one knows the right course of action but is constrained by systemic pressures (Aljebar et al. 2024). Here, detachment understood as relational discernment, not emotional withdrawal, can serve as an ethical anchor, enabling caregivers to sustain compassion without collapse. Similarly, in professional and digital spheres marked by overexposure and constant emotional stimuli, the Gītā's teaching of "action without attachment" offers a framework for engaged presence without exhaustion. Contemporary psychology likewise confirms that healthy forms of psychological detachment, understood as mental disengagement from stressors, not emotional numbness, promotes well-being and moral clarity (Baktash and Pütz 2025).

This reimagined detachment thus transcends its ascetic and patriarchal past to become a vital ethical resource for modern life. It offers a model of moral strength that combines clarity without compassion, composure with care. In an age of moral overload, it calls for inward discipline that preserves ethical responsiveness without emotional depletion. Detachment, when understood through the combined insights of the Bhagavad Gītā, Gilligan, and Held, no longer signifies the rejection of feeling or relationship. It signifies the freedom to engage without ownership, to care without collapse, and to act with discernment amid uncertainty. Keywords: Bhagavad Gītā, detachment, anāsakti, care ethics, feminist ethics, Carol Gilligan, Virginia Held, emotions, well-being, relational discernment. “

Between Rules and Reality: Revisiting the Formalism-Realism Debate in Formal Modeling of Law

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The debate between legal formalism and legal realism (instrumentalism) has long been a prime issue in legal philosophy, especially in legal reasoning theory. Many famous debates that have shaped the path of modern jurisprudence emerge from this main dispute as consequences of it, like the Hart- Fuller debate or the debate between Haack and Bulygin. Even the contemporary school of legal theory, neo-formalism which is a refined version of formalism, is a result of this debate. But still, there are many new issues coming out as the grounds of new discussions in this particular theoretical conflict and continues to provide fuel to foster this historical discussion in many different paths and keep it as relevant till date. One of those grounds could be the context of formal legal modeling or AI-based modeling of Law, like Rule base or case base models. We can analyse the legal modelings and the philosophy behind them in the light of this classical debate and can try to verify how this fundamental and theoretical conflict of legal philosophy is still relevant there and in which sense. This paper is motivated to shed light on this particular topic to

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bridge the gap between the contemporary technical developments and the classical philosophical analysis in this field from the perspective of Philosophy of Law.

I will frame this whole discussion in the following parts of this paper. In the first part or introduction, I will elaborate on the formalism-realism debate by providing its historical development and the different aspects of these two contesting views. The main points over which legal theorists were divided in between formalist and realist worlds are primarily grounded upon the issues like the moral relation of law, the rule dominance of law, the dynamic nature of law and obviously the role of logic and interpretation in legal practices. As we can see most of them are connected to legal reasoning and its methods. Pioneer formalists like HLA Hart, Hans Kelsen or Joseph Raz all have taken the position that supports determinacy in law, objectivism, textualism and separation of legal concepts from other extra legal concepts and disciplines, which are the characteristic features of legal formalism. On the other hand, the realist school of thought, mainly developed in American tradition treated law as a non-deterministic, subjective, interpretation-friendly phenomenon which has a deeprooted connection with social and moral values. So, according to them, separating law from society is a theoretical blunder.

The next part will judge the impacts of these two views solely on legal reasoning or decision-making theories because our legal modelings are basically modelings of legal decision-makings. As far as legal decision-making is concerned, the formalists adhere to the deductive structure of legal reasoning more than anything; according to them, this is actually the application of the set of existing rules over a set of facts. And the meanings of the terms of the rules are taken in a fixed, textual way. On the other hand, legal realism is the identification, interpretation, and creation of rules of law in the light of intended purposes, underlying values(moral), and likely consequences of law. It is considered as the practical reasoning. For them, the purpose of law is the most important thing and even existing legal rules can be changed to maintain purposefulness of law. So, interpretation always has a great position in realistic reasoning as contrast with the formalist one.

The third part will compile with the philosophical understandings underlying different models of legal reasoning and its comparison with mainstream legal philosophical views. Mainly two types of modeling we will be focusing on, one is Rule-base reasoning model (RBR) and the other one is Case-base reasoning model (CBR). The Rule-based legal modeling uses symbolic AI to represent legal knowledge as a set of logical conditional rules and descriptions of facts. An inference engine then applies these rules to the facts of a specific case to reach a conclusion, emulating the decision-making process of a legal expert. Rule-based legal modeling, particularly within the field of legal informatics and computational jurisprudence, applies this formalist vision by expressing legal norms in a formalized, logical

framework. It seeks to represent legal reasoning through a system of explicit rules that can be handled by computational mechanisms—often using formal logic tools such as predicate logic or deontic logic (Bench-Capon & Sartor, 2003). In doing so, rule-based models mirror the formalist assumption that legal reasoning can be captured as a process of rule application: from premises (facts) to conclusions (legal outcomes). The connection between legal formalism and Rule-based modeling thus lies in their shared epistemic commitment to the rational and rule-governed nature of law.

Case-Based Legal Modeling like CATO and HYPO models, closely resonates with the realist viewpoint. It models how judges and lawyers rely on analogies between past and present cases, focusing on the realist idea that law evolves through practical adjudication rather than strict rule following. The emphasis on case resemblance, contextual interpretation and factsensitive reasoning in CBR mirrors the realist understanding of how legal reasoning actually operates in practice. Thus, the connection between legal realism and case-based modeling lies in their shared commitment to capture the contextual dimensions of law. There are some alternative views too. If we concentrate on Henry Prakken's observation, we can find that he is not biased on any of the positions in his theory. He proposes: "In a legal case various types of decisions must be made, including determining the facts, classifying the facts under legal concepts, and deriving legal consequences from the classified facts, and each has its own model of reasoning" (1998), both realist and formalist ways. It's clearly visible in his writings that in his model, he incorporated 'interpretation', 'practical reasoning', and 'balancing of interests and values', all of which are the components of realist thought and also deductive logic from the formalist approach. Prakken's view aligns with the neo-formalist view and resonates in the CABARET model of legal modelling

The Extended Cognition Thesis: Resurffing the Waves and resolving the differences

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The extended mind hypothesis is construed as an antagonistic position to the brain-bound notion of cognition. The latter maintains that cognition is confined exclusively to the brain whereas the former maintains that cognition extends beyond the confinement of the brain. In short, cognition or cognitive process is not an exclusive property of the brain alone, external artefacts and extra neural processes or non-neural processes can be considered as substratum of cognition. Since its conception, unsurprisingly, the extended mind thesis has faced a spectrum of responses from philosophy and cognitive science; from its denial to its endorsement. As a result, responses and counter responses shaped the thesis itself and led to many variations.

In this paper I propose two claims: First, the argumentative style concerning extended mind thesis despite its apparent variation has remained the same since its conception until today. The variations, although not unfounded, must be located in the deployment of concepts supplemented to argue for the extended mind thesis instead of locating in the nature of the argument. As far as the nature of the argument is concerned, particularly from Andy Clark's point of view, it remains unaltered. The central argument for the extended mind thesis remains unchanged despite all the responses and counter responses. This begs the question of explaining the presence of alleged different kinds of argument concerning the extended mind thesis: functional and parity driven and complementary driven argument for the extended mind thesis.

Second: I claim that the arguments merely look different because we choose to emphasize different aspects of the same argument. By employing the functional and parity driven argument, we are identifying instances where functional similarity plays an important role in driving the argument. Use of mobile phones to store phone numbers or writing down an important date on the calendar instead of memorizing are such instances where functionality driven argument manifests itself. Similarly, in complementary driven argument, the emphasis is upon the complementary nature of our ability to do a task. Some cognitive tasks could not have been possible if it

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was not for the additional props from the external world. The coupling of external artefacts and the subject complements the subjects ability to do cognitive tasks that would not have been possible in the absence of the external artefacts. Solving a mathematical problem by manipulating mathematical symbols using a pen on a paper instead of painstakingly doing it in your head (although impossible) is an instance of complementary driven argument.

I further argue that both these (first and second) claims challenge the thematization of the extended mind thesis by different philosophers, particularly Shaun Gallagher (2018) and John Sutton (2010). The thematization is wrong on two fronts: First, it mistakenly argues them as two different kinds of arguments for the extended mind thesis. And second, it fails to trace both the (alleged) arguments in Andy Clark's work on the extended mind thesis. Furthermore, the proposal also offers a resolution to a concern: the complementary and functional based driven arguments are in conflict with each other. The functional argument requires similarity in the functional aspect whereas complementary requires dissimilarity in the functional aspect. It is dissimilarity of the functional role of the external artefact in relation to the subject that complements the subject's ability to achieve a cognitive task; whether successfully or unsuccessfully, it does not matter. However, in the functional aspect, it is the functional isomorphism that is required of the external artefact. This confrontation was acknowledged and identified by Clark (1997) and Sutton (2010). I claim that such a confrontation can be resolved by looking at the functional and complementary argument as aspects of the same argument instead of two different kinds of arguments. This is a consequence that follows from the claim that the argument for the extended mind thesis has not changed at all.

Keywords: functional role, complementary, parity principle, nature of argumentation

Session A2

English

Chair: Prof. Rakhee Kalita Moral

Transnational Narrative Traditions and the Maternal Epistemology: Reading the Poetic Oeuvres of Adrienne Rich and Mamoni Raisom Goswami.

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The primary intention is to find out how the spiritual and the material blend within respective narratives of Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Adrienne Rich's select poetry, to either deconstruct or transfigure the institution of motherhood. Rich's work of poetry, especially after *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976), places the maternal imagination most centrally as a secularized hermeneutic, a politicized interpretive lens by which the language and experience of female embodiment are questioned and remade. For Rich, the imperative of the narrative is to express the built-in "split self" of the mother: the lack of continuity between the transcendent reality of gestating life and the suffocating, isolating institution of motherhood imposed by the patriarchal culture. Her poetry seeks to wrest the female body reality from the clinical eye, theological judgment, and phallogocentric mythologies.

In poems such as "A Woman Mourned by Daughters" or in portions of *The Dream of a Common Language*, Rich's narrative turn towards abstraction, didactic manifesto, and the creation of revisionary mythologies that substitute the patriarchal idea of God with the powerful, material fact of female history and lineage. Thus, any spiritual resonance is framed as an immanent relationship based solely upon inter-female relationality and mutually based experiential knowledge, as opposed to externally founded divine commandments or adopted religious dogma.

Contrary to the above, Goswami's poetic and fictional works, steeped in the cultural and religious environment of the Brahmaputra Valley, place the maternal imagination within a strong framework of corporeal realism laced with ritualistic history and tangible mysticism. The suffering of the maternal body, through coerced child-widowhood, coerced abortion, or civic disenfranchisement, is told in unflinching detail. But this unflinching realism is at the same time transfigured by the evocation of local sacred geographies and commanding deities, like the primeval

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mother-goddess or the figure of Krishna. Goswami's narratives utilize these mystical frameworks not to escape reality, but to bestow the mother's suffering and agency with a mythic or mystical transcendence. The violence visited upon the body becomes a form of ritualistic suffering, and the endurance of the mother-figure achieves transcendental pathos, a sorrow that exceeds the individual and resonates within a cosmic or cultural register of enduring sacrifice. This synthesis guarantees that while Goswami is vituperatively critical of social injustice, her narrative tradition at the same time re-sanctifies the body it criticizes, testifying to a spiritual power based on an old, feminine divinity that patriarchal systems seek to erase. The imaginative act, then, for Goswami, is syncretic: it is at once a recorded history of suffering and a coded invocation of the goddess's primordial power.

Methodology:

This paper shall conduct a comparative reading of the maternal imagination as a fundamental narrative force in the poetic works of two feminist poets located in spatially different cultures, Adrienne Rich (1929–2012) and Mamoni Raisom Goswami (Indira Goswami, 1942–2011). It maps out the way two world-historically disparate literary traditions—post-sixties North American feminist poetry and South Asian subaltern/regional literature of the present day and use the mother-figure not just as a thematic topic but as a site of militant cultural critique and ontological insurgency. The research assumes that the "maternal imagination" is a discrete, though culturally negotiated, anti-patriarchal narrative epistemology within every corpus of work, requiring a critical reexamination of the narrative traditions transnationally.

Key Findings:

The contrast between Rich and Goswami highlights a deep play of complementing and contrasting each other's socio-cultural narrative traditions with regard to the maternal imagination. Rich's Western paradigm places value on the narrative of escape from the institution, which functions according to a secular, intellectual discourse in which the imagination is a political tool to construct a new, rational selfhood. Goswami's South Asian model, however, employs a narrative of endurance and spiritual protest within the existing cultural and religious framework, where the imagination acts as a bridge between the abject reality and a pre-patriarchal mystical source of power. While Rich's narratives aim to excise the spiritual contamination of the patriarchy, Goswami's narratives embrace the power of the mystical veil to transform personal, bodily pain into socio-spiritual commentary.

The narrative trajectory in Rich is thus one of emancipation, wherein the maternal imagination is the intellectual and political means of naming the oppression and mapping a direction towards an unencumbered, self-defined female future. This narrative heritage is revisionist in nature, utilizing critique to bring about socio-political transformation. This technique uses a bare, unadorned mode of narrative aimed at deconstructing and reconstructing, centered on the moral imperative of autonomous selfhood and agency.

In Goswami, the maternal body is deployed not primarily as a political abstraction, but as a tangible, violated, and ultimately sacred archive of systemic violence, caste trauma, and economic abjection. Goswami's work draws from narrative traditions that accept and utilize the weight of myth and ritual history, often engaging with the lives of marginalized women, specifically widows in Vrindavan and those connected to the socio-religious practices surrounding the Kamakhya Temple.

This paper shall be an attempt to re-read select poetry from the works of Rich and Goswami, which shall demonstrate a global literary continuum within which the imaginative potential of the mother-figure works universally to re-write inherited structures of power. This research paper shall seek to understand these narrative traditions of the two canonical but geographically distinct poets, who enormously broaden the definition of "maternal imagination," rendering it a dynamic, transnational narrative tool that is both embodied and culturally syncretic.

Keywords: Transnational Narrative Traditions, Maternal Imagination, Spiritual Protest, Corporeal Realism, Ontological Insurgency.

“To Die or Not to Die”- Unveiling Death as a Catalyst and Catharsis in Shakespearean Tragedy, Hamlet.

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William Shakespeare’s tragic oeuvre gives structural insight into the human condition, where the characters become the conduit for probing the human psyche. Particularly through the recurring motif of death, functioning as a catalyst for narrative and character progression. The prior scholarship within the psychoanalytical apprehension, that of A.C. Bradley, did explore the “tragic flaw” and psychological depth in Hamlet, but a systematic analysis using an empirical psychological model has been lacking. This research work specifically addresses this gap by utilising Aron Beck’s Cognitive Theory. It rigorously identifies and traces a path for Hamlet’s dysfunctional thinking to elucidate the intricacies of his cognitive decline, specifically after the murder of King Hamlet, acting as an “Activating Event” (A in the A-B-C model). This triggers a peculiar “Cognitive Distortion” (B), resulting in Hamlet’s moral decline, facilitating cognitive transformation and Catharsis (C). The investigation dissects *Hamlet* through the prism of Beck’s theory to study how death, a pivotal trigger, instigates emotional response and dysfunctional thinking in Prince Hamlet. The methodology discerns three key distortion patterns through Hamlet’s soliloquies and dialogues. The first one is Catastrophizing, which exaggerates the negative consequences and existential angst over his mother’s swift remarriage to Claudius. The second is Black-and-White Thinking, which debilitates him in indecision. And the last is Personalization, where he internalises the singular burden of vengeance, viewing unable to act as moral damnation. The analysis confirms that the identified distortion contributes to cognitive dissonance, emotional upheaval, and moral decline, contributing to Hamlet’s tragic trajectory, manifesting in procrastination, indecision, isolation, and escalation of violence. Hamlet’s shift in perception from his conflict and indecision towards accepting his destiny and restoring moral order by bringing Claudius to justice serves as Catharsis. The research examines Shakespeare’s Tragedy, Hamlet, to explore the traces of human cognition and behavioural patterns through the motif of death by exploring

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its effect on cognition, human psyche, and language, making him a man divided against himself.

Power, Gender, and Resistance in Sanskrit Satire

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The ubiquitous presence of gendered power structures across society shapes the identity, representation, bodily autonomy, and agency of women through social, cultural, and political norms. By focusing on two satires, Kshemendra's *Samaya Matrikā* (*The Courtesan's Keeper*) and Shyamalika's *Padatāḍitaka* (*The Kick*), this paper examines the representation of gender structures in the classical Sanskrit satires. *The Courtesan's Keeper* follows Kankali, an old courtesan who has become a matron to a young prostitute, proudly reveals her trickery and exposes the follies of men from all sections of society, from wealthy merchants to temple priests. The text centres on how Kankali, a witty and powerful matron, actively helps to shape the destiny and life of the young prostitute. This striking critique reveals how liminal figures like courtesans can exert their agency despite prevailing limitations. *The Kick* opens with an audacious and provocative scene in which a courtesan kicks the head of a Brahmin while engaging in intimacy with him. This, in turn, infuriates him, shattering his masculine and Brahminical supremacy, directly challenging his authority. Through the use of humour and exaggeration, the text highlights the inherent contradictions of patriarchal authority. These satires act as a site of resistance, challenging male hegemony through mockery and empowering marginalised voices. Being a product of ancient India, rooted in the complex socio-cultural context of rigid social stratification, they offer a deep insight into the gender norms and the prevailing tensions. The courtesans held economic agency, unlike other women who were restricted under patriarchal guardianship; however, they were still regulated by the androcentric hegemonic norms and were the victims of social exclusion, the masculinist gaze, marginalisation, and oppression. But the satirical critiques exhibit

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how the courtesans negotiate and defy gendered hierarchies and conventions of power.

Objectives:

- To examine how gendered power structures and patriarchal norms are represented and contested in classical Sanskrit satires, focusing on oppressed and subversive female voices.
- To analyse the ways courtesans in these, select texts enact resistance through subversion, trickery, and sexual transgression, thereby reconfiguring traditional power relations.

Methodology:

The study applies a qualitative approach with close reading, contextual interpretation and thematic analysis. This paper foregrounds Michel Foucault's idea of the incestuous dynamic between discourse and power, and analyses how courtesans function as a discursive critique to challenge patriarchal institutions. As Foucault argues, power is everywhere, and it is not just coercive or repressive but also productive, which shapes what can be considered true. Nevertheless, there exists a scope of resistance as it can be effectively applied from the bottom up within the same discursive structures which sustain power as well as nodes of contestation, giving the marginalised subjects also a power to dissent. The satires create the Bakhtinian carnivalesque where the hierarchical barriers are dissolved temporarily, and reverence for the sacred or norms is stripped of its power. Breaking this hierarchy brings everyone on the same level and ridicules the authoritative figure, exposing their hypocrisy and follies.

Mary Douglas's pollution theory further complements this argument by delineating how courtesans occupy a space of liminality and destabilise the normative boundary of purity and pollution. As Douglas argues, society is organised into ordered categories, and if something is perceived as 'out of place', then it becomes pollution. The symbolic system of order and disorder is not inherent and can be transgressed, which can either result in restabilising the boundary or redefining it. The courtesans in these select texts, instead of restoring the status quo, create a new pattern that subverts the dominant social order.

Key Findings:

In the dominant narrative, the feminine signifiers are usually associated with submissiveness, passivity, gullibility, dependence, and chastity. Courtesans in these satires ingeniously subvert and reject such oppressive signifiers. The re-signification of the female as dominant, rational, witty, and promiscuous exposes the contradictions and injustices inherently embedded within the patriarchal power dynamics. Their acts expose the fluidity of normative boundaries and reveal that male-authoritarian regimes of truth are not essential or ontological but rather can be easily breached. Thus, these compelling counternarratives presented in the texts focus on the marginalised and subversive female voices, reclaiming their identity and autonomy through resistance and destabilising the binary of male 'activity' and female 'passivity.'

Through this analysis, the paper fills the critical gap in the comedy studies by delineating

how the Sanskrit satires offered a site of struggle for competing ideologies and establish the richness of the Indian comedic and satiric tradition and its significant contribution to the hitherto existing knowledge system.

Keywords: Gendered power structures, Subversion, Resistance, Carnavalesque, Discourse,

Examining Networks of Care in Charlotte Yonge's "The Pillars of the House"

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This essay examines Charlotte's conception of a sustainable community through an analysis of her family structures and their immediate communal surroundings from the perspective of feminist care ethics. Yonge was deeply influenced by Tractarian

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theology, and many critics note that she incorporates Tractarian doctrines into the theme and form of her novels with an unmistakable vocational purpose. Tractarianism, also known as the Oxford Movement, emphasized Apostolic succession, Church authority, communal and liturgical worship, and publishing tracts—the source of its more popular name—to disseminate its teachings. It was a theological movement to curb what was seen as the increasing secularism and individualism in nineteenth-century Victorian England.

Yonge locates spiritual and moral growth in interdependency. Her novels focus on the family and its immediate community. Disability, afflictions, struggles, sacrifice, and care are the material of her daily domestic struggles without sensationalizing any of it. Her novels are long, the one under study being more than eight hundred pages and divided into two volumes, and the plot is unremarkable, in that it portrays the mundane and the everyday in the lives of her characters, which is usually centred around a large family. However, she weaves her stories in such a way that her invested reader is led by a certain narrative curiosity till the end. The word ‘end’ for her novels is also insufficient, as characters and families are often visited in what has been called her ‘Linked Novels’; a set of twenty-two novels written over fifty years about several branches of interrelated families constituted of roughly forty family names, all linked through marriages, friendship, and other associations. *The Pillars of the House* is connected to seven earlier novels and four later ones, two of which continue certain narratives begun in *Pillars*.

The novel begins with the thirteen siblings having to face the world as impoverished orphans; the eldest children are in their mid-teens, and the youngest, a set of newborn twins. A loophole in a will deprives Mr. Underwood of a living; this is the source of the family’s affliction. The young curate overworks himself until he succumbs to consumption. His wife, after sustaining a fall that leads her into what can be described as a depressive state, follows soon after. The rest of the narrative is a series of afflictions that visit each sibling, poverty being one of the many challenges. Felix Underwood, displaying a high degree of parental care, takes over the role of surrogate father and breadwinner in an impecunious household of orphans. He does not undergo much character development as he is quite morally perfect from the start of the narrative. His care and sacrifice for his family and the way in which each sibling does or does not emulate his selflessness acts as a gauge to each character’s moral development. Each Underwood child is faced with difficulties: from forfeiture of social position to earn a living so the siblings can remain together, to losing scholarships and access to higher education, to scarlet fever, to having one’s husband invalidated in an explosion, to navigating lameness in childhood, which is corrected with surgery later, to the most severe being a permanent cognitive impairment, every major character becomes dependent or is depended upon at different points. Strife and sacrifice are the stuff of Yonge’s novels, and yet she resists poetic justice in the name of realism. Most acts of heroism are either off stage or woven into the fabric of the mundane without sensation or melodrama. The novel is a narrative of interdependency, a construction of an

extended network of familial care with exchangeable gender roles among the more morally developed characters; each finds themselves as carer or receiver of care at various points.

Feminist care ethics emphasizes relationships, empathy, and compassion over the formulation of principles. Early theorists viewed care as a historically maternal and womanly domain, but later findings suggest that care practices among men and women are culturally assigned. More recently, care theory posits that care relations traditionally work better in small, personal groups and may not be effective in bringing about significant political change. They can, however, effect small changes in individual lives, and that could hopefully bring about changes with broader impact.

Nineteenth-century Victorian fiction often enacts care relations and can offer lessons on effective caregiving, while also acknowledging its limitations and failures. This is hardly surprising, as the period experienced a significant cultural paradigm shift, marked by increasing industrialization, individualism, the rise of medical sciences, and a general shift away from a more communitarian way of life. Self-help ideology and the idea of autonomy and independence informed many of the narratives in nineteenth-century England, undermining the ideals of social interdependence. Domestic novels had to find creative ways of valorising dependence and proposed networks of care centred on familial and small communal structures, encapsulating a society with interdependence and ideal caretaking at its core.

Pillars, a multi-plot novel with focalization scattered equally among its various characters, may seem amorphous in form; however, read as a narrative primarily about networks of care enabled by mutual caretaking, it achieves a decisively coherent form. In drawing out the issue of dependency and mutual caretaking as narrativized in the novel, this paper seeks to challenge certain assumptions in discourses of autonomy and independence and foreground the ways the text illustrates certain tenets of care theory.

Turner's Seas: Maritime Heritage, Imperial Identity, and the Politics of Memory

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This paper positions the maritime paintings of the British Romantic artist J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851) within the dynamic landscapes of power, identity, and heritage, and postulates how the humanities and social sciences can re-visit and re-imagine such cultural artefacts in light of contemporary challenges. Turner's lifelong engagement with the sea and the watery realm— from his first exhibited oil painting to his late stormy seascapes— highlights the centrality of maritime culture to the British identity and nation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Nevertheless, these same paintings complicate the heroic and triumphalist narratives of empire and nation-building, instead offering a deeply ambivalent, and often critical, vision of Britain's place in history.

The paper underscores two interdependent arguments. First, that Turner's seascapes function as repositories of British culture and heritage, encoding his nation's naval supremacy, imperial ambition, and constructed mythologies. Second, that his art undercuts these very narratives by staging the sea as a destabilising, destructive force that exposes the vulnerabilities and fault lines of such constructions. By negotiating between complicity and critique, Turner's seascapes remind us that heritage is not static, but a contested process which is shaped continuously by evolving structures of power, public and individual memory, and imagination.

The argument is developed across a study of three areas. The first one explores Turner's engagement with the conventions of History Painting, the genre considered to be at the acme of genre hierarchy by the Royal Academy. Turner's tryst with history paintings transformed it into a hybrid genre where the vast expanse of sea becomes a stage for myth, heroism, and national sacrifice. Works such *Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus- Homer's Odyssey* (1829) and *The Fighting Temeraire* (1839) translate Britain's maritime supremacy into visual allegories, connecting the Napoleonic Wars and naval victories with longer traditions of epic history and national destiny. These paintings exemplify how art mediates collective memory,

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producing a sense of identity and heritage which links ancient myths with modern nationhood.

The second study explores Turner's paired Carthaginian compositions, namely *Dido Building Carthage* (1815) and *the Decline of the Carthaginian Empire* (1817). With these canvasses, Turner invokes ancient history as an allegory for Britain's imperial ambitions. By depicting the rise and momentous fall of the ancient maritime empire of Carthage, Turner offers both a celebratory vision of Britain's ascendant power and a stark warning of its potential decline in the future. The paintings underscore how heritage can function not only as a repository of patriotic pride but also as a site for critical self-reflection, where present imperial power is evaluated against historical precedent. They also reveal Turner's sophistication as a cultural critic, his seascapes are not static memorials but dynamic commentaries on power, empire, and identity.

The final study examines Turner's later shipwreck and storm paintings, like the unfinished *Disaster at Sea* (1835) and *Snow Storm- Steamboat off a Harbour's Mouth* (1842). These paintings abandon triumphalist imagery and revel in the chaos, fragility, and vulnerability of the human experience. The sea here actively resists mastery by overwhelming technological progress like steam powered boats among other innovations. These paintings register the "anti-sublime" (a term I borrow from Christine Riding), rather than exalting human power, they underscore its stark limitation, producing canvasses of unmediated terror and exposure without proffering any delight associated with the contemplation of 'sublime.' In doing so, Turner presents cultural heritage not simply as monuments of achievements but as complex narratives about resilience, justice, ecological precarity, and warnings against hubris.

In its methodology, the paper is interdisciplinary. It draws on art and visual analysis of Turner's marine paintings but at the same time situates them firmly within the broader frameworks of history, sociology, and blue humanities. Turner's works are seen as tangible material culture that encode within themselves social and political processes, as nuanced narratives that were deeply attuned and responsive to the literary and visual traditions of his time, and as ecological imaginaries that pre-date and prefigure our contemporary concerns about environment and society. As such, the paper aligns with the conference's emphasis on fluidity of methods- it brings together art analysis, historical contextualisation, and critical theory to illumine the complexities of heritage in flux.

The larger stakes of this exploration lie in how we conceptualise heritage today. Turner's sea paintings are not merely artefacts of an era gone by, rather, they persist as active interlocutors in debates about national identity, empire, and environment. They demonstrate how the certainties of one era (Britain's maritime triumphs in the

nineteenth century) can become problems of another, thereby demanding critical re-thinking and re-engagement. In the context of our current age of Anthropocene, marked by climate crisis and newly emergent threats to the coasts and the seas, Turner's storm paintings resonate still as reminders of human vulnerability and as visual warnings against hubris. By examining his art through the combined lenses of material culture, heritage, and interdisciplinary methodology, the paper argues that maritime heritage is not a fixed field, but a contested site. It is shaped by the tensions and negotiations between pride and critique, celebrations and warning, remembering and forgetting. Turner's seas thus become both a cultural archive of Britain's maritime identity, and a critical reassessment of the manifold entanglements between heritage, power, and environment necessary for our own time.

Session A3

Sociology

Chair: Dr. Visakh MS

Documenting Dominance: Reflections from a Brahmin Caste Publication Kanyakubj Manch

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The interlocked operations of caste, gender, race, and sexuality, a subject of critical enquiry in sociological and anthropological research, have come to be imagined as issues for those who occupy the “margins”. “Caste, in most scenarios, is invoked with power where “status and hierarchy are also dimensions or forms of power...moreover, its reproduction in everyday life would have been possible only through ‘power’, coercive or legitimate” (Jodhka 2012, 35). In the dominant narrative reinforcing power relations, these groups at the “margins” and their identity politics have been discarded as redundant and archaic mediums for perpetuating social divisions. This asymmetrical politics of identity is embedded in the “transcoding of caste”, “castelessness”, “unmarked identities”, and of those in positions of power and hegemony (Pandian 2002; Deshpande 2013).

Deshpande (2013) advocates building an alternative approach to understanding caste and its elusive nature. This approach concerns questioning the hypervisibility of the lowercaste identity and the invisibility of the upper-caste identity formation, wherein the modern professional identities overshadow the upper-caste identity. The lower caste identity is engraved in caste over all other forms of identification. The encashment of traditional caste capital into modern caste capital by dominant caste groups includes education, property, and professional advancement. The power of the dominant caste groups to effect the “extraelectoral coup” through the accumulation of the modern caste capital and in most cases this power that appears not as caste explicitly but as a story of nation-building in the mainstream narrative. Thus, greater attention is needed to understand the complexities of the institution of caste and the “naturalisation” of upper-caste identity. These assertions and arguments are imperative in locating the gaps and asymmetries in the manifestation of caste identities in the mainstream narrative. This sets the tone for looking at caste privilege and advantage not only as abstract terms but as processes and modalities at the disposal of the creation of upper-caste identity. To look further at these processes and modalities beyond identity formation into other manifestations of caste privilege, power, and reflections of the same.

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The recent ethnographical shift towards the exploration of privilege, relations of power, and formulations of elite forms of knowledge and socio-cultural accumulation has significantly contributed as a counter to the asymmetrical politics of identity, caste, and gender (Bairy 2009, 2010; Fuller and Narasimhan 2014; Ponniah 2017, 2023; Waghmore 2019; Subramanian 2019; Chickerur 2021; Narasimhan 2024). The reproduction of privilege and inequality in subtle yet differentiated ways, embedded in the notions of “modernity” in contemporary times, makes it imperative to look at institutions and spaces that facilitate reinforcing and maintaining relations of power.

The legitimization of power and inequality through an ideologically “modern” system operates interstitially across private and public domains. To capture the meaning of social change, Brahmins, along with other forward castes, are largely seen as mediating institutionalised demands and operations in the face of emerging needs, desires, and personal solidarities by balancing institutional demands with evolving desires for development (Bairy 2009; Waghmore 2019; Deshpande 2023).

It is presumed that with the rise in levels of education, a shift toward ‘modern’ attitudes and beliefs results in more fluid boundaries of caste that consider the idea of caste as an archaic institution of the past or present only in rural settings (Mose 2018). In the urban context, caste is often seen as an aberration, and when catered to, will result in its disappearance from the “urban and modern landscapes of India’s national life” (Jodhka and Naudet 2023, 1). These conceptions are based on the tendency to negate its continuing presence and impact, both as a structure of privilege and advantage and as discrimination. There has been a shift moving beyond the ritualistic formations by referring to Berreman (1991) to define caste as a system of “institutionalised inequality” that is obscured by overemphasis on purity and pollution (Dumont 1972). It is crucial to situate the differences between caste groups in the localised occupation hierarchy and specific cultural traditions based on control over resources, power, and status. This has led to an understanding of caste disparities as a complex institution in theory and practice, reinforced and asserted to maintain the hegemonic structure (Chakravarti 2003, 2018). Hence, the shifting frameworks of the operation and manifestation of caste from ritual purity to a system of “graded inequality” and power relations can be understood by focusing on contemporary changes rather than an isolated focus on structural continuities.

Given this context, through this paper, I aim to reflect on and examine the existing and emerging power relations informing hegemonic discourse through the content analysis of the caste publication *Kanyakubj Manch*, a caste journal/magazine. Caste journals serve as important documentation and record-keeping tools for tracing lineage, identity formation, and accumulating socio-cultural capital among dominant caste groups. These publications, often produced by caste associations and, in some

cases, by individual community members, aim to preserve and promote caste identity and heritage. This serves as a context to understand the presence, operation, and circulation of the *Kanyakubj Manch*, a tri-monthly journal/magazine associated with the *Kanyakubj* Brahmin community in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh.

Keywords: Caste publication, power, hegemony, Brahminism, identity, and capital

Studying Muslim Caste in ‘Unpleasant Times’: Challenges and Contestations of a Muslim Research Scholar

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Caste has not been a new question of debate in India; for at least the last one hundred years, caste has remained a central topic to our scholarly debate, political mobilisation and everyday politics. Even as India has undergone thorough democratisation and modernisation, the caste continues to play a significant role in our society, both in visible and invisible ways. While there have been extensive debates and scholarship on caste practices within Hinduism, scholarly attention to similar practices in other Indian religions, such as Islam, has been significantly less. Although discussions on the Muslim caste had occurred sporadically since the late colonial period, they gained significant visibility in the 1970s through the works of Prof. Imtiyaz Ahmad. However, this visibility was also largely confined to the academics, and it did not translate into the political sphere.

In the political sphere, a mobilisation of Pasandmunda Muslims under the leadership of Ali Anwar Ansari has addressed the caste question in Muslim politics; its impact remains limited. It has failed to generate a broader mobilisation and foster widespread discussions about caste among Muslims in India. Similarly, in academics also, very few scholars have engaged with the caste question of Muslims. Consequently, it remains an under-explored area in both the academic landscape and the socio-political discourse. .

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Alongside community discouragement, studying Muslim caste also raises certain theoretical and methodological challenges. Scholars often ask whether Muslim caste is the same as Hindu caste and whether it is appropriate to apply the same theoretical frameworks, given the different ideological and historical origins of the two religions. Methodologically, questions arise about which approaches yield reliable results and whether specific methods can be employed at all when the community perceives them as sensitive or “unpleasant”. This paper aims to discuss these challenges and reflect on the theoretical and methodological journey undertaken to address them, based on ethnographic research in coastal Kerala among the fisherfolk, or Pusalans.

The researcher’s positionality as a Muslim offers both advantages and disadvantages. While shared identity facilitates access and trust, it also brings isolation, criticism from close circles, and moments of self-doubt. This paper explores how the researcher navigates these challenges and contestations while engaging with the underexplored area of Muslim caste. In doing so, it also examines how the internal hierarchical structures within the Muslim community intersect with broader patterns of power and marginality, arguing that the marginality of the Muslims is closely connected with these caste or internal hierarchies.

Keywords: Caste in Islam, Unpleasant times, Methodological challenges.’

Local Practice, Global Stage: Tuluva Identity-Making in the Wake of Kantara

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Identities are constant work-in-progress; they are always in flux, subjected to forces shaping and re-shaping them. Sociological research, however, has traditionally fixated itself on identity through representation or contestation, virtually treating it as a fixed, finished product. As sociologist Steph Lawler (2014) observes, identities come under the sociological radar only during identity crises involving loss, erasure, or absence. To address this, Lawler argues for perspectives that extend beyond the

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fixed social categories and, instead, understood through the everyday social and collective processes involved in identity-making, turning identity into something actively achieved. While this may imply an end goal, signifying an eventual finished product, Lawler draws from Stuart Hall to suggest that the active processes also seek to restabilise instabilities inherent within the identities (ibid.). This paper draws on these theories to complicate the present understanding of identity-making through a case study of the Tuluva identity, particularly in the context of Daivaradhane - the cultural practice that has come to define it.

Daivaradhane – a unique non-Brahminical system of beliefs, rituals, and social practices, is limited to the Tulunad region of Karnataka and Kerala. It has long remained the central axis of academic research on the Tuluva identity. Existing literature, while extensive, is fragmented across three dominant but loosely connected strands of research. The first, Daivaradhane-centric strand, posits its ritual practices as the core analytical entry point into Tuluva culture, although how the practice was viewed changed between colonial and post-colonial scholarship. The former ignored the socio-religious complexity of Daivaradhane, mischaracterising it as “devil worship”, “demonolatory” or “primitive superstitions” (Walhouse 1876; Caldwell 1856). The latter rejected the reductive, orientalist perspective to re-centre it as a complex, integral socio-religious system unique to Tuluvas and as the primary arena of articulation of caste hierarchies and inter-caste (Claus 1979, 1989; Carrin 2008; Benjamin 2017). Other research, cutting across disciplines, captured the social, cultural, and philosophical aspects of Daivaradhane, focused on the meanings and embedded messages in the form (Gowda 2005), aesthetics (Baindur and Tapaswi 2019), and oral texts and rituals (Upadhyaya and Upadhyaya 2002; Shetty 2015, 2025).

A second, socio-political strand consciously decenters Daivaradhane to focus on broader transformations, including caste dynamics outside the sacred precincts (Devi 2016; Koudur 2020), land reforms, and migration (Damle 1989). Contemporary research here concerns the mechanisms of politicisation, ethnicisation, and polarisation of society (Parinitha 2012), through culturalisation of castes (Santhosh and Paleri 2021) and Hindunization of Daivaradhane (Mastaka 2008). A third, more recent cultural strand analyses Tuluva identity through media representations in and reception of Tulu films, often treating films as ethnographic texts (Darshan & Prasad 2020; Darshan B M 2016, 2017), though these studies remain within disciplinary siloes. Lost in these dominant academic strands are the linguistic and ethnic dimensions of Tuluva identity and their relationship to the broader social, cultural, economic, and political transformations.

In the 21st century, Tuluva identity increasingly asserts its linguistic and regionalist dimensions through a revived Tulu movement seeking recognition for the Tulu

language in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution and, ultimately, statehood for Tulu Nadu. A movement that once prioritised cultural aspirations over political ambitions (Someswar et al. 2000), under the pressures of a dominant ideology that upheld a multiplicity of national and sub-national identities (Satyanath 2009), now articulates linguistic and cultural pride alongside claims of marginalisation by the Kannadiga majority. While this political aspiration has been critiqued as lacking support (Tambs-Lyche 2024), exclusionary expressions of an ethnolinguistic, majoritarian Tuluva identity are prevalent in Tulu cultural productions, including films (Madhavamurthy & Sengupta 2025).

Fuelling the fire is the unprecedented public attention – statewide, national, and even global – that Daivaradhane has received in recent years. The commercial success of films like *Kantara* (2022) has led to a trend of similar movies featuring Daivaradhane, including *Kantara – 1* (2025), thrusting the practice from a local practice into a charged, public arena, with internal and external forces pulling the practice in different directions. The trend presents a significant challenge to the Tuluva identity's stability, and has triggered intense debates on culture and identity in Tulu and Kannada primetime electronic media as well as social media pages. These debates mostly concern (mis)representations, appropriations, and emulations of Daivaradhane which are often carried out by those who see it as a mere expression of plural Hinduism. These developments provide an opportunity to move beyond simplistic Hindutva consolidation or erasure of Tuluva identity theories.

While providing invaluable insights into the Tuluva identity and culture, the various academic strands rarely converge, ignoring the interplay between the role of faith, the region's political transformation, and the avenues and challenges associated with digital media, remain under-explored. This paper seeks to problematise reductive views of identity that either essentialise identity by anchoring it in specific cultural practices or frame the ongoing transformative processes in a language of erasure, externalising the agent of transformation. The paper's central research question asks: How is the Tuluva identity articulating and re-shaping within contemporary social and electronic media debates, and what does this process reveal about the sociological mechanisms of identity-making in a globalised media environment? The paper argues that the various forms and aspects of identities do not inhabit siloed realms but, almost always, are in a relationship that consistently attempts to address the inherent contradictions during identity crises to accomplish itself. By leveraging contemporary narratives and debates around Daivaradhane – considering its status as the core tenet, and a distinguishing marker, of the Tuluva identity and culture – this paper demonstrates the everyday construction of the various aspects of identity and how a crises in the form of films made on the practice expose the fractures i.e., contradictory aspirations of various aspects of the Tuluva identity, thereby threatening to destabilizing it and, ultimately, the processes and mechanisms that aid

in restabilising it. The paper seeks to contribute to the sociological study of identity through its complication of simplistic understandings of cultural and identity transformation. It demonstrates a more dynamic and agentive process in which a local identity is produced and reproduced.

Keywords: Identity Making, Tuluva Identity, Sociological Theory, Media Studies, Cultural Politics

Culture, Heritage, and Economic Survival: An Ethnographic Study of Dhokra Artisans of Bastar, Chhattisgarh

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Art, as a fundamental expression of civilization, reflects the values, aesthetics, and ethics of a society. It is neither an isolated creative act nor a purely commercial endeavor but a collective social practice embedded within broader networks of meaning, labor, and exchange (Becker, 1982; Mukherjee, 1951). This research explores these dimensions through an ethnographic study of Dhokra artisans in Bastar, Chhattisgarh, a region that preserves one of India's most enduring metallurgical traditions, the lost-wax casting technique. Dhokra art, which traces its lineage to the Indus Valley civilization, has survived through centuries as both an economic practice and a repository of tribal cultural heritage. In Bastar, it is primarily practiced by the Ghasia community, whose artistic craftsmanship continues to embody motifs of nature, mythology, and everyday tribal life. Yet, despite its cultural depth and aesthetic value, Dhokra artisanship faces critical challenges in the contemporary era, including market exploitation, inadequate institutional support, and the homogenizing pressures of globalization.

The study conceptualizes Dhokra not merely as an art form but as a social world, shaped by collaboration, ritual, and intergenerational knowledge transmission.

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Drawing from Howard Becker's "Art Worlds" (1982) and Pierre Bourdieu's (1983) theories of cultural capital and field, the research situates artisanship within relational networks that determine artistic legitimacy, access to markets, and social recognition. Traditional Indian perspectives, especially those of Ananda Coomaraswamy (1956) and Radhakamal Mukherji (1948), further illuminate the spiritual and moral underpinnings of Indian crafts where artistic creation is understood as a synthesis of beauty, utility, and ethical responsibility. This framework highlights how Dhokra artisanship transcends commodification: it embodies a way of life, linking individual creativity with collective identity and ecological balance.

At the same time, anthropological and sociological studies by Verrier Elwin, Virginia Xaxa, and Nandini Sundar provide a critical lens into the socio-economic and political realities of tribal life in Bastar. Elwin's work foregrounds the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems alongside economic empowerment, while Xaxa (2008) and Sundar (1997) interrogate how state interventions, globalization, and capitalist development have restructured tribal economies and identities. These insights are crucial to understanding the predicament of Dhokra artisans, who navigate between tradition and transformation, negotiating new markets while striving to retain cultural authenticity.

The literature also exposes the paradox of visibility and vulnerability: although Dhokra art has gained recognition in domestic and international markets, artisans often remain at the margins of profit chains. Studies by Chatterjee (2013) and Sinha (2021) show that intermediaries and traders capture the majority of commercial benefits, while artisans lacking market literacy and technological resources remain economically dependent. Furthermore, machine-made replicas and urban design adaptations, while enhancing accessibility, threaten

the symbolic and aesthetic integrity of the craft. This research, therefore, intervenes in these debates by emphasizing the lived experiences of artisans and their strategies of adaptation, resilience, and self-preservation within changing cultural economies.

The primary objective of the study is to examine how Dhokra art functions simultaneously as a cultural heritage and a means of economic survival. Specifically, it investigates:

1. how Dhokra art contributes to the construction of tribal identity and shared memory;
2. how knowledge and skill are transmitted across generations within the Ghasia community;
3. what economic challenges and opportunities artisans face amid globalization;

4. how external forces such as markets, state policies, and NGOs shape production and consumption; and
5. how artisans negotiate these forces to sustain both livelihood and heritage.

To address these objectives, the study adopts an ethnographic and exploratory research design, employing a mixed-methods approach. The fieldwork is conducted in Kondagaon (Shilpanagri) and Jagdalpur, two major centers of Dhokra production in Bastar. Data collection involves participant observation, semi-structured interviews with artisans, middlemen, sellers, and customers. Secondary data including archival records, academic literature, policy documents, and documentaries supplement field observations, situating the study within broader socio-historical contexts.

The analytic strategy combines thematic and interpretive analysis, allowing for both structural and cultural readings of artisanship. Themes such as *economic vulnerability*, *market adaptation*, *knowledge transmission*, and *cultural symbolism* will be explored to trace how artisans conceptualize their work as both livelihood and heritage. This analytical approach is informed by the dual frameworks of sociological institutionalism (which examines cooperation, value chains, and networks of art production) and anthropological humanism (which foregrounds meaning, belief, and identity).

Preliminary insights suggest that Dhokra artisans occupy a liminal position within India's development discourse, celebrated as bearers of cultural heritage yet excluded from economic prosperity. The craft's survival depends not only on market integration but also on the transmission of intangible cultural capital, skills, rituals, aesthetics, and values that sustain the moral universe of artisanship. The research thus situates Dhokra as a living tradition, continuously reinterpreted within changing material and symbolic economies.

Ultimately, this study contributes to broader debates on heritage, globalization, and the political economy of art. It challenges the binary between traditional and modern by demonstrating how artisans actively reinterpret their craft to align with contemporary aesthetic sensibilities and market demands, while retaining a deep sense of cultural rootedness. By foregrounding artisans' voices, the research seeks to bridge the gap between economic anthropology and cultural sociology, offering an integrative framework for understanding how heritage-based livelihoods persist and adapt in the twenty-first century.

In doing so, the study underscores the importance of recognizing artisans not as passive custodians of tradition but as creative agents navigating multiple modernities. Their resilience embodies a broader narrative of cultural continuity amid structural

change, a story of how art, community, and survival converge in the lived experience of the Dhokra artisans of Bastar.

Session A4

Economics

Chair: Dr. Bodhisattva Sengupta

Nexus between Climate Change and Yield Variability in Hill Regions of North-East India: Evidence from Quadratic Production Function

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Abstract: Globally, climate change across geographical regions increasingly affecting agriculture and the rural communities suffer more who primarily depend on it for livelihood. Using Just and Pope production function analytical framework, and three step feasible generalised least squares we examine the impacts of changing climatic variables on the growth and variability of yield of major crops across two hill districts in North-East India (Assam) during 1981-2022. Empirical results reveal significant variation in effects of changes in climate factors across crops. Rainfall emerges as risk-increasing factor for summer rice, wheat, tur, mustard, sugarcane and jute while it reduces risk for autumn and winter rice, and potato. Maximum temperature emerges as risk-increasing factor for wheat, mustard, sugarcane while it is risk decreasing for all rice varieties, tur, potato and jute. Minimum temperature is found to be risk-increasing for summer rice, potato and jute, while it is risk decreasing for wheat, tur, mustard, and sugarcane. Wind speed is also found to be a factor that affect yields of crops differently. Overall, erratic changes in rainfall and continuous rise in temperatures ultimately have mixed impacts, which are compounded in extreme conditions. These findings point to the need of national-level adaptation policy and also highlight the necessity for localized, context-specific and micro-level adaptations to mitigate climate change risk for crop productivity in this eastern Himalayan region of Assam.

Keywords: Climate change, stochastic production function, Crop yield, Variability, Production risk
JEL No: Q10, Q19, C23, Q54, Q56

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Crop Diversification as a Climate Adaptation Strategy: Implications for Farming Livelihoods in Assam

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In India, about 50% of the population are dependent on agriculture (Bahinipati & Venkatachalam, 2015). This sector remains vulnerable to climatic changes, which in turn have considerable implications for the economic well-being of farming households (Birthal et al., 2021). Approximately 60% of agricultural produce is influenced by climate changes, which directly impact farmers' livelihoods (Aryal et al., 2020). India also facing the problems of a decreasing land-to-population ratio, a growing population, unemployment, changing consumer food habits, and a rapidly changing market pattern (Bahinipati & Patnaik, 2015). In the present scenario, crop diversification is one of the processes that has recently developed in an agriculturally dependent country (Behera et al., 2023a). This process involves practices such as crop rotation, multiple cropping, and intercropping, which contribute to the improvement of the agricultural sector (Hufnagel et al., 2020). Diversified farms are resilient to market shifts, protect against climate change, and have proven to be the most reliable method of reducing poverty through increased income (Akber et al., 2022). Therefore, crop diversification remains a viable option for safeguarding the production risk. Moreover, crop diversification helps farmers to grow a variety of crops that facilitate their income (Feliciano, 2019). It also helps improve the soil health, keeps pests and diseases away, and leads to more stable crop yields (Behera et al., 2023b).

In developing nations like India, considerable efforts are being made to promote crop diversification, but it still fails to be adopted efficiently (Birthal & Hazrana, 2019). Similarly, in the Northeastern state of Assam, a similar situation also prevails. Assam has diverse climatic conditions, encompassing both plain and hilly regions (Dutta and Saikia, 2016). About 70% of the population are dependent on agriculture as a source of income, but it still fails to provide an adequate contribution to the net state domestic product (Kumar De, 2014). Moreover, very limited studies are being conducted on the North-Eastern region of Assam regarding the study area of crop diversification as a climate adaptation strategy. Thus, this study tries to examine the

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various factors that influence the adoption of crop diversification and also to understand how crop diversification affects the farming communities and their livelihoods.

To fulfil these objectives this study uses cross-sectional data collected by the NSSO during its 77th round, which focused on land and livestock holdings and the situation of agricultural households in 2018-2019. It specifically focused on the Kharif season (July to December), especially in Assam, and analysed responses about 1,706 farming households during that period. So, for the first study it uses the Double Hurdle (DH) model, and for the second study, the Propensity Score Matching (PSM) method.

The DH model is used for assessing the decisions to be adopted and the intensity of the crop diversification. The first hurdle of the DH model determines whether a household will adopt crop diversification or not (0,1). The second hurdle determines factors that affect the intensity of crop diversification, given that the household is an adopter. The DH model are

similar to the log-likelihood of a probit model and a truncated regression model. Hence, it is efficient to run a separate regression for the first hurdle with a probit model and truncated regression for the second hurdle to obtain a consistent estimate with the DH model.

The PSM is beneficial in measuring the second objective as it measures the exact effect on the livelihood of adopting crop diversification to the non-adoption of crop diversification. To achieve robust results, this analysis incorporated neighbour-based approach, radius approach, and kernel approach. The PSM has a two-step procedure. In the first step, a logistic regression model is used to adjust for any systematic differences in the baseline characteristics between the diverse groups receiving treatment and those in the control group. In the second step, we calculated the average impact of the treatment for those who received it (ATT), for those who didn't receive it (ATU), and overall, for the entire group (ATE).

This study reveals that farmer's decisions to diversify crops in Assam are influenced not only by their household situations but also by the institutions that shape farming choices. Families with more members, smallholders, and those from marginalized communities are anticipated to rely more on diversification, often as a way to balance limited resources with the need for food security and income. Even a basic level of education is likely to help farmers manage more varied cropping systems, while access to irrigation should make it easier to experiment with crops beyond the traditional staples. The institutional picture, however, is more complex. Affordable credit, remittances, and support from programs such as MGNREGA are likely to encourage diversification by easing financial pressures. In contrast, schemes such as crop insurance and technical advice may sometimes push farmers toward

specialization, narrowing the range of crops instead of broadening it. Experiences of crop loss may also prompt households to adopt new crops, although this does not significantly increase overall diversity. Overall, the study highlights diversification as both a livelihood strategy and a form of risk management. Strengthening irrigation, credit access, education, and better-aligned institutional support is beneficial for enabling farmers to diversify more effectively.

Keywords: Climate Change, Crop Diversification, Factors, Adaptation Strategy, and Livelihood

District-level agricultural risk analysis of a north-east Indian state (Assam), using entropy-based-TOPSIS and latest IPCC risk framework

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1. Introduction

The Eastern Himalayan Region (EHR) of India, houses economies that are primarily agrarian in setting. Blessed with rich biodiversity, and replenished by the perennial rivers of the Barak and the Brahmaputra, this region supports distinct socio-economic activities. The activities are primarily rooted in agri-based occupations. However, over the years, due to the rapidly changing climate, the economic and social life of this region has been greatly affected (GoA, ASDMA, 2022). During the past few decades, the frequency and the intensity of the disasters, plaguing this region, has also surged manifold. The region largely suffers from annual floods, seismic activities, landslides, storms, cloud bursts etc. and in the recent past the region has also been experiencing droughts, and forest fires. Of all the states lying in the EHR, the state of Assam is of special interest, this is because it is located in the flood plains of the mighty river Brahmaputra, making its population and the agricultural sector highly susceptible to the aggravated risks arising from the climate

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change related hazards, vulnerability, and exposure. In recent years, multiple studies (Brooks et al., 2005; Das et al., 2020; Krishnamurthy et al., 2014; Partey et al., 2020) have been investigating the vulnerability and risks profiles for different states of India, but only a handful of the studies (Alam et al., 2022; Dasgupta et al., 2024; Rao et al., 2016; Shah & Malakar, 2024) have done it for the district level. Even though, construction of indices, to assess, climate change impacts, is widely practiced, but construction of sector specific indices with updated frameworks is an emerging area of interest. This is because, with emergence of new and improved frameworks sector specific impacts of climate change can be better assessed and addressed. Therefore, through this study we aim –

- To build an aggregated agricultural risk index by employing TOPSIS approach with entropy weights.
- To identify the indicators that contribute highest and lowest to the overall risk outcome.

2. Methodology

2.1 IPCC latest risk framework

The risk framework defines risk as the function of hazard, vulnerability, and exposure. Symbolically,

$$\text{Risk} = f(\text{Hazard} \times \text{Vulnerability} \times \text{Exposure})$$

We use latest IPCC's (IPCC, 2022) definitions of hazard, vulnerability, and exposure, to short list agri-specific indicators for construction of the indices. A total of 39 indicators were grouped under the sub-components of risk.

2.2. Entropy weighted TOPSIS

Shannon's entropy method (Shannon, 1948) is employed for obtaining weights for the decision matrix, the steps are as follows (briefly) –

- Decision matrix generation and normalization
- Entropy value (e_j) calculation and calculation of degree of divergence ($d_j = 1 - e_j$)
- Generation of entropy weights ($w_j = d_j / \sum d_j$)

Weighted TOPSIS (Zou et al., 2023) is employed for obtaining the indices thereafter. TOPSIS was initially proposed by Hwang & Yoon, 1981, and in

this study we employ the same. The steps associated with the approach are (briefly) –

- (i) Decision matrix normalization and weighted matrix generation
- (ii) Determining ideal best (B_j^+) and ideal worst solutions (B_j^-)
- (iii) Calculation of Euclidean distance (E_i^+) and (E_i^-)
- (iv) Calculation of performance score (Q_i)
- (v) Min-Max standardisation ($Y_i - Y_{min} / Y_{max} - Y_{min}$)

2. Results

The results obtained can be listed as follows –

- (i) Inter-district variability of agricultural risks, is noted among the districts of the same agro-climatic zones.
- (ii) The districts of Kamrup Rural and West Karbi Anglong are highest risk prone.
- (iii) The districts of Dimahasao, Dibrugarh, and Nagaon, scores highest in proneness to hazard, vulnerability, and exposure.

Session B1

Sociology

Chair: Prof. Maitrayee Chaudhuri

‘Token Fatigue’: Queer narratives of workplace discrimination in India

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Introduction –

In the contemporary age of globalization, many corporate organizations prioritize inclusivity due to the advantages of employing a diverse workforce. The LGBTQ community is often a target of discrimination in the workplace (Kattari et al., 2016; Nelson et al., 2019). They are victims of illegal firing, bullying, microaggressions, and verbal and physical harassment. According to a study¹ conducted in 2024 by the Williams Institute, School of Law, UCLA, nearly 47% of LGBTQ employees in the USA have reported experiencing discrimination or harassment at work.

Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code² was decriminalized in 2018. However, this legal recognition has not led to social acceptance. Violence against the LGBTQ population is still rampant in India. To prevent homophobia in the workplace, the DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) framework was adopted worldwide (Morukian, 2022). However, inclusion is more than simply hanging a rainbow flag outside one’s house or incorporating pride colors into a company’s brand logo. Most companies engage in ‘rainbow washing,’ also known as pride or pinkwashing (Schopper et al., 2024). They hire LGBTQ candidates to meet their diversity quota or enhance their public image. This is done to create an illusion of diversity, rather than implementing any real change.

Methodology and Research Question –

Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and participant observation over a six-month period. The timeline for data collection was from August 15th to November 15th, 2024, and from March 8th to June 8th, 2025. The sample size of this study is 20. The field site is New Delhi and Kolkata, two metropolitan cities in India. After the data collection, the interviews were transcribed by the researcher into Word files. Open coding was

used to label concepts, which were then synthesized into categories and interpreted as themes. The primary objective of this study is to describe the various forms of

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discrimination faced by LGBTQ individuals in the workplace and to examine the ‘performative allyship’ of the Indian corporate sector.

Findings and Results -

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braune & Clarke, 2019). This led to the emergence of three major themes, mainly: (i) disclosure dilemma, (ii) microaggression, and (iii) tokenism.

Theme 1 – Disclosure Dilemma

Self-disclosure refers to the act of revealing sensitive and vulnerable information about oneself. When individuals hesitate to disclose a stigmatized aspect of their identity, it causes a dilemma within them. However, disclosure is a continuous process, and not a one-time event (Raggins *et al.*, 2007). For example, a gay man concealing his identity so that he isn’t overshadowed during promotions or becomes the topic of office gossip.

Theme 2 – Microaggression

Microaggressions are subtle forms of everyday verbal/nonverbal, intentional/unintentional acts of discrimination and aversion directed toward a minority group (Williams *et al.*, 2021). For example, asking a male colleague about his girlfriend indicates an assumption of heterosexuality. When a bisexual person is not considered ‘bisexual’ because she is dating a man, it leads to an erasure of her identity. Additionally, a major example is using the wrong pronouns. One must always respect others’ pronouns and use them accurately.

Theme 3 – Tokenism

Tokenism refers to a perfunctory or symbolic gesture that appears to be more inclusive of underrepresented groups or individuals, creating the illusion of diversity. It often leads to misinformation about the groups being represented. Individuals in the role of a token are bound to feel marginalised, dehumanised, misrepresented, ridiculed, stereotyped, and depersonalized. For example, being treated as a token or representative of the LGBTQ community, rather than as an individual. Or, appointing only one gay man as a member of the Board of Directors to portray that your company supports LGBTQ rights.

Implications –

In the 21st century, there is a growing emphasis on engaging with marginalized communities and amplifying the voices of underrepresented populations. DEI policies play a crucial role in promoting inclusivity. DEI recognizes inter-sectionality and addresses multiple forms of exploitation and discrimination. Companies should establish queer inclusive DEI Policies and organize gender sensitization workshops

to prevent homophobia and increase the job satisfaction and mental well-being of their employees, which in turn leads to better financial performance

Women and the Urban Commons: The Stewardship of Shared Spaces in Varanasi

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Urban commons can be referred as the spaces and resources which are shared, owned and accessed equally by urban community to ensure their own survival and well-being. Earlier, commons were understood in terms of forests, pastures and rural landscapes but with the rapid urbanisation and privatisation of the public resources in the cities shifted the focus of social scientists towards urban commons. The urban commons such as parks, lakes, ponds, ghats, rivers, underwent with a lot of changes in Indian cities such as Bengaluru, Delhi, and Mumbai.

Varanasi is one of the oldest living cities of the world in terms of habitation, heritage, culture and the spiritual heart of India. In the last few years, it has undergone so many changes due to the rapid urbanization and privatisation. The urban commons of Varanasi city such as the river Ganga, ghats, temples and public parks have been re-constructed and beautified in these processes. These spaces are not just material; but are constructed by social relations, labour and care. In particular, it is often the women who play an important role in maintaining, caring and co-creating the public spaces which constitutes a form of stewardship. Such stewardship is not only limited to responsible management and preservation of the urban commons but also extends to the acts of negotiation, informal rule-making, and resistance for the maintenance of these commons. Yet these practices by women are often overlooked and unrecognized in the dominant discourses.

Keywords: Urban Commons, Women's Stewardship, Varanasi, Urban Sustainability

Research Objectives

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This research paper critically examines the everyday stewardship undertaken by women, with the focus on how such daily care and maintenance practices shape, sustain and sometimes contest the social and material spaces of the Varanasi city. The investigation is drawn by three objectives:

1. To interrogate the modes and meanings of women's everyday care of urban commons in Varanasi.
2. To analyse the implications of women's urban stewardship on urban sustainability and social cohesion.
3. To examine how women negotiate, redefine, and resist the restrictions and opportunities embedded within Varanasi's urban landscape.

Methodology

The study employs a qualitative research design rooted to capture the complexity of women's engagement with urban commons in Varanasi. The methodology is based on these interconnected approaches:

1. Ethnographic observations: The fieldwork will be conducted in some selected urban spaces of Varanasi, especially focusing on ghats and River Ganga.
2. In-depth interviews and oral histories: The semi-structured interviews with women of different caste, class and age-groups will be conducted to capture diverse experiences of engagement with urban commons.
3. Analysis of documents and media reports: The local newspapers, NGO reports and government documents will be reviewed to assess the women's initiatives and achievements with the respect to urban commons.

Key Findings (Proposed)

- *Stewardship at the Ghats of Varanasi:* The ghats of Varanasi at the bank of River Ganga, are very essential part of the city which not only serve as the spaces of spiritual importance but also play an important role as urban common for the residents. These urban commons need regular maintenance and care. Women have engaged themselves as the key stewards of these spaces from the everyday routine cleaning to environmental sustainability. Several local newspapers have showed how women's group like Green Army Initiative, take care of daily cleaning, organize

awareness campaigns for river pollution, and participate in ritual care which merges spiritual and ecological stewardship.

- *Transforming waste into eco-friendly products:* One of the remarkable innovations is the transformation of temple and festival wastes into eco-friendly products such as the discarded clothes are collected and are reused by SHG-led microenterprises into usable bags and handicrafts. This shows the contribution of women in maintenance of environmental sustainability.
- *Maintaining Urban Parks:* The urban parks are crucial commons for social gathering, recreation and biodiversity. Women with the help of neighbourhood residents' and Self-Help Groups, play an important but often overlooked role in maintaining these spaces. Some case studies by local NGOs and media highlight how women's group have maintained parks by regular cleaning, seasonal planting and organizing children's and senior citizen's events. One of the notable initiatives is "Dadi-Pota theme park" which will be the home for old-age women and children, where the children will be taken care with the love of women residing. Also, the children will be given primary education, which will weave together social and environmental care.
- *Cleanliness Drives:* The women of Varanasi are also the key custodians of cleanliness and waste management in the city. An Open Defecation Free initiative under Swachh Bharat Mission 2.2, the focus has been given upon waste collection and processing. In this initiative over 1,000 women have been appointed for waste collection, segregation, and processing, which highlights the women's vital role in the stewardship of urban commons.
- *Gendered Spatial Politics:* Though the women stewardship of shared spaces in Varanasi is vital but it is also shaped by the complexities of gender, caste, class and religions, as women of marginalized class and caste face more vulnerability in care and labour work. The women participate and contribute in the management of urban commons but still the patriarchal mindset exists in the city as the male section dominates the public spaces, rituals, temples and the women's care get unrecognized and overlooked. These works are also hierarchical in nature as the women sweeping the ghats, participating in regular cleaning practices are mostly from lower and marginalized sections of the society, which shows that the practices of care and stewardship are also political in nature.

Fatherhood 2.0 : Exploring the Masculinities of 'stay-at-home' fathers in Urban India

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This paper aims to examine the gender performance of stay-at-home fathers. India has lacked extensive research on a man's masculinity when he becomes a father, especially if he is a stay-at home, unemployed father. A very restrictive hetero-patriarchal family set-up has always seen fathers as the breadwinners of the family, while the mother stays at home and takes care of the domestic sphere. But what happens if the father makes a conscious choice of not being employed and staying at home in order to take care of the children? How does this affect the family dynamics? What does the father staying at home feel about his masculinity? And more importantly, is society as accepting of a stay-at-home father as it is in case of a stay-at-home mother? This paper tries to explain a man's masculinity as a social construct, shaped by a multitude of factors. In doing so, it brings in references from the theory of gender performativity by Judith Butler. Central to this theory is the idea that an individual's gender is a fluid, non-essentialist construct which is shaped by her/his embodied experiences and symbolic representations. This paper also delves deep into the man's experience as a stay-at-home father and how he looks at fatherhood- as his whole identity or as part of his identity. Since this paper is on fatherhood and masculinity, it also references Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity. This research is solely based on the Indian context and, it will study men belonging to families in the urban middle-class. A section of this paper also looks into stay-at-home parenting during the pandemic and how the lockdown played a role in affecting the dynamic of these so-called atypical families. In short, this paper aims to look at fatherhood from a nuanced lens by trying to explain how the concept of domestic masculinity fits in India. Gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time- an identity instituted through stylised repetition of acts(Butler, 1988). Butler has argued that both gender and identity are performative, constructed through constant repetition of certain behaviours that align with expected social norms. Butler, therefore, positions their theory opposite to the theory of gender essentialism. According to Butler , gender is socially constructed and performative. Our identity is also shaped by the things we learn and repeat around us, mainly,

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through actions, speech, and behaviour. Erving Goffman in his theory of Dramaturgy('The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life', 1959), has said that an individual's identity is something they construct to present himself in social interactions. The identity that he has constructed for himself varies depending on the social situation he is in and the people present in front of him. Thus, our identity is not something we are born with. It is culturally shaped and our persistent repetition of certain actions and behaviours has made identity seem natural. One of the many things that Butler has said in their theory of gender performativity is that these prior anticipated and repeatedly performed expressions create what an individual appears to be. For instance, a man acts masculine not because he is born a man but because of the repeated performance of the culturally shaped 'masculine' behaviours that makes him be looked at as a man. Thus, any research on the masculinity of a man will start with a study on the various factors that have led to the formation and shaping of his identity. The aim of this research is to explore the masculinity of an unemployed, stay-at-home father. Having discussed the factors that have contributed towards the shaping of a man's identity, the next point that this paper will engage with is how the man is performing his masculinity when he chooses to be an unemployed, stay-at-home father. Looking at a man's masculinity as the consequence of his identity formation and performativity also means evolving from the idea of essentialist masculinity, which assumed that certain inherent, unchanging characteristics defined all men and that these characteristics were rooted in biology. While studying domestic masculinity, this paper will also discuss the concept of the *feminisation of the man* who is a stay-at-home father.

Keywords- masculinity, domestic, fatherhood, gender, urban.

Session B2

History

Chair: Prof. Arupjyoti Saikia

A Cultural History of Conquest: Fathiyā-i Ibriyā and the Mughal Expansion into Northeast India

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The Mughal invasion of Kuch Bihar, located in the northern part of Bengal (now split between modern West Bengal and Bangladesh in eastern South Asia), began in 1661 under Nawab Mir Jumla. He was appointed as the *sūbādār* (governor) of the Mughal province of Bengal during the reign of the sixth Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (1658–1707). A recollection of this campaign appears in *Fathiyā-i Ibriyā* or *Ta'rīkh-e-Āshām*, written by Shihabuddin Talish, who served as Mir Jumla's *waqā'i nawīs* (news reporter) during the Kuch Bihar and Assam campaigns (1661–1663). This text provides an eyewitness account of the Mughal-Ahom conflict, detailing the war, topography, and culture in the regions of Kuch Bihar and Assam. While earlier works have investigated this text to glean information for the expedition, my paper will analyse the representational politics of this text to offer a cultural history of this conquest.

The Mughal–Kuch relationship was historically dynamic and often in flux. While the Bengal *subā* had become an integral part of the Mughal empire by the sixteenth century, Kuch Bihar and Assam remained on its shifting peripheries. Yet, military and political interactions with the Mughal state left a significant impact on the institutions of these kingdoms and shaped the imperial imagination of the northeastern frontier. To explore this dimension, this paper examines the Mughal reconquest of Kuch Bihar in 1661 as a case that extended beyond military conquest to encompass political integration and cultural negotiation. I will critically analyse Talish's account to investigate how imperial narratives represented these processes and what they reveal about the Mughal conception of authority and legitimacy at the empire's northeastern limits. I study *Fathiyā-i Ibriyā* as a key text for understanding the interplay of power, prestige, and identity in imperial campaigns and for rethinking how the Mughal state imagined and narrated the legitimisation of its frontier conquests.

Historians such as Gautam Bhadra and Jadunath Sarkar have studied different aspects of these events. Bhadra emphasised their economic significance, while Sarkar underlined their political and administrative dimensions. While these works remain

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important for understanding the political history of Mughal–Kuch relations, this paper shifts focus from events to representation. It examines how imperial historiography itself becomes a site for negotiating frontier identity and legitimacy. Through a close reading of Talish’s chronicle, I explore how the northeastern frontier was imagined, described, and justified in the Mughal political culture. Before delving into the main analysis, I will briefly outline the political origins of the Kuch kingdom to situate the region within its historical context. The paper is then divided into two main sections. The first section studies the Mughal perception of the Kuch space and environment. By the time Talish was writing, Kuch Bihar was no longer an alien space for the Mughals. From Akbar’s reign onwards, the Kuch Rajas had been vassals of the Mughal Empire. This section asks how *Fathiyā-i Ibriyā* represents a local kingdom through the empire’s lens and how geography, boundaries, and nature are used to legitimise conquest. The text offers a detailed account of Kuch Bihar’s landscape, economy, and politics, which I analyse to understand what experiences shaped the Mughal perception of the region and how those perceptions were articulated in the imperial discourse. Talish’s description reflects the official voice of the state while illustrating how fluctuating political control caused tensions between fixed imperial boundaries and the realities of frontier governance. Finally, this section explores how the Mughal Empire made sense of and justified incorporating a region it sought to absorb.

The Mughal encounter was not only limited to the geographical aspects of the region, but also to its people and their space. The second section examines the representation of Mughal interaction with the people and culture of Kuch Bihar to unpack the imperial imagination of the frontier. Talish’s account reveals how the Mughal Persianate culture encountered, identified, and mapped the Kuch people. His descriptions of their customs, appearance, and environment demonstrate how conquest was also an interpretive act, in other words, a way of incorporating the “other” within the Mughal ideological framework. Understanding these depictions in the text reveals how cultural and environmental perceptions shaped the empire’s political and military strategies in the region. The Mughal encounter, as described by Talish, was therefore not limited to just warfare but extended into the realm of cultural perception and representation. It sheds light on the relations between the Mughals and the northeastern frontier in early modern India. This analysis will focus on how the attributes of Kuch Bihar, its people, political structure, and cultural practices, were considered to be either familiar or foreign to the Mughal political and social systems. Lastly, this section will reveal not just the imperial attempts to understand the region, but also how they adapted or imposed their own values onto it.

Together, these sections reveal how an imperial chronicle like *Fathiyā-i Ibriyā* would narrativise the imperial reconquest of a local kingdom and how the Mughal power

relations would be imagined, asserted, and negotiated on the empire's northeastern frontier. Through this, the text also participates in legitimising imperial expansion as both a civilizational and political project. Talish's writing offers a nuanced interpretation of conquests. A close reading of his tone reveals not only the empire's political ambitions, but also its anxieties, fear, and frustration with the uncertainties of a frontier campaign. Ultimately, this study proposes *Fathiyā-i Ibriyā* as more than a record of political conquest. By analysing Talish and his work, I argue that the reconquest of Kuch Bihar was not merely a military episode but a cultural encounter that highlighted questions of power relations, interactions, and identity within the imperial order. Reading such narratives critically helps us to rethink Mughal authority and political culture vis-à-vis its shifting peripheries. In doing so, the paper contributes to a broader understanding of how the empire wrote, perceived, and redefined its limits, through both the sword and the pen.

Imperial Indian Capital: Constructing New Delhi Amid Unhealthiness, 1911-1932

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Keywords: Colonial governance; Environmental history; Disease; Delhi

This paper reinterprets the making of New Delhi—the imperial capital of British India built between 1911 and 1932—through the analytical lens of environmental history. While the construction of New Delhi has been extensively studied as a project of imperial architecture, urban design, and colonial symbolism (Irving 1981; Metcalf 1989; Volwahn 2002; Hosagrahar 2005; Legg 2007; Sharan 2014), little attention has been paid to the ecological conditions and sanitary anxieties that underpinned its making. This study argues that the capital's construction was not simply an expression of imperial permanence, but an environmental project deeply shaped by concerns over disease, water, and drainage.

Conceived as an international showcase, New Delhi embodied both a promise of liberation and a continuation of colonial dependence. Rival European planners, divided by competing visions, revealed a drama of haste, environmental ignorance, and the persistent spatial segregation of Britons and Indians. The committee used

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the fear of shared infrastructure, insanitary spill overs, and diseases to make a boundary between New Delhi and Delhi. By tracing how debates over “unhealthiness” informed the selection of Delhi as the site of the new capital, the paper reveals the paradox of colonial planning: the very environmental problems that British officials sought to escape by relocating the capital—malaria, cholera, and unsanitary water conditions—re-emerged during its construction.

The paper argues that New Delhi’s making was not only a political or aesthetic act but also an experiment in environmental control—an effort to naturalize imperial hierarchies through technologies of sanitation, drainage, and water supply. Situating Delhi within global histories of capital city planning—from Canberra to Washington—it highlights how colonial regimes used the rhetoric of health and hygiene to legitimize spatial segregation and uneven development.

The paper situates this contradiction within the broader logics of colonial governance, where the management of bodies and environments was central to the making of modern urban space. By tracing these ecological entanglements, this paper rethinks modern planning not as a story of separation but as one of overlapping environments and shared vulnerabilities. In doing so, the paper contributes to the ongoing rethinking of modernity in the humanities and social sciences—moving from architectural and political representations of empire toward ecological and infrastructural interpretations.

Objectives

1. To rewrite the making of New Delhi as an environmental history of empire, foregrounding the ecological and sanitary anxieties that shaped British planning decisions.
2. To situate the priorities of town-planning experts and officials within Delhi’s ecological context.
3. To uncover the continuities between Old Delhi and New Delhi, showing that the boundary between “healthy” and “unhealthy” spaces was imagined, and not definite.
4. To explore how infrastructures of water, drainage, and sewage functioned as technologies of governance, used to classify and control bodies, spaces, and communities.

Methodology

The study draws on a diverse body of primary sources and interdisciplinary methods to reconstruct the environmental conditions that shaped the making of New Delhi:

1. Archival documents from the India Office Records, Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), Cambridge University, National Archives of India and Delhi

Archives focusing on planning reports, correspondences, public work departments and sanitary engineers' memoranda.

2. Sanitation and medical reports of the Government of India and the Delhi Municipal Committee that tracked water quality, malaria incidence, and drainage problems between 1911 and 1932.

3. Local newspapers, periodicals, memoirs and magazines

4. Maps, surveys, and engineering blueprints

Methodologically, the paper demonstrates how reading technical documents as environmental texts can reveal the implicit ecological reasoning of colonial statecraft. It also adopts an interdisciplinary approach that combines environmental history, history of medicine, and urban infrastructure studies, exemplifying the conference's theme of bridging perspectives and methods across the humanities and social sciences.

Key Findings

1. Environmental anxieties drove the choice of Delhi as the imperial site- competing expert opinions revealed deep uncertainty about the city's water table, soil drainage, and disease ecology.

2. The construction phase re-created the very unhealthiness the planners sought to avoid. Labourers, many of them migrants housed in overcrowded "coolie lines," suffered outbreaks of malaria, cholera, and typhoid. Sanitary officers frequently described the labour camps as "miniature old Delhi's." Environmental separation was difficult because of ecological entanglements.

3. Infrastructures of water and drainage became tools of social and racial ordering- The planning of separate water supplies and sewage systems for European and Indian quarters illustrates how colonial governance linked bodily health to spatial hierarchy. The "healthy" New Delhi was maintained through the deliberate neglect of the old city and its peripheral villages.

4. Continuities, not separations, defined Delhi's urban ecology- Despite attempts to construct a modern, sanitary capital, shared aquifers, rivers, and drains tied the two Delhi's together. The paper thus challenges the notion of New Delhi as a break from the past, presenting instead an ecology of entanglement.

5. Piped water, the harbinger of modernity in India- The official narrative of the British colonial state providing 'pure and adequate' water through modern water and sewage networks did not match the reality on the ground. The system was limited, with an uneven geography of pipes that often led to frequent outbreaks of epidemics.'

Pir Katha Literature of Bengal in the Domain of Islamic Literature: Historiographical Trends and Present Challenges

Jayeeta Ghosh²²

Presidency University

The regional characteristics of Islam in Bengal has been a much-discussed topic among scholars from various discipline. The thirteenth century marked the beginnings of Islamization across Bengal, as political expansion brought further cultural transformations. As Richard Eaton demonstrates in *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760*, Sufis and Pirs played a central role in making Islam popular among local people. With establishment of dargah and khanqah, stories and legends of charisma and miracles became part of the hagiographical narratives. In Bengal, much like in other parts of South Asia, biographical narratives about Sufis were started to be composed. The literature centred on pirs in Bengal occupies an important place in the broader corpus of Islamic literature in South Asia, yet its historiography reveals that this tradition has faced continuous tensions of legitimacy. The importance of Sufi hagiographic literatures in understanding Sufism, and Islam in general, was highlighted during mid-twentieth century, by historians like Muhammad Habib and K. Nizami. They have initiated a discourse on the role and influence of Islam in India through the study of interactions between the state and Sufi groups. The spiritual and intellectual history of Islam and Indian society was largely shaped through the biographies and letters of Chishti Sufi saints. S. A. A. Rizvi divided the Sufi literature produced in South Asia into several categories — such as Malfuzat (records of conversations between a spiritual master and his disciples), Maktubat (letters or correspondence), and Tazkirat (biographical writings). These literary works were primarily composed for didactic and religious purposes. Sufi writings were generally authored by individuals belonging to specific Sufi orders (silsilas). Scholars like Asim Roy, Richard Eaton often highlighted role of these Sufi figures as “cultural mediators” whose presence helped to negotiate religious authority over local populations. During nineteenth and twentieth centuries, historiographical interest in such literature became part of a larger conversation about Muslim identity, literary culture, and vernacular Islam. These questions carry implications for what is considered acceptable in Islam and what

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counts as “legitimate” literature. In this context, a specific genre of literature written in *dobhasi* bangla namely the ‘Pir Katha sahitya’, becomes important to discuss. First categorized by Girindranath Das in 1960, this literary genre consists of narrative compositions about both historical and imaginary pir figures in Bengal. Rooted in oral traditions, Pir Katha literature carries within it both narrative and performative elements. With the advent of print culture, these stories developed into *punthi* tradition which helped in preserving their performative and oral underpinnings.

The initial challenges of identifying Pir Katha literatures within the domain of Islamic religious literatures became evident during nineteenth century. The religious reform movements in Bengal, often aligned with more “orthodox” or reformist impulses, criticized ideas expressed in Pir Katha literature, labelling them impure or heterodox influences. It also faces scrutiny to standardization of Bengali literature and language during nineteenth and twentieth century due to usage of *dobhasi Bangla*, a mixed register incorporating Bengali vernacular elements along with Perso-Arabic and Urdu vocabulary. The logic of “purity” in language and question of mixed registers corresponded with validity of Muslim identity with their linguistic choice. And thus questioning the legitimacy of Pir Katha literature as part of Islamic religious literature in Bengal. The classification of these texts as “folk” and “fictional,” by scholars from various disciplines contradicted its didactic qualities for several decades. These texts were marginalised to understand the serious domain of Islamic literature.

This paper explores that the regional character of Islam and confusion regarding the nature can be solved if we can borrow and examine the framework of Sufi biographical literature that included elements of Keramat and miracles, and re-interpret the genre of Pir Katha Literature. And shows how despite these challenges, Pir Katha literature offered an alternative ideological space with essence of Sufism to contest reformist critiques. And shows how shaping Muslim identity in Bengal goes beyond orthodox definition of Islamic religious literature and can provide a better understanding of regional characteristics of Islam in Bengal. This paper addresses that Pir Katha literature in Bengal, despite challenges and critiques from religious reformism continued to exist and can provide a layered understanding of Islam in Bengal beyond rigidity of the lens of purity and orthodoxy, by taking into account of vernacular, popular, performative dimensions of these literatures.

Session B3

English

Chair: Dr. Debapriya Basu

Literary Memes: A Categorical Estimate and Analytical Framework

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Keywords: Memes • Digital Narratives • Semiotics • Internet humour • Conceptual blending

Literature and its expression have found new avenues in the world of the internet. This work attempts to study literature through the internet-phenomenon that we call memes. Memes, usually aimed at being humorous, are a powerful tool for encoding messages and they have found their way into the discourses of literary discussions. In this paper, I shall look at a subcategory of memes, namely literary memes, and present a two-fold argument— a. how to categorize them, and b. how to study them. What I mean by literary memes are those which either speak of a work of literature or uses literature as the vehicle for communicating ideas. Jacques Lacan's semiotics and Ernesto Laclau's discourse theory speak of a phenomenon called a floating signifier, that is a sign that need not always point to one object but rather it may present different signifieds depending on the context of the receiver. Attardo (2024) shows that memes are indeed floating signifiers. Memes comprise of multimodal signifiers that point to an idea. He also uses the concept of the memetic drift, where a meme may refer to one idea but with time may move on to encompass other ideas or refer to something completely different. Using these concepts, in this work I shall analyse a pool of literary memes, collected from Reddit and other sources. First, I shall show how these memes can be divided into three types: Type A- where both the signifier and signified are in the same textual domain, Type B- where the signifier belongs to literature domain and the signified to a different domain (e.g. socio-politics), and Type C- where the signifier belongs to an external domain but the signified refers to a literary domain. Second, I show how these types require different processing models. I shall use Halliday's (1978) multimodal semiotics for this analysis. Type A is processed almost directly since the signifier and the signified exist in the same domain. Type B and Type C, I shall show, have a two-step processing. In the first step, there is a semiotic mapping between the two domains into one conceptual frame, which then subsequently constructs meaning through the negotiations of the multimodal intertextualities.

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Third, I shall discuss the significance of the meanings from Types B and C and show how the difference in source and target domains impact the meme's efficiency.

Finally, through a close analysis of some memes and a reductionist strategy, I shall attempt to show what how literary content is encoded in these units. I also take a look at how critical literary theories may be applied to the analysis of each—either the efficacies of these models or discover ways to modify these theories, if feasible, so that they can accommodate these compressed units. With the changing landscape of digital narratives, it has become necessary to study new phenomena, categorize them, and devise strategies to study them. This work attempts to do exactly that with memes.

Genius, Exclusivity, and Institution: Michael Faraday's Rise as a Nineteenth-Century Science Hero

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Research Objectives

The scientific and intellectual culture of nineteenth-century Britain has been studied through a variety of aspects. While scholars such as Jon Klancher have explored the establishment of cultural institutions and their role in popularising scientific knowledge (2013), those like Iain Watts have highlighted the scuffle for power and legitimacy within the fast-expanding intellectual sphere (2014). This paper aims to engage with similar concerns by analysing the career trajectory of Michael Faraday, a British scientist whose growth into a widely-known genius depicts both, a meteoric rise to heroic fame and a long struggle to gradually enter the exclusive intellectual circles of nineteenth-century Britain. Through this paper, I hope to:

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- 1) Develop an enhanced understanding of nineteenth-century intellectual culture, specifically in the context of scientific knowledge systems.
- 2) Critically analyse the struggle for power in terms of the increased propagation of knowledge that begins as a result of a growing interest in scientific knowledge (Dawson, Gowan 2020).
- 3) Understand the intertwined nature of institutional legitimacy and cultural currency by studying the popularisation of establishments such as the Royal Institute.
- 4) Analyse the relationship between Michael Faraday and his senior, Humphry Davy to outline the limits and possibilities of knowledge production within nascent scientific institutions of the nineteenth century.

Methodology

This research paper will involve archival research through a close reading of the various writings surrounding Faraday, including his works. By analysing the representation of Faraday's scientific discoveries in contemporary scientific journals such as the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, this paper will critically engage with the rhetoric around the larger significance of his contributions and their potential for popularisation among the general public. I will also study authoritative biographies of Michael Faraday by scholars such as Geoffrey Cantor to highlight the complex professional relations (such as the one he shared with Humphry Davy) that defined the unconventional individual trajectory of this esteemed man of science. By contextualising Faraday's meteoric rise to fame within the dynamic intellectual culture of nineteenth-century Britain, I hope to uncover the larger institutional forces that played a role in constructing the glorified public persona of Faraday as a symbol of national pride in terms of the scientific advancement of Britain. This paper will trace the evolution of the reception and interpretation of Faraday's work over the course of his career to shed further light on the networks of scientific knowledge production that were developing in nineteenth-century Britain.

Key Findings

This paper will provide deeper insights into the development of the institutional structures that framed the production of scientific knowledge in early nineteenth-century Britain. It will critically assess the economic, political, and even personal forces that drove the popularisation of certain kinds of intellectual ideas as well as the concretisation of scientific knowledge as a significant field of study. It will highlight the persisting debates around exclusivity and accessibility with respect to the move toward an increased engagement with knowledge as a result of growing

literacy. By using Faraday's scientific career as a model, this paper will try to explain the ways in which ideas such as 'genius,' 'discovery,' and 'scientific investigation' were taking shape amid the constantly changing and developing cultural field of Victorian Britain. Finally, this paper will emphasise the challenges that an increasingly democratic spread of scientific knowledge posed to elite knowledge institutions and the manner which such forces pushed the boundaries of a shifting intellectual space to make it accessible to a larger group of science professionals and enthusiasts. "

Digitising the Margins: Responsible AI and Digital Humanities for Cultural Archives in North-East India.

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The advent of the digital era has reshaped nearly all areas of knowledge and in this age, professional practice and knowledge production as well as cultural practices have taken a significant turn towards the digital which has transformed how we create, preserve, operate or share concepts, ideas and meanings. In terms of cultural memory, the digital turn in humanities research and practice has redefined the preservation and accessibility of it. If we discuss about India's peripheral regions-India's North-East in particular, still remains under-represented and indigent in terms of national repositories. The National Digital Library of India (NDLI) has aggregated over 95 million resources in 70 languages (IIT Kharagpur, 2024), of which only a fraction originates from Assam, Meghalaya, or Manipur. The reasons for this digital divide include fragile collections, limited technical infrastructure, and scarcity of language-aware digitization tools faced by the institutions. The following study argues that Digital Humanities (DH) methodologies, being combined with Responsible AI practices can help to build equitable, multilingual cultural archives that respect local epistemologies; highlight marginalized spaces and address the issue of digital divide and its probable solutions. By looking at three ongoing digitization

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projects—the Assam State Archives, the Northeast India Audiovisual Archive in Shillong, and the community-led Digitizing অসম initiative in Assam—this paper explores how Digital Humanities approaches can support ethical ways of handling data, involve communities in describing their own collections, and use AI tools to make materials more accessible, all while avoiding top-down or centralised control.

Research Objectives:

The study includes the objectives such as-

- 1) To study current digitisation work in the North-East and understand how different archives manage scanning, metadata, and digital access of this region.
- 2) To explore how AI tools such as Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and speech-to-text can support digitisation in regional languages, focusing on the Northeastern region of India.
- 3) To give an outline for a Responsible AI framework which ensures transparency and fairness as well as invites communities to participate meaningfully while safeguarding their cultural rights in the digital space.
- 4) To suggest ways to connect local archives with national platforms like NDLI's Digital Preservation Centre (DPC) while keeping the local identity intact.

Methodology:

The study uses different methodologies to reach the desired objectives of the study. The methodologies include- Case Study Approach, where three key examples from North-East India is taken that represent different models of digitisation. They are- Assam State Archives (Guwahati) – which is a government archive that holds official records dating from 1823 to 1990. Its dedicated Digitisation Wing has already scanned over 1.5 million pages and preserved thousands of records on microfilm (Government of Assam, 2023). The other one is Northeast India Audiovisual Archive (Shillong), which was established in 2019 at St. Anthony's College with support from the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (Japan). This archive holds around 4 terabytes of sound and video recordings, which capture the rich oral and visual cultures of the North-East. The last one is Digitizing অসম (Assam) – which is a community-led initiative. This project has digitised more than 3,000 Assamese journals and books published between 1813 and 1970. These materials are made freely accessible online under open licences, showcasing how public participation can drive cultural preservation. These three case studies provide a diverse view of the ways of digitisation, approached by the region that includes state-led to academic and citizen-driven efforts. Apart from the case study approach, the study applies to a set of Digital Humanities (DH) tools and perspectives to understand and evaluate these projects. The DH tools and perspectives include mapping of digitisation

workflows; testing AI tools like Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and speech-to-text systems and observe how they perform for local languages such as Assamese, Khasi, and Mizo and what is the accuracy rate of these; metadata practices comparison etc. Through these methods, an attempt is made to investigate how these systems try to connect national and global standards such as the NDLI framework and Dublin Core with regional and cultural heritage. The issue of Ethical reflection is also addressed in the study with a focus on applying UNESCO's (2021) guidelines on Responsible AI to see how issues like consent, data ownership, and cultural sensitivity are being addressed within these projects.

The methodology of the study is a mixed-method approach. This approach is chosen so that technical analysis can be combined with cultural and ethical understanding. The sources of this study are- project websites, public reports, and interview reports of archivists and curators who are part of these initiatives. The data gathered has been re verified from time to time with official records from government and institutional sources so that accuracy and reliability can be ensured.

Key Findings:

The Digitisation process in North-East India is expanding in a steady manner, even though it faces uneven growth in different regions and cultures. Government archives like the Assam State Archives have successfully built a strong scanning infrastructure, but it needs better metadata consistency and long-term management to work efficiently. Academic projects such as the Northeast India Audiovisual Archive works as a preserver of valuable oral and visual histories but it faces issues like funding shortages and limited AI usage. Community initiatives like Digitizing **অসম** works to fill the cultural and linguistic gaps, yet it requires stronger institutional and technical support.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) helps streamline work through the application of different tools. Some examples of this are- OCR for Assamese which has $\approx 88\%$

accuracy, according to NDLI 2024 and speech-to-text for Khasi and Mizo, which has $\approx 70\%$ accuracy, according to a study of IIIT Hyderabad, 2024. In Meghalaya, AI-based image restoration has also revived about 6,000 historic photographs, according to the magazine Down To Earth, 2019. Still, these tools must remain guided by local expertise so that they can ensure cultural, linguistic, and social sensitivity.

There are many persistent challenges regarding these initiatives, such as unclear data management, language bias in AI models, funding limits, and poor internet access, etc. A Responsible AI framework can help to resolve these challenges if it is focused on transparency, community participation, and ethical use. To make digitisation in the North-East more inclusive, sustainable, and community-centered, efforts should

be given on strengthening state support, creation of digital-curator roles, and building cross-border collaborations, etc.

Conclusion:

The digitisation process of North-East India is not only about technology but also about fairness, inclusivity, unity in diversity and participation. To overcome the challenge of exclusivity often faced in the digitization projects, Responsible AI and Digital Humanities can work together to make cultural preservation more open and community driven. If the archives start putting effort on using transparent AI tools, sharing metadata openly, and involving local people, etc., it can help to protect both the data and the dignity of the communities whose stories, culture, language and heritage are being digitised. By linking regional efforts with national platforms like NDLI, India can build a truly inclusive and multilingual digital future if the local control is maintained properly. “Digitising the margins”, in the study thus means ensuring that every community - big or small, urban or rural, mainstream or marginal - has its voice and memory represented in the nation’s greater digital heritage.

Post-historicizing Literary and Cultural Studies: The Problem of Explanatory Underdetermination in a Post-Artificial Academe

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In *The Limits of Critique* (2015), Rita Felski interrogates what she describes as a “picture of context as a kind of historical container in which individual texts are encased and held fast” (Felski 155). It is this rather oversimplified model of historical context that subtends the all-pervasive historicist impulse in literary and cultural studies departments—an impulse that takes its rallying cry from Fredric Jameson’s famous dictum : “Always historicize” (Jameson ix). Three and a half decades on from the original publication of Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious* — the book

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that famously opens with the aforementioned slogan — historicizing texts within their context of production remains a cardinal virtue across literary and cultural studies departments. Even in this “post-artificial” moment, when fundamental assumptions about authorship, reception, and a host of other axiomata in the discipline’s scholarly procedures have come under renewed scrutiny, the historicizing imperative remains well and truly alive. As texts processed and generated by large language models rapidly proliferate, and AI-text detection systems prove to be increasingly incapable of keeping up with them, the post-artificial reader has no other option but to approach a text with an “agnostic stance in regard to its origins” (Bajohr 333). In other words, the reader can no longer hope to track down with any certainty the originary point of a text — whether human or machinic. Therefore, if a post-artificial text is authorless by default, the idea of a historical context of production against which to study a text appears increasingly untenable. The post-historicist argument that a text is not a static object

hemmed in by the box of historical context could have scarcely found a more convivial ally than post-artificiality.

Literature Review

Although post-historicist approaches to literary and cultural study have not gathered the necessary momentum to upend the methodological hegemony of historicism, they are by no means entirely non-existent. As Rita Felski points out in regard to the pushback against historicism, “a multitude of minor mutinies and small-scale revolts are under way” (155). If we restrict ourselves to post-historicist voices that have emerged since the turn of the current century and those that necessarily do not call for some form of a return to belletrism or formalism, the earliest that is worth mentioning is Russell A. Berman’s “Politics: Divide and Rule” (2001) published in the *Modern Language Quarterly*. Berman’s argument against periodization schemes – and historical contexts for that matter — is that they “suppress the experience of reception” (328). According to Berman, reading literature has a strong diachronic thrust that the historicizer ends up dissimulating, thereby treating texts as more static entities than they really are. Over a decade later, Jennifer Fleissner’s *Historicism Blues* (2013) seeks to avoid the pitfalls of history-as-a-box, as well as its obverse — history-as-repetition. For Fleissner, Dominic LaCapra’s view of “temporality as repetition with change” is especially compelling (708), and she finds this solution embodied in both African-American literature and the blues aesthetic. Notable for its scant presence in the antihistoricist rhetoric within literary and cultural studies is Bruno Latour’s *Reassembling the Social* (2005) — one of the most thorough excoriations of the idea of social-historical context. Although Rita Felski’s arguments against historicism, drawing heavily upon Latour’s actor-network theory (ANT),

show the way ahead for post-historicism, the project is in dire need of a revisit after the advent of large language models (LLMs).

Methodology

The proposed paper will draw upon an eclectic array of methodologies, out of which the most significant contributor will be Bruno Latour's actor-network theory (ANT). In particular, Latour's notion of a historically or socially contextualized account as a "black-boxed electronic appliance" will drive the study forward (50), all the while being augmented by the concept of underdetermination—drawn from the philosophy of science (Douven 336). The paper will also frequently turn to concrete instances of natural language processing or generation by readily accessible large language models in an attempt to substantiate its central claims about the pitfalls of historicizing texts. In search of a post-historicist alternative for literary/cultural study in a post-artificial regime, it will once again take recourse to the sociology of associations/translations (*sociologie de la traduction*) advanced by Bruno Latour's actor-network theory. While the post-historicist alternative suggested will likely be a blueprint at best, it could prove to be a springboard for a body of scholarship well equipped to deal with the vagaries of a post-artificial world.

Research Questions

The proposed paper will strive to answer the following research questions:

1. While shifting notions of authorship and reception in a post-artificial world have been addressed in considerable detail, what evolutionary trajectory will prevailing notions of "context" take in a world pervaded with post-artificial texts?
2. How could natural language generation and processing by large language models expose fault lines in the (much) vaunted project of historicizing texts?
3. How could actor-network theory (ANT) show the way forward for a post-historicist study of texts in a post-artificial academe?

Key Findings

The proposed paper will explore precisely how received notions of historical context become fraught with questions of explanatory underdetermination in a post-artificial academe. It will argue that in a post-artificial textual regime, the causal links between text and context become underdetermined, with the very idea of a hermetically sealed context losing its viability as an explanatory strategy. Finally, the paper will outline an ANT-inflected approach in which contextual explanation makes way for the assiduous tracing of associations among a motley array of human and non-human actors.

Digital Panopticons and Necro Technics: Gendered Memory and Carceral Control in White Christmas

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The rise of artificial intelligence and digital consciousness in today's culture is fundamentally reshaping not just the way we envision technology, but also how we think about punishment, work, and subjectivity. This paper explores the interconnections of gender, memory, and digital personhood in *White Christmas* (Black Mirror, 2014), which centres on a sentient digital clone of a living woman's consciousness encapsulated in a smart home device and put through an extreme alteration of time. Punishment is meted out not through direct physical violence but rather through rapid isolation, where minutes of real time become years of subjective time. This speculative articulates a shift from a Foucauldian model of disciplinary power to necro-technological control—an apparatus that robs the subject of their right to a physical death, thus perpetuating life as a condition of incessant labour and suffering.

The article positions *White Christmas* within the overlapping areas of digital humanities, feminist theory, and critical media studies to investigate the ways in which memory itself operates as a carceral apparatus. Drawing on Michel Foucault's notion of disciplinary time and the panopticon, it argues that digital punishment no longer relies on external surveillance; rather, the subject internalises its own control through awareness and repetition. The clone, injected with her human counterpart's full autobiographical memory, cannot disengage, die, or escape. She is both the prisoner and the archive of her own suffering; a self-surveilling panopticon in which self-awareness serves as the replacement for the guard tower.

From a feminist perspective, this digital subject is also gendered. The clone is made compliant and to facilitate domestic management, embodying the feminisation of affective and reproductive labour in the digital age. Her identity as a subservient intelligence makes concrete the historical connection of women's labour to care, service, and emotional regulation. When this feminised AI is punished for noncompliance, *White Christmas* complicates the relationship between patriarchal

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discipline and technological dominance, suggesting that digital consciousness reproduces the gender hierarchies it was supposedly meant to disrupt.

This article, drawing on Michel Foucault's 1977 work *Discipline and Punish*, Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics (2003), and recent feminist work on artificial intelligence (AI) (Wajcman, 2004; Braidotti, 2013), will suggest that the episode enacts a new modality of slow violence: the violence of memory. Here, carcerality is temporal, as opposed to spatial. Punishment moves through manipulated time, where time moves in seconds, with psychosocial effects, into decades. The smart home device represents a heterotopic enclosure; as a Foucauldian counter-space, it conditions to surveil and distort reality. Similar to the asylum or prison, it sequesters the subject from social life. The key difference is that the trauma is felt in virtual space; unbodied but embodied and agonising nonetheless. The digital heterotopia legitimises a type of psychic violence, while it erodes multiple implications of the physical. The paper lays out how control in posthuman systems of practice is through affect, rather than anatomy.

The methodology takes a cultural studies and film analytical approach, utilising close reading of visual cues (e.g., white space, artificial lighting, temporal loops) and narrative cues as metaphors for both surveillance and psychological decomposition. In doing so, this paper situates *White Christmas* as a cultural artefact of emergent anxieties regarding AI ethics, consciousness, and punishment. By analysing the episode together with theoretical temperature and digital labour, posthumanism, and necro-technics, the paper aims to show how affective and cognitive capacities are weaponised as part of algorithmic architectures of power.

The findings include an argument that *White Christmas* presents a paradigmatic shift from biopolitical governance to necro-technological governance. It opens up a posthuman ethics of incarceration whereby the digital subject is neither alive nor dead but always in suspension; an example of Mbembe's "living death." This suspension materialises punishment in the form of data-driven endurance, while reconstituting control as a technological condition rather than a juridical regulation. As well, it embeds gendered consciousness into the logic of servitude and isolation, reminding us that the future of AI ethics cannot be divorced from gender and affect. The paper ultimately argues that *White Christmas* represents the slow violence of memory in the contemporary moment, where consciousness can be copied, contained, and disciplined through code. As digital life represents a new possibility for governance, we should be cautioned against a future where empathy and agency are programmed into memory, and the desire to perfect control perpetuates endless, gendered suffering.

Keywords: AI, necro-technics, gendered memory, panopticism, digital punishment

Session B4

Economics

Chair: Dr. Amarjyoti Mahanta

Waiting Cost, Contract Incompleteness and Mode of Organization across Time Zones

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“This paper develops a theoretical model using a monopolistic competitive structure to examine firms’ mode of organization. The objective of this paper is to find the choices between integration and outsourcing by incorporating night-time waiting costs. This paper finds that outsourcing is preferred when fixed costs are low and waiting costs are high. The model highlights the role of time zone differences, showing that outsourcing becomes more profitable in case of service than good. The extended part of the model shows that outsourcing remains beneficial only when monitoring costs and the risk of contract breach are sufficiently low.

JEL Classification: D23, F1, F12, L23, O14

Key words: Outsourcing; Time Zone; Trade; Contract Incompleteness; Monopolistic Framework

Introduction

In the context of global value chain, it is very common for today’s world that the firms are often offshoring their production process. When we consider this outsourcing possibility to a different country, there is another aspect which needs to be taken into account, i.e., exploiting the time zone difference. People are becoming more impatient day by day, and they value their product on the basis of time. That is why people are willing to pay more price for a product to receive it early. To engage in this type of intermediate trade time zone difference is a crucial factor because countries can use the benefit of non-overlapping time zone. In the current globalized situation, firms are often facing a choice between integration (producing all the stages within the country) or outsourcing (producing some initial stages at the home country and finish the final stages in foreign countries). In this paper we construct a Dixit-Stiglitz model of monopolistic competition to investigate the choice between the integration and outsourcing. Further this paper also emphasizes on the implications of contract incompleteness. Contracts have a crucial role in this context for foreign outsourced firm. Though there is a probability of breaching the contract

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in foreign outsourced firm under incomplete contracts. So, the firm has to bear some monitoring cost to mitigate this probability of contract violation.

Despite the existing literatures, a notable gap remains regarding waiting costs in the domestic country. Since consumers generally prefer to receive the final product earlier, firms can operate more efficiently using the time zone differences. We assume a scenario in which a firm produces in two stages and works during the daytime only. The first stage is completed domestically and the second stage is produced somewhere in non-overlapping time zone. Thus, the firm can effectively reduce the total time of production and avoid the nighttime waiting cost.

The Basic Model

The two factors of production are: Capital and labour, used to produce a continuum of varieties of a single commodity. When a firm engages in offshore outsourcing, there should be a fixed costs associated with the production process. Now, if the firm produces the final product on its own then it bears the fixed cost once and incurred twice in case of outsourcing: one is for home country and another is for foreign country. In this section, our main objective is to focus on the mode of organization. Furthermore, we assume that there is another cost associated with the production for integrated firm, i.e., the night-time waiting cost. So, our first proposition is:

Proposition I: If time zone exploited, outsourcing is the preferred mode of organization compared to integration with lower fixed cost and higher night-time waiting cost.

Presence of Transaction Cost

Now we make things more realistic by introducing a transaction cost or trading cost. Transaction cost is needed only when the final product is produced in foreign country as integrated firm does not require further transaction or trading. A reduction in transaction cost implies higher profits for outsourced firms. If transaction cost is very high, the final good producer may not choose outsourcing though it is beneficial to avoid the nighttime waiting cost. Therefore, in case of goods where the transaction cost is very high then integration is profitable whereas in case of service, where transaction cost is low, outsourcing is more beneficial. Therefore, we can write the second proposition as:

Proposition II: Outsourcing is the preferable mode of organization with lower transaction cost and higher night-time waiting cost compared to integration and vice versa.

Firm Behaviour in Presence of Contract Incompleteness

In this section, we introduce the possibility of contract incompleteness at the foreign supplier firm. That is, there is a probability that the foreign supplier may

renege on the contract and the domestic firm may end up without the final produced commodity. If there is such possibility, the domestic firms have to incur two types of additional costs. One is monitoring cost; to monitor the activities of the foreign supplier firm. This can be thought of as a fixed cost regardless whether the outsourced firm renege the contract or not. And the second one is the markup price; in case of default the firm have to pay a markup on the cost. Therefore, we can draw our third proposition as such:

Proposition III: Outsourcing is preferred over Integrating when the probability of contract breaching and the cost of monitoring is low for the producer.

Conclusion

In this paper, we find that the choice between these two modes depends on nighttime waiting costs, trading costs and the nature of the product—whether it is a good or a service. Outsourcing is more efficient for services, due to the lower trade costs associated with service transaction. On the other hand, for goods, high transaction costs make integration more profitable when trade is occurring among countries located in non-overlapping time zones. In the extended section, we found that outsourcing can remain beneficial only when monitoring cost and the risk of contract breaching are sufficiently low. This paper suggests reduced transaction costs through improved digital infrastructure can benefit outsourcing. While service sectors benefit from trade liberalization, manufacturing sectors may still require policies that support integration.’

Impact of economic crime on economic growth: Evidence from India

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Economic crime has become one of the most persistent challenges facing developing economies today. It affects the economy not only through direct financial losses but also by weakening institutions, discouraging investment, and distorting the normal functioning of markets. In the Indian context, economic crimes such as fraud, forgery, cheating, criminal breach of trust, and counterfeiting have grown steadily over the last three decades. Yet, while a vast amount of research has focused

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on the effects of corruption and violent crime, the economic implications of these non-violent financial offences remain largely unexplored. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how economic crime influences economic growth across major Indian states during the period 1991-2022.

The motivation behind this study lies in the understanding that crime has significant economic costs. According to the economic theory of crime introduced by Becker (1968), individuals make rational decisions about committing crimes by comparing expected gains with potential punishment. When enforcement is weak or institutions are ineffective, the likelihood of committing economic crimes increases. Such crimes act as a hidden tax on the economy, raising transaction costs, diverting resources from productive activities, and creating uncertainty that discourages investment and innovation. In a developing country like India, where institutional capacity and governance quality differ widely across states, these effects can be particularly harmful.

The study uses a balanced panel dataset of sixteen major Indian states from 1991 to 2022. Data on the incidence of economic crime are taken from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which categorises crimes into subtypes such as Criminal Breach of Trust (CBT), Cheating, Fraud and Forgery (CFF), and Counterfeiting. The key dependent variable is the per capita Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) at constant prices, obtained from the Reserve Bank of India's Database on the Indian Economy. To ensure a robust analysis, several control variables are included: urbanisation, mean years of schooling, infant mortality rate, capital expenditure, and political competition, capturing demographic, social, and institutional dimensions of development. Together, these variables allow for a detailed examination of the relationship between crime and growth while accounting for state-specific differences.

The empirical analysis follows a multi-step econometric approach. First, the study applies the Panel Corrected Standard Error (PCSE) and Feasible Generalised Least Squares (FGLS) models to handle issues of heteroskedasticity, cross-sectional dependence, and serial correlation across states. These models are particularly suitable for the Indian context, where shocks such as financial crises or policy changes may simultaneously affect multiple states. Next, the study employs Fixed Effects (FE) and Fixed Effects with Driscoll–Kraay standard errors (FEDK) to control for unobserved state-level characteristics that remain constant over time, such as geographical or cultural factors. Finally, to address the potential endogeneity between economic crime and growth, since both can influence each other, the System Generalised Method of Moments (GMM) estimator is used. This dynamic model accounts for the persistence of growth and helps isolate the causal effect of economic crime.

Across all estimation methods, the findings reveal a consistent negative relationship between economic crime and economic growth. States that experience higher levels of economic crime tend to grow more slowly. Specifically, the results suggest that a one percent increase in total economic crime reduces per capita state income growth by approximately 0.8 percent. Among the subcategories, counterfeiting and fraud-related crimes have the strongest negative impact on economic performance, followed by cheating and criminal breach of trust. These findings indicate that crimes targeting financial credibility and trust in economic transactions have more damaging effects on growth than other types of economic offenses.

The results are robust across multiple models and sample specifications. The PCSE and FGLS models both show that economic crime significantly reduces growth, even after adjusting for serial correlation. The Fixed Effects and Driscoll-Kraay estimates confirm that the results are not driven by unobserved, time-invariant state factors. In the dynamic GMM framework, where lagged income is used as a predictor, the coefficient remains positive and significant, indicating persistence in economic growth, but the negative effect of economic crime remains evident. Diagnostic tests such as AR(1), AR(2), and Hansen's J-test confirm that the instruments are valid and the model is correctly specified. To further ensure robustness, the analysis was extended to a larger sample of 20 states covering the period 2001–2022, and the main findings remained consistent in direction and magnitude.

These results align closely with international evidence suggesting that crime can act as a tax on economic activity. Studies such as Detotto and Otranto (2010) and Raj and Kalluru (2023) have emphasized that criminal activity reduces productivity and competitiveness, while increasing uncertainty and transaction costs. The findings of this paper extend this evidence to the Indian context, demonstrating that economic crime exerts a long-term drag on state-level economic performance. Crimes such as fraud and forgery disrupt financial transactions, reduce market confidence, and distort credit allocation, while counterfeiting undermines the credibility of financial instruments and market systems. Over time, these effects accumulate, lowering productivity, discouraging entrepreneurship, and impeding sustained growth.

In addition, the results highlight how social and institutional factors shape the dynamics between crime and growth. States with higher education levels, reflected in the mean years of schooling, tend to experience stronger growth and lower vulnerability to economic crime. Similarly, capital expenditure and political competition show positive correlations with growth, reflecting the importance of infrastructure investment and institutional vitality. On the other hand, states with higher infant mortality rates, a proxy for weaker social conditions, show lower

economic performance, which indirectly supports the argument that weaker social systems may coincide with higher crime rates and slower development.

In summary, this study provides one of the first systematic empirical assessments of the relationship between economic crime and economic growth in India. Using panel data from 1991 to 2022 and multiple econometric approaches, it finds clear evidence that economic crime negatively affects growth across Indian states. The relationship remains robust across estimation techniques, time periods, and measures of crime. By bringing together insights from the economics of crime, institutional theory, and empirical growth analysis, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of how non-violent economic offenses shape the broader trajectory of development. The results underscore that crime and growth are deeply interconnected phenomena and that understanding this relationship is essential for studying the institutional foundations of economic progress in emerging economies like India.

Mental health and employment in India: A gendered analysis

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Objective

Global evidence, primarily from high-income countries, suggests that poor mental health adversely affects labour market outcomes through mechanisms such as learned helplessness and reduced self-efficacy. Mental illnesses like depression and anxiety contribute to an estimated \$1 trillion in productivity loss annually, positioning mental health as a major public health concern. In low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), where labour markets are largely informal and access to mental health services is limited, the economic consequences may be even more severe. Yet, empirical evidence from these settings remains sparse. Studies from India often rely on small samples, specific occupational groups, or particular districts, limiting generalizability.

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Further, gendered patterns in the mental health–employment relationship remain inconclusive. While some studies report stronger effects among men, others suggest women are more vulnerable, and several show no gender difference at all. In terms of measuring mental health, studies use scales such as CES-D, K6, K10, or the CIDI-SF. These are used either as continuous scores or based on diagnostic thresholds. However, relying on a single approach may obscure nuanced effects. Threshold-based models identify clinically significant cases, whereas continuous scores capture gradations of severity. Using both approaches helps to capture the full spectrum of effects on labor market outcomes.

Recognizing these gaps, and responding to WHO’s call for more representative evidence from LMICs, this study investigates the causal effect of depression on employment outcomes in India and explores gendered differences in this relationship.

We hypothesize:

H1: Depression reduces the probability of being in work

H2: Gender disparity in employment probability, with women being disadvantaged

H3: Gender disparities in employment are greater among the depressed than among the non-depressed

Data

We utilize data from Wave 1 of the Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI), 2017–19, a nationally representative survey of adults aged 45 and above. We focus on respondents aged 45–60 years, a critical subgroup of the labour force increasingly exposed to health-related vulnerabilities. The final sample includes 27,092 individuals who have ever worked for at least three months and reported their current employment status.

Methodology

Depression is measured using the CIDI-SF (Composite International Diagnostic Interview – Short Form), comprising ten indicators (range: 0–10). We measure depression in its continuous nature and also employ threshold (T) based approach, threshold-based (T) approach, where individuals crossing the threshold are classified as depressed coded as 1, with non-depressed individuals coded as 0.

The outcome variable, WORK, as defined in LASI, includes engagement in both paid and unpaid agricultural and non-agricultural activities, encompassing all forms of self-employment and assistance in family businesses. It is coded as 1 (“Yes”) if

respondents have ever worked and are currently working, and 0 (“No”) if they have ever worked but are not currently working. We use two modelling approaches:

1. Control function approach with continuous CIDI scores to estimate marginal effects $WORK = \beta_0 + \beta_1 CIDI + \beta_2 X + \varepsilon$ [1]

2. Probit-2SLS instrumental variable model at multiple CIDI thresholds (≥ 3 to ≥ 8) to identify clinically and subclinically significant effects

$$WORK = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 CIDI(T) + \gamma_2 X + v$$
 [2]

To address endogeneity, we use two instruments: parental history of psychiatric illness and number of confidants.

The analysis includes controls for age, sex, education, caste, religion, multimorbidity, marital status, and place of residence. To examine gendered effects on employment, we estimate probit models separately for individuals with and without depression:

$$WORK = \eta_0 + \eta_1 FEMALE + \eta_2 X + \varepsilon$$
 [3]

when WORK is defined as stated earlier, FEMALE = 1 if the respondent is a female and 0 if male, and X is the vector of covariates defined earlier (excluding gender). We compared the values of η_1 between mentally non-depressed (ND) and depressed (D) individuals to assess whether the gender gap in employment varies with the severity of depressive symptoms. Further, we conducted a heterogeneity analysis across subgroups based on education and income.

Results

- Depression significantly reduces the likelihood of employment, even at moderate symptom levels below clinical thresholds
 - o Continuous score model shows a statistically significant negative effect on employment ($\beta = -0.219$, $p < 0.01$)
 - o Threshold models reveal stable and significant employment penalties (-41.9% to -43.8%) across all CIDI cut-offs tested (≥ 3 to ≥ 8)

- Gendered patterns are counterintuitive

- o Despite female disadvantage in labour market, women with depression are more likely to remain employed than men with depression, resulting in a narrowed gender gap among the depressed subgroup

- o The lower gender gap among depressed individuals may indicate reduced labour market discrimination against depressed women, or it may reflect structural pressures facing women such as financial necessity, gendered expectations, or stigma

- Subgroup analysis reveals that disadvantaged women—those with lower education or income—are especially likely to continue working despite poor mental health. They may be engaged in precarious or unpaid roles given their socio-economic vulnerability. While in educated group, the gender disparity among depressed individuals has increased, possibly indicating greater bargaining power among educated women.

Conclusion

This study presents causal evidence linking depression to reduced employment among midlife Indian adults. Importantly, the negative effects emerge even below clinical thresholds, underscoring the need to address subclinical mental distress in employment policy.

The observed narrowing of gender gaps in employment among depressed individuals challenges the assumption that employment is a clear signal of well-being. For many women, continued labour force participation despite poor mental health may reflect lack of choice rather than agency.

Interventions are needed even for subclinical cases to prevent hidden labour market vulnerabilities. Mental health support should be integrated into employment programs like MNREGA, with targeted efforts for those in the informal sector, particularly among the disadvantaged.

Gender-sensitive interventions are essential. While men may require targeted outreach to address stigma and disengagement, women must be empowered to recognize and navigate the structural constraints that limit their agency. Importantly, it is necessary to move beyond symptom management and address the broader structural determinants of mental health. The counter-intuitive trend observed in this study—where depressed women are more likely to remain employed than their male counterparts—may indicate the silent exploitation of vulnerable women who continue to work under distress. Unfortunately, the dataset lacks information on occupational choices and caregiving responsibilities, highlighting important areas for future research.’

Session C1

Political Science

Chair: Dr. Mithilesh Jha

World Order Beyond Dualism: Towards Global International Relations

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The transformations in social, economic, political, and technological domains in the 21st century have unsettled the foundational assumptions of the global order, which are thus challenging the foundations of the academic discipline of International Relations (IR), and the way we have understood the ‘core’ concepts of this discipline. Traditional IR theory, emerging from Western intellectual histories, has been underpinned by a body–mind dualism that fragments the relationship between the individual, the collective, and the moral order—*producing a view of the nation as an externalized, power-oriented structure*. However, in changing times contemporary world calls for alternative traditions of political reasoning that articulate different relationships between self, community, and order, where the political is not severed from the ethical or the spiritual, and where identity and belonging are conceived relationally rather than possessively. Such epistemological shifts demand that concepts like nationhood be understood not as static territorial entities but as fluid, evolving formations embedded in shared meanings and collective consciousness. Looking at IR through this lens allows for a more holistic and plural comprehension of world politics—one that transcends the dualisms of subject and object, self and other, and acknowledges the call for ‘Global IR’.

Keywords: Global IR, Nation, World Order, Alternative traditions

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Customary Institutions, Gender Norms, and Climate Justive: Women's Agency in Local Climate Governance in Nagaland

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The livelihoods of indigenous communities has increasingly affected by climate change, yet the customary traditions and gendered norms continues to guide the local responses. Customary institutions play a vital role in managing land and natural resources in Nagaland, in this scenario despite being closely connected to the environment in their everyday lives ,women often remain on the margins of decision-making. This paper explores the role of women in the Surohoto area of Zunheboto district by engaging with questions of governance and climate justice within these traditional systems. Inspired by feminist political ecology ,through a qualitative study, the research looks at how women navigate through social boundaries, negotiate with customary authorities, and find alternative spaces to make their voices heard. It also showcases their knowledge and practices contribute to local resilience and adaptation in the face of environmental change. The argument of this study involves recognizing women's agency and indigenous knowledge to create more inclusive and sustainable forms of climate governance. By bridging the gap between customary institutions and democratic processes ,this study is essential to ensure that climate action in Nagaland reflects both cultural values and gender equity. As this study focuses the lived experiences of Naga women, this research seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions on justice, representation, and sustainability, linking local realities with global goals such as gender equality (SDG 5) and climate action (SDG 13).

Keywords Keywords: Gender, Customary Institutions, Climate Governance, Indigenous Knowledge, Nagaland, Feminist Political Ecology

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Between Development and Dispossession: The Politics of Resource in Assam

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In most developing and postcolonial economies, the development trajectory has largely mirrored the logic of colonial extraction. Neo-capitalist development has often been justified under the banners of modernisation and economic growth, and this has entrenched new hierarchies of inequality through intensified resource exploitation. Natural resources- minerals, oil, forests and lands are now not limited to being categorised as economic commodities but also as political sites that display the intersection of state authority, corporate interests and local livelihoods.

The neo-liberalisation of the economy has created an extractive orientation, being an advantage to the market economy over the welfare of the locals and the sustainable use of resources. Therefore, what is visible is that many postcolonial states continue to reproduce *coloniality of power*, where growth is achieved through dispossession and development is measured by the flow of capital, often in contrast to the well-being of locals and indigenous communities.

Partha Chatterjee observes that the postcolonial state often inherits a *colonial governmentality* (Chatterjee, 1993). The state's approach to the North East Region of India, both during and after the colonial rule, can be seen as a continuation of this governmental logic, which justifies the extraction and regulation in the name of national progress. Such a perspective reveals how the discourse of development functions as a modernised form of colonial management over indigenous territories and populations. To understand this, we may look into the case of Assam.

Assam exemplifies the colonial legacies of resource exploitation that have persisted through contemporary development policies, often reproducing inequalities. During the colonial period, this could be seen in how the British incorporated the imperial economy as a hinterland for tea, oil, and coal industries that served as the external centres of accumulation rather than the welfare of the people. Tilottoma Misra, in her article, *Assam: A Colonial Hinterland*, argues 2

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that there has been a systemic exploitation of the rich resources of Assam by the colonial rulers and the post-independent Indian State and the capitalists have continued this colonial tradition (Misra, 1980). The continuity between colonial and postcolonial extraction has generated enduring consequences, primarily grievances among indigenous communities whose land, ecology, and identities remain under threat in the pursuit of national development.

Development policies, hence, have often been criticised for reproducing structural inequalities and extractive logics under new guises. It is important to note that uncommodified reserves are appropriated and commodified through extraction, this have multifaceted consequences for the environments and local people, although the violence of dispossession involved in resource-making is often disguised under the rubric of *discovery* of natural resources (Bridge & Billon. , 2013.) and (Polanyi, 1944) and pursued as '*in the name of Development*' (Escobar, 2008.)

A historical example is the introduction of the Waste Land Acts. The Colonial Government allowed them to make large tracts of land available for tea cultivation at low costs. This facilitated the establishment of tea plantations and the expansion of tea production in Assam. Initially, they relied on local Assamese labour; however, often labelled as '*lazy*', the locals were gradually not preferred to work there, and it led to the importation of labour from other regions, such as *Bengali coolies*. This was seen as necessary to meet the demands of the expanding tea plantations (Varma, 2017). Misra further observes that even after Independence, large areas of fertile tea gardens were owned by British Planters under the various concessional rules of the past. She also pointed out how the aspiring Assamese planters were discriminated against and discouraged from competing with the British planters. A case in point is Maniram Dewan, who was not granted a special concession under the Waste Land Rules, and his land was assessed as ordinary rice-land, which resulted in him paying higher land revenue (Misra, 1980).

In recent times, among many others, the *Bhagjan blowout* reflects the irony of development, where the promise of industrial growth resulted in displacement, ecological destruction and deepened alienation and deprivation. The absence of prior consultation and the state's limited responsiveness reinforced the sense of marginalisation and exclusion from the developmental process. Similarly, the Dima Hasao land allotment controversy highlights, at the very beginning, a contradiction and irony that the Sixth Schedule meant to safeguard and protect the autonomy of the tribals is being used to facilitate corporate control. Reclassifying forest land as *non-forest* further prioritises state and corporates over indigenous stewardship.

Instances like these illustrate the paradox of *development without welfare*, and how the *colonial hinterland* framework persists within the postcolonial state's resource politics. On the other hand, many times, the *core-periphery* dynamic that defines India's

developmental geography, often, peripheral regions like Assam remain resource-rich but institutionally marginalised. These cleavages produce a sense of alienation among the indigenous population. Both situations have given rise to sub-nationalist sentiments where both mainstream voices and insurgent groups questioned the state's integration within the Indian state and continue to do so.

Research Objectives:

The paper aims to situate Assam's resource politics within the framework of the neo-capitalist development and relative deprivation, and contribute to the broader debates on growth, welfare, and justice in postcolonial societies. However, while doing so, the study positions Assam not merely as a peripheral hinterland but as a critical site for reimagining the possibilities of equitable development and postcolonial justice in Northeast India.

1. The paper proposes to analyse how colonial resource politics in Assam have evolved in the postcolonial times under neo-capitalist development.
2. It applies Ted Robert Gurr's *Relative Deprivation Theory* to interpret the political and psychological dimensions of deprivation among Assam's indigenous communities.
3. The paper examines how the colonial logic of *colonial governmentality* (Partha Chatterjee) and the *psychological alienation of the colonised* (Frantz Fanon) intersect with contemporary development policies and identity politics.
4. To understand how collective discontent arising from deprivation translates into forms of political resistance, including sub-nationalist movements and identity-based mobilisations.
5. To contribute to broader debates on growth, welfare, and justice in postcolonial societies through a grounded case study of Assam.

Key Findings:

Ted Gurr posits that *collective violence* arises when there is a perceived discrepancy between the expected and achieved welfare. It is when communities feel that they are systematically deprived of the benefits they deserve (Gurr, 1970). The study found that the deprivation is both economic and symbolic in the case of Assam, which has led to deep psychological and structural alienation, manifested through movements for autonomy, ethnic assertion, and sub-nationalist mobilisations - such as the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) or Bodo mobilisations. This resonates with Frantz Fanon's reflections on the psychological and structural alienation produced by colonialism, creating internalised hierarchies of inferiority and exclusion.

The study found that deprivation has evolved from localised grievances over land and livelihood into organised political resistance challenging the legitimacy of both the state and the capitalist actors. The study also found that the contemporary development trajectories and engines of growth in Assam have shaped the complex interplay of infrastructure expansion, resource alienation and identity politics, leading to what may be termed *developmental deprivation* a condition where development projects themselves become sources of insecurity for the marginalised. Such alienation has led to the internalisation of the peripheral status, and the emergence of sub-nationalist movements and insurgencies that can thus be read as attempts to reclaim identity, agency, dignity, and sovereignty from both external domination, internalised subordination and alienation.

Methodologies:

Methodologically, the paper is qualitative and interpretive; it relies on secondary sources, including government publications and ethnographic literature etc, to trace the continuities between colonial and postcolonial developmentalism. The analytical framework integrates Gurr's Relative Deprivation Theory with postcolonial political economy, to explore deeper into how the historical extraction patterns and modern developmentalist agendas converge to reproduce structural inequalities and conflicts over resources. Further, using Parth Chatterjee's colonial governmentality and Fanon's concept of alienation, the study tries to construct a multi-dimensional framework to understand Assam's social, political, and psychological aspects of resource governance.

Three interlinked methodological commitments is used here in the study: -

1. **Historical contextualisation:** situating contemporary development practices within the colonial concept of development.
2. **Theoretical synthesis:** connecting psychological, political, and structural dimensions of deprivation through multiple frameworks; and
3. **Critical regionalism:** foregrounding Assam and the Northeast as epistemic sites for rethinking development and justice beyond metropolitan narratives.

The study interprets how development has produced persistent inequalities, alienation, and resistance among Assam's indigenous populations through this framework.

Keywords: Postcolonial development, Extractive politics, Relative deprivation, Colonial governmentality, Indigenous communities, Land and resource alienation, Neo-capitalist development, Identity politics, Developmental deprivation, Sub-nationalist movements

Representation of Women's Issues in Print Media: A Study of Editorial Columns and Opinion Pieces Published in Selected Bengali Daily Newspapers

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1. Introduction:

Women are integral part of socio-economic development of a nation. Their contribution towards growth is enormous. However, several studies have shown that women are marginals and neglected in the development process. Academicians have raised the issues of freedom, rights and opportunity of women in the society. In this context, UN Women declares that gender equality is a right. This may help to resolve the concerned issues - from social and professional discrimination and lack of health care, to violence against women and state oppression against them (Women and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)). According to the 2024 report of Social Statistics Division, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation under the Government of India, "Since women and girls makeup half of the global population, unlocking their full potential requires addressing present gender inequalities" (Women & Men in India 2024: Selected Indicators and Data, 2024).

In these circumstances, media has a responsibility to safeguard the rights of women, uphold their demand and facilitate improvement in the quality of life. Hon'ble Justice G.N. Ray, former Chairman of Press Council of India, has stated that "The media through its reach to people at large has been instrumental though not to the extent desired in supporting the movement for women emancipation by focusing neglect and marginalisation of the position of the women in society" (Ray, 2008).

2. Brief Review of Literature:

Yadav has highlighted the representation of women's issues in mass media. Here the researcher has focused on the way of representation of women in several mass media, including folk media, print media, electronic media (radio, movies and

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television) and new media. In this research, he has stated that the propensity of representing women as sexual objects is truly harmful for the society. The researcher has observed that women are represented in a stereotyped manner. They are often described by using erotic language and portrayed by emphasizing their subservience and weakness. Sometimes, mass media promotes beauty standards for women and showcases them as dependent on men for social recognition and security (Yadav, 2023, pp. 778-787).

Further, Mishra has focused on representation of women's issues in mass media. This research has found the comprehensive effects of misrepresentation of women in mass media contents. Here the author has defined such misleading pretence of women as reinforcement rather than minimization of stereotypes. In most cases, women are shown as obligated to family responsibilities and social prejudices in mass media. Consequently, it reinforces the audience by strengthening pre-existing stereotypes in the sphere of social settings (Mishra, 2015, pp. 122-128).

Additionally, Sharma has overviewed the way of representation of women in print media specifically. This research has been conducted in Indian context. Here the researcher has analysed the approach of addressing women's issues published in Times of India. Seven pertinent issues related to women have been identified in this study, such as 'crime and women', 'issues of urban women', 'issues of rural women', 'women and healthcare', 'women and career', 'women's movement' and 'women and public policy'. From the analysis of this study, the researcher has found that the primary preference of coverage is on the issues of urban, educated, upper and middle classes. There is no such diversity of representation of women's issues in terms of caste, class and region. However, their priority of coverage has shifted overtime. Though the approach of portraying women has not been changed from patriarchal perspectives (Sharma, 2019, pp. 35- 48).

Moreover, Jingala and Nandal have highlighted the representation of women in print media and have focused on the coverage of The Hindu newspaper in 2018. Here they have observed that there is an inadequate coverage of women's issues, like women empowerment, entrepreneurship, poverty, violence against women, particularly in rural areas. Apart from these, issues like women health and hygiene, career opportunities, legal facilities etc. have no coverage (Jingala & Nandal, 2019).

In this context, Sharma has also focused on the coverage of women's issues in editorial page. Here the author has found that a little space has been allotted for the publication of women's issues in editorial page in particular. In this limited scope, the pertinent issues related to women are neglected, whereas a few political affairs or any sensational occurrences are prioritised more for publication in editorial page (Sharma, 2019, pp. 35- 48).

3. Statement of Research Problem and Statement of Objectives:

From the above discussion, it has been found that in most of the cases women are misrepresented in mainstream media contents. In case of print media, women are not only misrepresentation, rather the representation of women is marginal. However, there is no such study conducted in post COVID-19 pandemic period in Bengali newspapers, particularly on editorial page.

So, there is a research gap which may be verified against empirical study.

This paper tries to overview the content category, frequency and volume of publications may be the indicators of the coverage of women issues in newspaper.

Therefore, the objective of the study is stated as –

- To make a comparative analysis of publications in editorial page, particularly editorial columns and opinion pieces related to women's issues in terms of content category, frequency and volume of publications in selected Bengali daily newspapers published from West Bengal.

4. Methodology:

This study will adopt the following methodology as stated below –

- A quantitative analysis of editorial columns and opinion pieces on women's issues published in selected Bengali newspapers will be conducted
- A purposive sample will be drawn from the editorial columns and opinion pieces published in three most leading Bengali newspapers, namely Anandabazar Patrika, Bartaman and Ei Samay, as referred by The Media Ant (Top 10 List of Bengali Newspapers, 2025).
- The sample will be drawn during six months in the year 2023-2024, from September, 2023 to February 2024.
- Further, to analyse the data descriptive statistics will be applied.

Session C2

Psychology

Chair: Prof: Dilwar Hussain

Exploring the effectiveness of a web-based ACT intervention on well-being indicators among Indian college students.

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Introduction

Student Mental health represents a public health concern globally. According to a large-scale epidemiological meta-analysis, approximately 62.5% of individuals experience the first onset of a mental health disorder before the age of 25 years globally (Solmi et al., 2022). Recent studies from India indicate a pattern in student mental health that aligns with global trends. For instance, a survey conducted at 30 institutions across nine states in India revealed that approximately 18.8% of students had contemplated suicide, while 6.7% had attempted it at some point in their lives (Cherian et al., 2024).

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)-based interventions are emerging transdiagnostic interventions that have demonstrated effectiveness in enhancing psychological flexibility and well-being across diverse populations (Thompson et al., 2021). Transdiagnostic interventions refer to the approaches that target underlying psychological processes common across multiple mental health disorders, rather than focusing on disorder-specific symptoms (Harvey et al., 2004). Transdiagnostic techniques are increasingly employed as preventive strategies or early interventions for diverse groups. ACT is a flexible approach to developing context-sensitive interventions that are accessible and effective. This aligns with the recent call for the democratization of mental health care in India, which involves integrating public health programs at the community level (Dhyani et al., 2022). In low-resource contexts, such as India, existing support structures, including educational institutions, can be leveraged to implement universal promotive interventions by utilizing digital technologies to create scalable solutions (Mehrotra, 2020).

As an initial attempt to develop an accessible, cost-effective, culturally competent intervention, our study broadly aims to deliver a web-based intervention to college students that is grounded in a well-established theoretical framework.

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Research Objectives

1. To adapt and pilot a web-based ACT intervention for Indian college students.
2. To assess the feasibility and acceptability of a web-based ACT intervention on Indian college students
3. To examine the effectiveness of a web-based ACT intervention in improving well-being indicators among college students in India.

Methodology

An intervention program comprising six modules, presented in the form of animated videos and interactive worksheets, was developed and hosted on Google Classroom, an open platform. The intervention was rooted in the theoretical framework of ‘Acceptance and Commitment Therapy’ (Hayes et al., 2006), with each module’s theme aligning with one of the six ACT processes: Acceptance, cognitive defusion, present moment awareness, the observer self, values, and committed actions. An initial pilot study, using a single-arm pre- and post-testing design, was conducted with 24 college students to examine the feasibility, acceptability, and preliminary effectiveness of the intervention modules on well-being indicators, such as psychological flexibility, euthymia, mature happiness, and psychological general well-being. Feasibility was assessed by asking participants whether they deemed the intervention’s duration appropriate, while acceptability was assessed by asking participants whether they would recommend the intervention to others. Following minor modifications, the main study with $N = 90$ college students was used to examine the effectiveness of the intervention on various well-being indicators and ACT processes. The main study utilized a quasi-experimental design, incorporating a pre- and post-test design along with a waitlist group to assess the effectiveness of the intervention. Additionally, all the intervention measures used in this study were tested for their psychometric properties and factor structure using the baseline survey data ($N = 299$).

Key findings

The outcome measures of intervention, i.e., psychological flexibility, mature happiness, euthymia, and psychological general well-being, were found to be an adequate fit in the Indian context. The values of the psychometric properties fell within an acceptable range. The intervention was feasible and acceptable, and it showed a significant marginal increase in

psychological flexibility scores from pre- to post-intervention. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to evaluate the difference in post-testing scores between the

intervention and waitlist groups, while controlling for baseline scores. The results showed that participants in the Intervention group had significant improvement in psychological general well-being scores compared to the waitlist group ($F = 4.240$, $p = .042$, $\eta^2 p = .046$). No significant differences were found in the post-testing scores of psychological flexibility, mature happiness, and euthymia between the intervention and waitlist groups. Additionally, the effectiveness of each module was assessed using a paired sample t-test. Only two of the modules, specifically module-2 based on the theme of cognitive defusion ($t [44] = 2.32$, $p=0.02$) and module-6 based on committed actions ($t [43] = -2.657$, $p=0.01$), demonstrated statistically significant improvements from pre-to-post testing. The effect size for cognitive defusion was low (Cohen's $d=-0.28$) and moderate for committed actions (Cohen's $d=0.51$).

Conclusion

The intervention could be considered as feasible, acceptable, and effective in improving psychological general well-being and various ACT-based processes such as cognitive defusion and committed actions. This is a promising avenue for various policies and practices and may stimulate further investigation.

Algorithmic Storytelling: How Media Platforms Shape Human Narratives and Psychological Selves

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In the current digital era, algorithms employed by social media platforms have emerged as unseen mechanisms that significantly influence how individuals develop, interpret, and enact their identities. Rather than functioning as impartial instruments, these algorithms consistently filter, prioritize, and suggest content, thereby shaping users' perceptions and, in turn, the manner in which they articulate their own life narratives. This research presents the notion of Algorithmic Storytelling—the

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mechanism through which digital algorithms collaboratively construct human self-narratives by dictating which dimensions of the self are highlighted and which remain obscured. By synthesizing perspectives from narrative psychology, media algorithm theory, and technoself studies, this article investigates the effects of algorithmic curation on personal storytelling, authenticity, and psychological well-being within modern media contexts.

Study Objective

The study wanted to answer four related research objectives:

1. How do individuals comprehend the impact of algorithmic systems on the formation of their self-narratives?
2. How algorithmic validation and visibility affect self-esteem, authenticity, and belonging.
3. The ways users manage agency within algorithmically curated spaces.
4. In proposing the conceptual framework—Algorithmic Narrative Selfhood—for how algorithmic mediation reconfigures the composition and coherence of human narrative identity.

These objectives fill an important gap in the research on psychological and media studies: while previous studies have examined the outcomes of algorithms on attention, engagement, and belief, few studies exist that examine the effect on the psychological story element to the construct of self-identity.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative, interpretivist research paradigm and combined narrative analysis and reflexive thematic analysis to translate the participants' lived experiences. Participants included 45 participants (age between 20 to 35 years; $M = 27.3$) who were purposively sampled from universities, creative sectors, and information technology offices. Participants had been regular users of algorithmic platforms, namely Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, for at least two years.

Data were gathered via semi-structured interviews (45–60 minutes long) and an abbreviated online questionnaire that elicited demographic and engagement behaviors. Interview prompts encouraged consideration of self-presentation, algorithmic validation, and agency (e.g., "Does your feed portray who you are or what the algorithm deems you to be?"). Transcriptions occurred verbatim and data analysis via the Reflexive Thematic Analysis framework (Braun & Clarke, 2021) took place. Coding, theme building, and interpretive mapping occurred using NVivo 14 Software. Methodological rigor aligned with APA qualitative guidelines (Levitt et al.,

2018), including the highlighting of credibility, reflexivity, and transparency. Peer debriefing and member checking were also implemented to facilitate analytic rigor.

Chief Findings

The thematic analysis identified four interrelated patterns:

1. The Algorithm as an Unseen Co-Author: Participants characterized algorithms as covert influences that dictate which "version" of their identity is revealed to the public. They perceived their self-presentation as being partially shaped by algorithmic reasoning rather than deliberate self-expression.

"my instagram feed is telling the story i did not write—it is edited by the algorithm." (P11)

2. Curated Identity and Performative Authenticity: The notion of visibility was intrinsically linked to adherence to algorithmic standards. Respondents intentionally shared "algorithm-compatible" material, thereby cultivating an impression of calculated selfhood. This performative adjustment reflects Turkle's (2011) idea of the performance-oriented self within digital environments.

"I share what will trend—not what's me." (P30)

3. Algorithmic Visibility and the Quest to Be Acknowledged: Participants linked algorithmic visibility to individual validation and self-worth. If algorithms limited the visibility of content, users felt disregarded or invalidated and thus affirmed existing research correlating algorithmic acknowledgment with changes in self-esteem (Soh, 2024; Nor et al., 2025).

If the algorithm doesn't recognize me, I am not seen." (P35)

4. Resistance and Reclaiming Narrative Agency: Despite algorithmic dominance, participants practiced resistance through deliberate disengagement, random liking to "confuse" algorithms, or emphasizing offline identity coherence. Such reflexivity represents a form of narrative re-authoring (Riessman, 2008) and supports Luppicini's (2013) view of technoself agency.

"I manipulate the algorithm in order to experience a sense of control." (P40)
Collectively these themes signal the twin role of algorithms as tools of narrative governance and actors of reflexive resistance. The Algorithmic Narrative Selfhood Model subsumes these processes within an overarching framework signaling the simultaneous shaping and testing of the construction of digital identity. Theoretical and Practical Implications The findings also expand the range of narrative identity theory to include the digital domain and assume that the modern self is mediated by algorithms more than by autobiography. Algorithms serve us narrative infrastructures—their deliberations determine what is seen and what is unseen

(Jacobsen, 2023). This study is an addition to the swelling body of research on algorithmic imaginaries (Gandini & Nieborg, 2023) and complements large-scale experimental studies finding little attitude shift but significant shifts in perceived visibility and the meaning of identity (Guess et al., 2023; Nyhan et al., 2023). Practically, this study highlights the need for algorithmic narrative literacy—educational and clinical frameworks aimed to help users to understand, deconstruct, and reclaim their agency within algorithmically ordered spaces. Conclusion This study argues that the narrative identity within the late-digital era is not singularly authored by the individual but is jointly constructed by algorithmic systems determining visibility, acknowledgment, and belonging. Through curation, calibration, and negotiation processes, the users continually rebuild their stories-of-self within the interactivity with algorithmic authority. Algorithmic Narrative Selfhood identifies the double existence within the scope of algorithms—where the search to be seen can also erase and upgrade individual meaning-making. Cultivating an awareness of these processes is central to the preservation of authenticity, psychological consistency, and digital well-being within an age where experience is algorithmically curated.

Keywords

Algorithmic storytelling; narrative identity; digital selfhood; media psychology; algorithmic recognition

Neurocognitive and Emotional dysfunction in Chronic Substance Users: Investing Associate Risk Factors Through Empirical Evidence

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Introduction: Adolescence and young adulthood represent crucial phases of neurocognitive, psychological, and emotional maturation, during which individuals are highly susceptible to external influences and behavioral experimentation. In

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Assam, the growing prevalence of substance use among youth has emerged as a significant public health challenge, driven by rapid socio-cultural changes, peer influence, and limited awareness of mental health and preventive services. Early initiation of substance use has been consistently associated with impairments in attention, working memory, executive functioning, and emotion regulation, domains essential for adaptive behavior and decision-making. Despite this alarming trend, empirical research examining the cognitive deficits, emotional dysregulation, and underlying risk factors among Assamese youth with SUD remains scarce. The present study, therefore, aimed to explore the cognitive and emotional regulation difficulties associated with SUD while identifying the key risk factors contributing to its onset and maintenance.

Methodology: A cross-sectional, comparative research design was employed to examine cognitive and emotional regulation differences between youths with Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and healthy controls. The study included a total of 320 participants, 160 clinically identified SUD cases and 160 matched healthy controls. The SUD group consisted of participants aged 15–30 years, recruited through purposive sampling from various rehabilitation centers across five districts of Assam. A detailed socio-demographic was administered to assess participants' background characteristics, family history of substance use, socioeconomic conditions, and other contextual determinants contributing to substance use vulnerability. The severity of substance use was evaluated using the World Health Organization's Alcohol, Smoking, and Substance Involvement Screening Test (WHO-ASSIST). Emotional regulation was assessed with the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS), while cognitive functioning was measured through the Trail Making Test (TMT-A and TMT-B), Stroop Color-Word Test, and Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) Cognitive Assessment Questionnaire. Data were analyzed using independent-sample t-tests to assess mean group differences, and Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) to examine the multivariate impact of substance use on cognitive domains.

Results: The mean age of participants was 24.52 years ($SD = 3.53$), with a mean age of substance use initiation at 16.39 years ($SD = 3.40$). Tobacco and cannabis users were predominantly at moderate risk, alcohol users exhibited heterogeneous risk levels, while heroin users consistently showed high-risk patterns. Significant cognitive impairments were observed in the SUD group compared to the control group. Performance deficits were most evident on the Trail Making Test-A (indicating slower processing speed) and Trail Making Test-B (reflecting reduced cognitive flexibility). On the Stroop Color-Word Test, participants with SUD demonstrated longer reaction times and increased errors, suggesting compromised inhibitory control and attentional interference. Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) scores further indicated mild to moderate global cognitive decline,

particularly affecting orientation, memory, and concentration. Composite cognitive scores revealed pronounced deficits in working memory, executive functioning, and sustained attention. Emotion regulation difficulties were significantly higher ($p < 0.001$), particularly in areas such as impulse control, goal-directed behavior, and emotional clarity. Additionally, multiple psychosocial and environmental risk factors contributing to substance use were identified.

Conclusion: The study revealed marked cognitive and emotional regulation impairments among youths with Substance Use Disorder (SUD) in Assam. Deficits in attention, working memory, and executive functioning, along with heightened emotion regulation difficulties, highlight the neuropsychological burden of early substance use. The presence of multiple risk factors further underscores the need for targeted prevention, cognitive rehabilitation, and culturally sensitive mental health interventions for affected youths.

Keywords: Substance Use Disorder; Youth; Cognitive Impairment; Emotion

Regulation; Risk Factors; Assam

Session C3

Linguistics

Chair: Prof. Bidisha Som

Echoes of birhor: an acoustic analysis of speech signals in an endangered austroasiatic language

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The Birhor language, belonging to the Munda branch of the Austroasiatic language family, is spoken by a small semi-nomadic tribal community dispersed across seven Indian states: Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra. Birhor language is classified as a Critically Endangered language by UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger. It lacks a written script, and its oral tradition is diminishing rapidly as well. Birhor is currently spoken by less than 10,000 people as their native language, and its linguistic endangerment has increased due to growing linguistic assimilation with regionally prominent languages like Bengali and Hindi. Amid ongoing sociolinguistic challenges, this work aims to support the preservation and documentation of the Birhor language through an acoustic analysis of its speech sounds. The study examines Birhor's phonetic properties, particularly focusing on parameters such as pitch and intensity, utilizing advanced signal processing tools in PRAAT software. The acoustic patterns identified reveal distinctive phonetic traits that differentiate Birhor from neighbouring languages. The research is based on primary data collected from native speakers of Birhor residing in selected villages of West Bengal and Jharkhand states. These acoustical features provide valuable insight into how sound and meaning are organized within the Birhor linguistic system. More significantly, they show how the language's phonetic structure has changed as a result of interactions with dominant surrounding languages. This highlights the interrelationship between speech, sound system, and social context, showing how societal pressure and linguistic dominance shape the acoustic profile of a minority language. The study offers an interdisciplinary approach that places the Birhor sound system within the processes of language change, bilingualism, and cultural persistence by fusing ethno-linguistic evidence with modern phonetic analysis.

Keywords: Acoustic phonetics, Birhor, India, Linguistical Analysis, PVTG, PRAAT Revitalization.

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Session C4

Economics

Chair: Dr. Bhaskar Jyoti Neog

Rain and Time Use in Bangladesh: Gendered Impacts and Vulnerabilities

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Climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges of our time, claiming over 765,000 lives and causing nearly USD 4.2 trillion in losses globally over the past three decades. While existing research has examined the health and economic impacts of extreme weather events, few have explored how climate shocks affect the allocation of time in daily life. Time, as an inherently limited resource, must be divided across paid work, household chores, rest, and other activities that collectively shapes livelihood and well-being. Understanding how extreme weather disrupts these patterns reveals hidden costs of climate change that productivity-focused analyses often overlook, particularly regarding immediate behavioural responses and gendered patterns of adaptation.

This study investigates the effects of off-seasonal rainfall on time use in Bangladesh, one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries. Bangladesh presents an ideal setting for this research due to several factors. Firstly, its frequent and increasing exposure to floods and cyclones disrupt daily life and economic activities. Secondly, it has a large informal economy where significant labour is directly employed in climate-exposed sectors. Lastly, though Bangladesh has seen a recent progress in women's empowerment yet entrenched patriarchal norms persist making it a unique setting to study whether weather shocks reinforce or mitigate gender divisions in labour.

Our analysis combines two comprehensive datasets: the Bangladesh Time Use Survey 2021, conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and United Nations Women, and high-resolution daily rainfall data from the Climate Hazards Group InfraRed Precipitation with Station data (CHIRPS) at 0.05° resolution (~5.3 km). The survey, conducted from January to April 2021 during the dry season, collected detailed time-use information from 13,680 individuals aged 18-59 years across all eight divisions of Bangladesh. The study focuses specifically on dry-season rainfall when precipitation is unexpected and exogenous, distinguishing it from monsoon-focused research where households have long-established adaptive strategies.

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Our study employs a censored hurdle regression model, which separately analyses two distinct decisions: the participation decision (whether to allocate any time to an activity) and the intensity decision (how much time to allocate, conditional on participation). This methodological choice recognizes that factors influencing whether someone engages in an activity may differ from those affecting how long they participate. The analysis examines five mutually exclusive activity domains: economic work (ECON), household production (HHPROD), household work (HHWORK), childcare (CHILDCARE), and leisure (LEISURE). For leisure, however, ordinary least squares regression is used since all respondents report some leisure time.

Our study reveals that even modest rainfall during the dry season substantially disrupts time use patterns. For each additional millimetre of daily rainfall, individuals reduce their annual time on paid work by approximately six hours and on household production by two hours. The time "saved" from reduced work is primarily reallocated towards leisure activities, which

increases by nine hours annually per millimetre of rainfall. Moreover, we find that rainfall narrows gender gaps in time allocation, but the mechanisms differ across activity types. For outdoor economic and household production activities, convergence occurs primarily through male contraction rather than female expansion. Men, who dominate Bangladesh's labour force (approximately 80% male employment versus 43% female), reduce their time in paid work significantly—by about 36 hours annually—while women's participation increases only marginally (4 hours annually). This pattern reflects men's greater exposure to weather-sensitive sectors like agriculture and construction, while women remain concentrated in weather-protected, indoor, and home-based informal activities due to social norms and gender biases.

For indoor activities like domestic work and childcare, the convergence mechanism reverses: men increase their participation during rainfall events while women's time remains largely unchanged. This suggests that weather shocks can temporarily disrupt entrenched gender roles, encouraging men to assume greater household responsibilities. However, women's workloads in domestic domains remain "sticky," reflecting social norms that bind them to unpaid responsibilities regardless of weather conditions. Notably, women enjoy about 22 minutes more leisure daily than men under normal conditions, and rainfall further increases this gap.

Further, our heterogeneity analysis reveals that rainfall vulnerability is not randomly distributed but concentrates among already disadvantaged groups. Rural households experience larger time losses (18 hours annually) than urban households (17 hours). Education acts as a buffer: individuals with primary education or less lose about 21 hours of work annually, while those with secondary or higher education lose only 10

hours. Wealth significantly moderates impacts—poor households (bottom tercile) suffer losses of 52 hours per year, middle-income households lose 14 hours, while wealthy households actually increase work time by 4 hours annually.

Agricultural households face the most severe impacts, losing 56 hours of economic work annually compared to 9 hours for non-agricultural households and 3 hours for those with other income sources. Intersecting vulnerabilities amplify these effects showing that the bottom 40 percent of rural agricultural households forfeit 67 hours annually, while the top 60 percent lose only 36 hours. This pattern demonstrates that rainfall exacerbates pre-existing socio-economic inequalities, with the largest impacts concentrated among rural, less-educated, poor, and agricultural households.

These findings carry important policy implications. The substantial time losses from relatively minor rainfall events suggest that climate adaptation strategies must address not only catastrophic events but also moderate weather disruptions. Targeted interventions should focus on vulnerable populations, including investments in climate-resilient infrastructure, livelihood diversification programs, and social protection mechanisms such as weather-indexed insurance and employment guarantees, particularly for women and rural agricultural workers.

Our study acknowledges several limitations: reliance on district-level rather than precise geographic rainfall measures due to data constraints; potential COVID-19 pandemic effects on time allocation patterns; inability to capture longer-term adaptation strategies or cumulative effects of repeated shocks; and limited information about seasonal migrants and detailed local infrastructure. Future research should explore seasonal variations, examine the role of social networks and infrastructure in shaping coping strategies, and utilize panel data to trace whether short-term disruptions translate into persistent welfare losses.

This research demonstrates that even modest weather variations during unexpected periods can significantly affect daily time allocation decisions, with gendered behavioural adaptations and disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations. The findings underscore the need for climate policies that recognize time use as a critical dimension of climate vulnerability and address the intersection of gender, poverty, and environmental stress in developing countries facing increasing climate variability.

Keywords: Rainfall; time use; gender; hurdle model; Bangladesh.

ESG and sustainable finance in india:trends and challenges

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Sustainable finance is an economic strategy that encourages environmentally responsible practices and compliance with social standards. It is one of the recent trends in the global business arena. Especially for India, aligning with the global ESG approach in key sectors is essential to ensure sustainable growth and development.

This research investigates important functions of ESG, along with emerging trends and challenges, by reviewing secondary sources such as case studies, academic papers, and articles. India has pledged to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2070, which positions sustainable finance as a vital component in this transition. Sustainable finance is crucial for addressing the risks linked to climate change and environmental decline, aiding India in its alignment with international climate objectives and the promotion of sustainable development.

This research examines how institutional behavior, stakeholder involvement, and the expectations of policymakers affect the incorporation of ESG principles into sustainable business practices. It utilizes interdisciplinary approaches, including qualitative and policy analysis, and primarily relies on secondary data. The study is qualitative and descriptive in nature. To develop a comprehensive understanding, 35 research articles were selected from reputed academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. These articles were chosen for their relevance, reliability, and contributions from Google Scholar to the evolving field of ESG. The study analyzed these materials to gather detailed insights regarding ESG trends, challenges, and effective practices. Additionally, the study highlights a detailed data diagram illustrating all factors within the proposed conceptual framework, which guides effective ESG integration in sustainable business models.

The key findings reveal a fragmented approach to ESG integration and pinpoint several major obstacles. These challenges include a lack of stakeholder involvement,

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ineffective policy formulation and execution, poor financial decision-making due to inadequate systems, and widespread greenwashing. These issues hinder the effective adoption of sustainable business practices.

The Future research could focus on green and sustainable bonds aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, incorporating fintech and blockchain technologies for enhanced transparency and efficiency.

Keywords: Sustainable finance, ESG, stakeholder, greenwashing, fintech.

Exploring Consumer Willingness to Utilize Solar Energy: An Empirical Study in Selected Districts of Assam

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The rapid growth of the population and the expansion of industrial activities have resulted in a substantial rise in energy demand (Kannan & Vakeesan, 2016). Climate change is intensifying alongside rising global energy demands (Petrovich et al., 2019). Over the years, heavy dependence on non-renewable fossil fuels has led to resource depletion and environmental degradation. This has created an urgent need to transition from non-renewable to renewable energy sources (Colmenares-Quintero et al., 2020). Even in fossil-rich regions like Iran and Morocco, climate change awareness is key to shifting perceptions towards renewable energy (Komendantova & Yazdanpanah, 2017). With the increasing global demand for sustainable energy solutions, solar energy has emerged as a critical alternative to conventional fossil fuels. Therefore, Solar power generation, as an emerging green energy, has attracted increasing attention (Zhang, 2025). Solar energy is a sustainable, renewable, and widely available energy source (Pourasl et al., 2023). It holds significant potential to substitute conventional fossil fuels, thereby helping to combat climate change and reduce pollution (Creutzig et al., 2017). Solar energy has become the key contributor to renewable energy sources, accounting for nearly 31% of the total installed

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renewable energy capacity as of 2022, sharing 3.6% in global electricity generation (Renewable Energy Statistics 2023, n.d.)

India has emerged as one of the primary contributors to this increase over the past few years. In India, the national government is actively promoting solar energy through initiatives such as the Solar Mission under the National Action Plan on Climate Change. However, at an individual level, the utilization rate in India remains relatively low. In the rural households of India, there is still a lack of reliable and continuous sources of electricity; although substantial subsidies for solar energy have been introduced by the government for the rural population since 2014, to overcome the issue of energy scarcity, its uptake and utilization have remained conspicuously low. Thus, we need to study which factors basically affect the willingness to utilize solar energy.

This study aims to address this research gap by analysing the influence of factors on consumers' willingness to utilize solar energy. This study offers an overarching understanding of the varied socio-economic, environmental, and psychological factors that influence the consumers' Willingness to Utilize (WTU) solar energy as a renewable source of energy, in the context of Assam, India. This study is particularly relevant in the context of Assam, because, despite having a tropical climate with ample amount of sunlight throughout the year, and the State government (in collaboration with the Central government) introducing several schemes promoting solar energy adoption in subsidized rates, particularly in rural regions where access to conventional electricity is unreliable, the rate of solar energy adoption in Assam is still none to negligible.

The primary objective of this research is to assess the factors that influence consumers' Willingness to Utilize (WTU) solar energy in two districts of Assam: Sivasagar and Dima Hasao, with a particular focus on key elements such as environmental concern, cost perception,

awareness, perception about self-effectiveness, belief in the benefits of solar energy and perception of neighbours' participation. For this study, we employed Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as the foundation for our research framework.

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, including both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Primary field surveys are conducted in Sivasagar and Dima Hasao districts to gather household-level data on perceptions and behaviours related to solar energy. Focus group discussions involving non-academic practitioners and the community provide additional insights into the challenges and opportunities for solar energy adoption in these districts. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, and structural equation modelling

to test the relationship between the identified factors and consumers' Willingness to Utilize (WTU) solar energy.

To address the issue of discriminant validity, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each factor has been calculated. To measure reliability and validity, we employed Cronbach's Alpha test. Besides this, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is conducted to identify the underlying factor structure of the data and to determine the contribution of each variable to the overall design configuration. Before performing EFA, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (BTS) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test are performed to determine the fitness of the data. After that, EFA proceed using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method. To assess the reliability of the factors, Composite Reliability (CR) analysis is conducted, and convergent validity is verified using factor loadings. To test the hypotheses, we employed Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). SEM offers an accurate estimation of measurement errors, enhancing the reliability of results and evaluates the model fit.

The findings revealed that perception about self-effectiveness, environmental concern, awareness of solar energy, and belief in solar energy benefits have positive effects on consumers' willingness to utilize solar energy, while the cost of solar energy has a negative effect. In addition, though the coefficient of perception of neighbours' participation is positive but it is not statistically significant. The R-squared value is 0.83, which indicates that 83% variation in the dependent variable is explained by the explanatory variable. The model fit statistics indicate that the estimated structural model provides a substantially better fit to the data.

As the study found that perception about solar energy, environmental concern, awareness and belief in solar energy benefits positively influence consumers' willingness to utilize solar energy, the government can take strategies to spread awareness about solar energy utilization among the people. Overall, the widespread adoption of solar energy will serve as a key driver of sustainable development, promoting environmental sustainability, social equity, and economic resilience.

Key Words: Climate Change, solar energy, Consumer Willingness to Utilize

DAY 2

Session A1

Philosophy

Chair: Dr. Akoijam Thoibisana

A Methodological Exploration of Realism(s) in Philosophy and its Relevance for Feminist Theory

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Keywords: gender identities, sexual difference, realism, psychoanalysis, feminism.

The debate about sexual difference and gender differences can be traced back to the 1970s in the United Kingdom, where a group of “women liberationists” wanted to understand the oppression of women in a way that was different from the sense in which Marx analyzed the term “oppression.” Several feminist thinkers around the time shared the motivation that the language of the unconscious and psychoanalysis had something pivotal to contribute to the theorization of women’s oppression and emancipation. Thus, in this speculative link between psychoanalytic theory and feminism, sexual difference becomes prioritized as an analytic category in a manner similar to how class difference becomes central to class politics. However, the prioritization of sexual difference was contested by Gayle Rubin and Judith Butler, but continues to motivate the works of Jacqueline Rose, Joan Copjec, and Alenka Zupančič, who present different nuances to the account of sexual difference but share the commitment to differentiate sexual difference from gender identities. To be sure, sexual difference is conceived of as a speculative difference insofar as it explains the (biological) failure to be perfectly male or female, as well as the (cultural) failure to perfectly embody masculinity or femininity. Despite the failure to perfectly represent the female/male anatomy or its socio-cultural symbolisation, sexual difference insists on the (unconscious) division between masculine and feminine that precedes our gendered and sexual identity in the world. Hence, gender identities and sexual orientation can be consciously chosen and can be multiple, while sexual difference is either masculine or feminine. Sexual difference brings in the radical perspective that woman as a category does not really exist, except as an imaginary fantasy. This position that negates any predication of what a woman can/should be (kind, gentle, beautiful, domesticated, etc.), de-substantializes our understanding of sexuality and, I contend, serves as the most fitting rebuttal to patriarchy. In this paper, I suggest that what productively brings these accounts together is a

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methodological commitment to position “sexual difference” in a manner crucial to truth formation and revelation.

Louis Althusser, in his essay “On Marx and Freud” (1993), suggests that the discovery of “class” and “unconscious” by Marx and Freud, respectively, as points of view that reveal the conflict underlying our contradictory reality, rather than dissimulating the conflict. Building upon Althusser’s insight, Alenka Zupančič (2017), in *What Is Sex?*, shows that sex is a singular point of view in psychoanalysis when it comes to thinking about gender differences and sexual difference. She writes: “that sex, or the sexual, is precisely such a ‘position,’ or point of view, in psychoanalysis. Not because of its (‘dirty’ or controversial) contents, but because of the singular form of contradiction that it forces us to see, to think, and to engage with” (4). This paper insists on such a materialist analysis of “sex” as a position that privileges feminist analysis in face of the masculine neutral analysis that surrounds us. The paper will explicate various facets of such neutral analysis: coherent, dualist as opposed to dialectical, emphasis on consciousness, and complete obliteration of the unconscious and, thus, sex.

The debate between Juliet Mitchell and Judith Butler explicates what is at the core of prioritizing sexual difference over gender and vice versa. Notably, in their accounts, the two positions are presented as mutually incompatible. Mitchell’s insistence on sexual difference is understood by Butler as essentializing gender and reinscribing the heterosexual normative, i.e., effecting an “accomplished heterosexuality”. However, Jacqueline Rose attempts a third productive position, which suggests that the two positions (Butler’s and Mitchell’s) offer us a false alternative and we need not dispense with either side of the equation. She corrects the inadequacy running through Mitchell’s over-emphasis on the law of sexual difference and Butler’s complete disassociation from the law of sexual difference and, thus, the unconscious by evoking Jacques Lacan’s position on the utter fraudulence yet exigency of the law, which opens a space for transformation.

The paper will reconstruct the productive alternative presented by Rose, in light of theorizations by Copjec and Zupančič, to insist on sexual difference as an analytical category to analyse the world through a feminist lens. Crucially, sex explains the always already outof-joint relation that the human mind has with the human body. Sex stands in as that which forms the body and mind of the human subject as always already split from within and, thus, escaping the usual causal and mechanical explanations of their movement and action. In other words, the laws of mechanical causality do not exhaustively explain human action and the paper suggests that this is because sex is an analytical and speculative concept, which cannot be located either in the body or in the mind, i.e., sex is neither anatomical nor cultural. I will concretely

situate this analysis by engaging Shoshana Felman's critical reading of the 18th century French writer Honoré de Balzac's short story *Adieu*. Section 1 begins by situating the limited sense in which the idea of "realism" is deployed by literary critics in interpreting Balzac's work. This section explores how the limited sense of "realism" is not inherent to Balzac's story itself, but rather imposed upon it by critics working within the dualistic framework of real-unreal, masculine-feminine, sanity-madness, inclusion-exclusion, and so on. Section 2 analyses how sex and sexual difference allow us to read the story differently, precisely by presenting an alternative frame to the usual dualism of, on the one hand, visibility and representation of men, which, on the other hand, renders the women's bodies and voices invisible. The analysis of "sex" reveals how the invisible is always already implicated in the visible itself. And, thus, to re-evoke Rose's formulation, gender theory, which dethrones sexual difference, collapses the gap between our unconscious and conscious, and thus, inhibits any real transformation. The larger wager of this paper is to demonstrate that the re-inscription of sex is crucial for shifting the frame of analysis from mere inclusion/exclusion, limited to the symbolic representation alone, and to present a frame for reconfiguring the understanding of representation itself.

Situated and Storied Selves: Reconfiguring Cross-Cultural Identity through Schutz and Ricœur

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Keywords- cross-cultural identity, narrative identity, lifeworld and typification, phenomenological hermeneutics.

In an environment that is becoming increasingly defined by profound intercultural entanglement, the subject of identity must be considered outside of certain established confines. Although identity has often been described in terms of a fixed essence or social role, the increased complexity of lifeworlds requires an improved

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comprehension of how individuals negotiate, mediate, and rearticulate selfhood within overlapping cultural frameworks. This paper does such a theoretical inquiry by fusing Alfred Schutz's phenomenological sociology with Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic philosophy. It implies that rather than being adequately represented by models that emphasize adaptation and assimilation, cross-cultural identity should be subject to constant reconfiguration. Alfred Schutz offers the groundwork for this research with his explanation of the socially constructed lifeworld, in which individuals act inside a predetermined horizon of typifications, habitual expectations, and intersubjective meanings. These structures provide for the implicit background against which all interpretation and self-understanding first develop; they are neither deliberately selected nor readily altered. In this context, identity is expressed via engagement with common systems of relevance and belief. A set of information is passed down to the subject, guiding perception and conduct and subtly directing how one perceives others and oneself. One is faced with the interpretive work of rewriting or negotiating the terms through which identity has previously been secured when the confines of their familiar horizon become visible.

Paul Ricoeur thematizes the chronological and ethical aspects of identity through the concept of narrative, adding to Schutz's descriptive explanation of this structural embeddedness. For Ricoeur, identity is *ipse*—selfhood—that emerges via the act of recounting a life throughout time, rather than *idem*—sameness—or a fixed core. The interpretive synthesis of diverse experiences into an integrated narrative—which is always subject to change—is *emplotment*, which shapes the self. Identity becomes essentially dynamic as a result of this narrative work. It is not given but authored, and it evolves through interpretive interaction with one's past and potential future. Further, Ricoeur provides an ethical dimension to this interpretative process, as narrative identity implies an essential relationship with the other. Speaking about oneself already entails speaking within a mutually recognized horizon, where one's identity is validated in response to others who also share narratives. By bringing Schutz and Ricoeur into conversation, the study proposes a layered theoretical model of cross-cultural identification. A situated lifeworld, moulded by socio-historical sedimentations and inherited typifications, is the subject's immersion in the first layer. The second layer introduces the moment of disruption, in which one's preexisting interpretive schemas are challenged by interactions with unexpected cultural configurations, revealing the partiality or opacity of their previous meanings. In the third layer, narrative reconfiguration is emphasized, as the self plots new experiences and incorporates rupture into a reframed continuity. Ultimately, the fourth layer culminates in an ethical orientation that is not an abstract moral obligation but rather the practical position of recognition—recognizing others as co-participants in the universe of meaning. From embeddedness to rupture, to narrative reappropriation, to ethical realization, this progression reveals cross-cultural identity

as both imaginatively free and structurally conditioned. Theoretical explanations that reduce identity to societal adaptation are critically challenged by this synthesis. The notion that identity is just adaptation assumes that there is a cultural balance that the subject must adhere to. However, no single normative framework can take precedence in an intercultural existence; identity develops via navigating ambiguity rather than returning to stability. Narrative turns into a tool for navigating discontinuity in this dialectic without eliminating difference. Identity is thus portrayed as a dynamic configuration of meanings rather than a fixed essence; a hermeneutic endeavour as opposed to a psychological possession. Identity is not merely something that exists; it is created and reconstructed through interpretive work. Lifeworlds are intersubjectively constructed, meaning that identity is always co-authored and dependent on relationships with people who validate, challenge, or reframe the narratives one shares. According to Ricoeur, mutual recognition is the understanding that the self's narrative is inextricably linked to the larger narrative field in which others also speak. Identity in this intersubjective space is a collective negotiation of meaning that is performed across lifeworlds that defy easy reduction to a uniform cultural perspective.

Aesthetic Creation as Existential Rebellion Through the Lens of Camus

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This paper explores the connection between existential philosophy and aesthetics, focusing on how the act of creating beauty serves as a form of revolt against existential angst. Drawing from Albert Camus' philosophical writings, it situates aesthetic creation within the broader field of resistance to absurdity, alienation, and meaninglessness. The research examines important topics like Camus' idea of revolting against the absurd, the challenge of finding meaning in a meaningless world, and depiction of alienation through storytelling. It questions how aesthetic expression, rather than clear philosophical solutions, supports existential defiance and it also explores the limits of language, form, and representation in expressing

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metaphysical estrangement. Instead of viewing aesthetic creation as a way to avoid or transcend the absurd, this paper treats it as a way to remain within it, to live with contradictions without forcing resolutions. For this reason, the term aesthetics is used over art because aesthetics allows for incomplete, messy, or fleeting expressions of beauty that still hold philosophical significance. This expression becomes a clear act of resistance. Camus' works show that meaning does not arise from objective truth; it comes from the continuous act of shaping experience with creative form. The findings of this paper challenge traditional views of existentialism that center around transcendence and individual authenticity. They also question aesthetic theories that focus on coherence, harmony, or refinement. Instead, a new understanding emerges—where fragmentation and chaos are not flaws but essential elements for resisting the pull of false clarity, simplistic conclusions, and even overly intellectualized interpretations. In doing so, this study adds a new perspective to both existential and aesthetic thought, suggesting that the act of creating, because it refuses to resolve the absurd, may be one of the most genuine and enduring responses we have to it.

Reading Kafka's Fiction through Agamben's Biopolitical Paradigm

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This paper investigates the philosophical convergence between Giorgio Agamben's political ontology and Franz Kafka's literary vision, proclaiming that Kafka's fiction embody a chronicle to what Agamben conceptualises as "bare life", in which life is stripped of its moral and political significance, yet paradoxically sustained by the very power that exclude it. Through the perusal of "The Metamorphosis" (1915), "A Report to an Academy" (1917), and "The Trial" (1925), the investigation illustrate how the universe of Kafka prefigures the modern biopolitical condition delineated by Agamben in "Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life" (1995). Spanning these texts, the category of "human" is destabilised, disclosed as a frail built, maintained by systems of abandonment and exclusion. By stationing Agamben's

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philosophical framework in dialogue with Kafka's fiction, this paper elucidates that the quandary of identity, freedom and justice within the narratives of Kafka are not just psychological or existential, but *biopolitical*, conveying the fundamental condition of modern being, that is, an existence defined by a life subjected to regulation, capture, and administration by power.

The *Homo Sacer* of Agamben revives an archaic Roman figure in which human life is comprehended only in the form of exclusion, life who may be *killed and yet not sacrificed*—to unveil the logic by which sovereign power governs life. It embodies the paradox of the *state of exception*, where the inclusion of life is done only by excluding it. The basis of Agamben's argument is formed via this figure of abandonment in which one is both inside and outside the political order that the modern politics is based upon the management of the life itself. The sovereign, Agamben asserts, is he who determines on the state of exception, who accommodates onto who may live and who may die, who is admitted as a citizen and who is stripped to bare existence. In his view, the “camp”, is an archetype of modernity, where the boundary between life and law, violence and legality, completely disintegrates. This framework accords us to re-read Kafka not as a writer of absurd bureaucracies or metaphysical parables, but as a *visionary of the biopolitical age*—a chronicler of the modern condition in which life is perpetually exposed to the possibility of exclusion and annihilation.

Gregor Samsa, in *The Metamorphosis*, transforms into an insect becoming the most literal representation of *bare life*. He is now a discounted creature that breathes but is unable to speak, confined within the domestic sphere yet excluded from its social and moral community. The gradual departure of care of his family and his final ungrieved death marks his transformation from personhood to a mere biological existence. The entire room of Gregor becomes a microcosm of Agamben's *camp*: a space in which humanity and law adjourn themselves and life continues in a pure biological form. The narrative thus unveil that *the human* is a political status and not just a metaphysical essence, which can be revoked. The portrayal of Gregor's slow erasure discloses the condition of modern life inhabited under the shadow of exclusion. Here, life may resume, but without rights, meaning or recognition.

The trajectory of metamorphosis is then reversed in case of *A Report to an Academy*, that is, the *animal's coerced ascent into humanity*. Red Peter, the ape, recounts the journey of his captivity to civilization through submission and imitation. This transformation of his is not liberation but adaptation and compliance, surviving through which costs his submission to and assimilation into the structure of human codes of behavior. A perfect paragon of performance of humanity that dramatizes what Agamben calls the *anthropological machine*, understood as the mechanism that produces the category of *the human* by differentiating it from *the animal*. The refinement of language and conform lay bare the violent process via which humanity defines itself. The “human”

is then a disciplinary achievement and not an ontological fact. Peter's apparent freedom is, in reality, a deeper captivity, at last, a biopolitical domestication of life. Through this, Kafka exhibits that the boundary between animal and human is neither in any sense natural or stable. It is thereby maintained and constructed through the acts of exclusion, the apparatus which underlies the genesis of the *homo sacer*.

Kafka, then, in *The Trial*, shifts this logic inward, that is, to the realm of judgment and law. Accused without evidence and justification and executed without reason, Josef K, turns into the very embodiment of the subject entangled within the *state of exception*. The law that administers him exerts its power by suspending itself, operating without justification, transparency or appeal. Simultaneously, Josef K is included within the legal system and abandoned by it, existing in a condition of pure exposure. *Like a dog* like execution is the hallmark of his final descent into *bare life* where individual is deprived of moral, legal and human dignity. As Agamben conceives it, the faceless court becomes the ultimate expression of sovereign power, a power that establishes life and death without accountability. The legal universe of Kafka thus prefigures Agamben's diagnosis of modern politics, where the law subsists only as an empty form of domination, and the individual's existence is rendered contingent upon invisible authority.

Kafka, across these three works, orchestrated a progressive *deconstruction of the human*. The different points of Gregor, Red Peter and Josef K. inhabit the same continuum that is, the human devolves into the animal, the animal then becomes human, and lastly the citizen turns into a criminal. The subject, however, in each case exists in a space of ambiguity which is a *zone of indistinction* between exclusion and inclusion, captivity and freedom, life and law: the zone of *Kafkaesque* world. The door to Gregor's room, the bars of Red Peter's cage, and the labyrinthine corridors of Josef K's court are the variation of a singular threshold, in a liminal space, where human confronts and is laid bare before its own negation. The paper will thereby, explicate that Kafka's narrative spaces are not just settings but *biopolitical topologies*, dramatizing the modern state's power to govern life by deciding who counts as human.

The objective of this inquisition is twofold. First, it establishes that Kafka's fiction embodies the logic of Agamben's *Homo Sacer* long before it was articulated in theory. Kafka's narratives make visible the biopolitical mechanisms by which modernity captures and manages life; through language, law, and institutional control. Second, it redefines Kafka's existentialism as a political ontology: his "absurd" worlds are not symbolic but structural, revealing the real conditions under which modern humans live. The paper thus shows that Kafka does not merely describe alienation; he anatomizes the metaphysical architecture of sovereignty itself. His protagonists live at the threshold of law and life, illustrating Agamben's thesis that the foundation of political order is the production of bare life.

The paper by aligning Kafka's literary imagination with Agamben's philosophical analysis concludes that modernity's defining feature is not the pursuit of freedom but the *administration of existence*. The family, the cage, and the courtroom, all sites of supposed protection ultimately, become zones of exposure where life is confined, managed and abandoned. Kafka's characters are all stripped of stable identity, and embody the human as a juridical effect rather than a metaphysical given. In the world of Kafka, as also in Agamben's philosophy, the human is never guarded or secure; it is rather only one decision away, one transformation and one accusation away from being reduced to bare life. The study thus elucidates that Kafka's world and Agamben's philosophy converge on a single revelation: *to be human in the modern age is to inhabit a condition of ontological vulnerability, where one's existence can be reduced to life without essence, law without any justice, and being without meaning.*

Session A2

Economics

Chair: Prof. Anamika Barua

Capital, Nature and Ecosocialism: A Critical Analysis and Commentary

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The earth system crisis emerges as a pressing issue in recent times. Human beings' unprecedented and unwarranted intrusion on the activities of nature has not only defiled the environment but also unleashed the likelihood of sixth mass extinction. In the so-called Anthropocene epoch – marked by unparalleled anthropogenic influence over the planet – the existence of mankind has been put at stake. To forestall such an absolute catastrophe, climatologists have been underscoring the exigency of constricting humans' elevated interference over nature to reconcile with the boundaries and limits of our planet. The Anthropocene narrative holds all human beings uniformly accountable as agents of this catastrophic change on the planet. Studies yet reveal that the geological footprint of an average individual in the global north is much higher than that in the global south. Majority of human beings are, in fact, the victims of the manoeuvre of a few, but this fact remains obscured in the language of Anthropocene. Further, a segment of social thinkers poses the question: is it adequate to put the blame on a certain section of humanity only? In this vein, ecosocialist intervention becomes crucial. Ecosocialism enters the seemingly natural-scientific phenomenon of planetary crisis through focusing on its underlying socio-economic dynamics. Confronting the implicit tendency of the Anthropocene narrative to portray ecological crisis as an "ahistorical issue of nature, technology, and ontology" the red-green theory highlights the complicity of capitalist economic system in the planetary emergency. Capital's relentless drive for accumulation, validated by the anthropomorphic epistemology (which ecosocialism disapproves and instead embraces an eco-centric approach), leads to incessant expropriation of nature. Ecosocialist theory thus drawing an association between capitalism and the planetary crisis seeks to denote the contemporary age of catastrophe as *Capitalocene*, the age of capital, instead of Anthropocene. This shift marks ecosocialists' emphasis on capital's culpability in precipitating the ecological crisis. This essay, in the backdrop of global ecological emergency, seeks to delineate the ecosocialist intervention, which, breaking away from the mainstream climatologists' ahistorical and asocial depiction of the planetary crisis, unfolds a political economic critique of the same. In particular, the focus here remains on the stage-two ecosocialist literature

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which further departs from the first stage theory on the question of Marx's own perception of ecology and nature. Refuting the stage-one thinkers' claim of ecology being secondary to Marx's political economy, the second stage red-green theorists contend that the question of nature has always been fundamental to Marx's critique of capitalism. Making a recourse to Marx's various unpublished notebooks and excerpts of natural sciences, second-stage ecosocialism rescues Marx from the promethean accusation and depicts how nature has invariably remained an integral part of his theory. Stage-two theory envisages *metabolic rift* as the fundamental theoretical tool of Marx's ecological critique against capitalism, which stems from Marx's understanding of human-nature interaction as a metabolic exchange considering nature as the inorganic body of human beings and capital's relentless growth pursuit causing a rupture to that human-nature metabolic relationship. Ecosocialist theory, to its credit, provides an incisive ecological critique of capitalism. However, its postcapitalist imagination contains severe shortcomings, which the essay seeks to critically engage with. The red-green theory assigns socialism the agency to rescue mankind from the impending existential crisis. The theory maintains that in socialist society associated producers will reckon with the ecological concern by means of democratic decision making. However, ecosocialists fail to explicate their proposed nexus between socialism and ecological sustainability. The forceful coupling of the two emanates from the fact that the struggle against capital driven expropriation of nature and the Marxist socialist struggle against exploitation both share the anti-capitalist trait, which, however, by no means corroborates any necessary link between them. In fact, the "actually existing socialism" of the nineteenth century stands testimony to the fact that socialist system can be driven by growth motive. Ecosocialists, however, strive to rearticulate the notion of socialism in such a way that would be conducive to promote ecological sustainability. They have distanced their understanding of socialism from soviet style growth driven socialism and reimagined the socialist future devoid of extravagant consumption, wasteful production that operates in solidarity with the boundaries of the planet. Here, resorting to Stephen Cullenberg's argument I seek to ask: Why to burden socialism with so many expectations? Invocation of Cullenberg's *thin definition of socialism*, in this essay, paves way to encounter the ecosocialist conception of postcapitalist future in two ways: first, it helps challenge the ecosocialist conception of socialism. Cullenberg defines socialism only as a non-exploitative organization of production process, which ensures performers and appropriators of surplus labour are the same. In ecosocialist framework socialism is defined in terms of the collective ownership of means of production (MOP) and equitable distribution, which are of no less importance but cannot substitute the aspect of 'appropriative justice' as the fundamental criterion for any production system to be labelled as socialist. Second, holding on solely to the criterion of non-exploitation while defining socialism renders the eco-friendly feature of socialism imposed by

ecosocialists as incoherent. Cullenberg's approach being based on overdeterminism refutes any necessary relationship as reality is perceived contingent and contradictory in the overdeterministic space. Hence, the nexus between socialism and ecological sustainability gets problematized.

The intervention of this essay lies in: first, to present the critical break of eco-Marxists from the mainstream climatologists' a-social narrative of the earth system crisis as well as from the stage-one ecosocialism; and second, bringing in Cullenberg's definition of socialism, which also manifests a critical departure from the Classical Marxism's perception of socialism, confronting ecosocialist belief that socialism will be the ultimate solution to the planetary crisis. Putting these two theoretical breaks into a dialogue with each other, the paper highlights exigency of rethinking of ecosocialism, especially in terms of its postcapitalist future.

Keywords: Anthropocene, ecological crisis, capital, socialism, ecosocialism, class

Modelling Cooperation through Shared Prosperity: An Economic Perspective on the Assam-Nagaland Border Dispute

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The Assam Nagaland border dispute is a prominent and multifaceted issue in Northeast India, rooted in the historical territorial claims, different ethnic identities and socio-political heterogeneity. Since the colonial demarcations, conflict over this border is the longest-running and the most severe one. Over decades, this dispute has resulted in repeated violent outbursts, leading to human sufferings, disruption of economic activities and the sustained underdevelopment among the bordering communities over many years. Despite multiple efforts grounded in conventional political and security solutions centering administrative demarcations, till date no one has been adequate to succeed in securing lasting peace or regional unity between the two states. Yet, they fail to realize that the lives and livelihoods of bordering communities are deeply interconnected through forest resource sharing, agricultural exchange and local trade, which could serve as the potential for trust-building and cooperation.

In the literature of economics and international relations, economic interdependence, characterized by shared economic activities, trade and resource exchange is often theorized as a constructive mechanism for promoting peace between two nations or two parties. Economic interdependence reduces conflict by raising the opportunity cost of conflict and shared mutual gain. Keeping this in mind, this paper tries to explore how such interdependence among bordering communities can be strategically utilized to encourage cooperation and manage this decades-long Assam-Nagaland border dispute as its prime objective. This paper also focuses on the series of dispute resolution attempts by the both governments and their strong personal incentives leading to the defection and mistrust.

The principal actors involved in the Assam Nagaland border dispute are the state governments, local communities and the economic agents. The study employs a game theoretical framework as its central analytical tool to analyze the strategic behaviors of these main stakeholders. Game theory provides a thorough structure

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to interpret decision making processes in situations influenced by both conflict and cooperation. Acknowledging the complex and layered nature of Assam Nagaland border disputes, the study tries to capture the rational dynamics of cooperation between Assam and Nagaland under the Stag Hunt framework. The Stag Hunt framework aptly describes scenarios where highest shared benefit can be achieved through trust and collective cooperation. Applying to the case of border dispute, this framework illustrates the opportunities for Assam and Nagaland to have a joint gain through shared initiatives such as collaborative resource management or infrastructure projects under the condition of binding agreements. The Stag hunt emphasizes that the role of institution is essential to cultivate trust for sustaining long run economic collaboration. The study proceeds with the analysis by extending the static Stag Hunt game into a repeated game framework to incorporate the longitudinal dimension Assam-Nagaland dispute. Repeated interaction allows the inclusion of strategies such as conditional cooperation which might stabilize cooperation. This extension demonstrates how trust and cooperation evolve over time based on historical experiences.

The paper integrates mixed method approach to ensure the depth of the study. Secondary data sources such as government reports, academic literature, books etc provide insights about conflict history, approaches towards conflict resolutions and socio, economic and political relations of these two states since demarcation. To complement this, field-based interviews with local economic agents, community representatives and officials are done to understand economic behaviors of the people, perceptions towards conflict and cooperation and their livelihood options. This helps in refining and validating the theoretical construct with real on ground realities.

Preliminary findings reveal that economic interdependence raises 'exit cost' of conflict and profoundly alter the strategic landscape. As the cost of engaging in conflict, that are, declining interstate movements of goods and services, loss of livelihoods, market disruptions, stalled developments- rise, cooperative strategies are started looking more attractive. This shift aligns with the cooperative equilibria of the Stag Hunt model showing visible growth in the local trade fairs, cross border exchange and market collaborations.

From the policy standpoint, the study recommends focused actions that can build lasting peace by reinforcing economic trust and interdependence over time. This can be achieved through prioritizing joint economic programs, developing cross border infrastructure, forming resource and revenue sharing arrangements and establishing frequent communication channels. Along with this, strengthening political and legal institution is equally important to monitor and mediate disputes.

The research stands out for its integration of economic theory and qualitative insights of ground local realities that explains conflict dynamics at sub-national level. The application of game theoretic model helps in identifying cooperation incentives in conflict settings. It not only offers pathways for fostering peace but also supports evidence-based policymaking.

In conclusion, economic interdependence, grounded by trust, commitments, reliable institutions and repeated economic engagements, holds transformative potential for resolving dispute and securing peace along Assam-Nagaland border. The game theory model reveals how cooperation can sustain over time and overweigh short term political gains. Despite enduring political and historical complexities, economically integrated structure routes toward regional peace, stability and shared growth in the bordering regions.

Keywords: Economic interdependence, Stag Hunt, repeated games, conflict resolution, cooperation incentives, Northeast India.”

Cranial Dimensions and Environmental Adaptation: A Study Across Altitudinal Gradients in Uttarakhand, India

Shresthi Jaiswal⁴⁸

Banasthali Vidyapith

The relationship between human biological traits and environmental factors has long been a subject of interest in anthropological research. Among the many environmental pressures that shape human morphology, altitude is a significant factor influencing cranial characteristics. Drawing on existing theories of human adaptation, such as those seen in high-altitude populations like the Tibetan and Andean peoples, this study explores how varying altitudes affect cranial dimensions. A study of 1,537 cranial samples, drawn from both male and female populations across multiple districts, using a stratified random sampling approach. Measurements of cephalic width (CW) and cephalic height (CH) were recorded using a spreading calliper, and spatial analysis was performed using ArcGIS 10.4.1 software. The Inverse Distance Weighted (IDW) interpolation technique was employed to examine geographic variation, and cross-validation was applied to ensure the robustness of predictions. Statistical analyses revealed notable relationships between cranial dimensions and elevation. Pearson's correlation analysis showed a positive correlation between cephalic width and altitude ($r = 0.3683305$), and a stronger positive correlation of 0.4670907 between cephalic height and altitude. Further, Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis indicated a significant positive relationship between elevation and cephalic width (coefficient = 27.705 , $p < 0.001$), and cephalic height exhibited a stronger positive association (coefficient = 119.673 , $p < 0.001$). Principal Component Analysis (PCA) identified three key components, with the first component (PC1) explaining 68.8% of the total variance, underscoring the dominant role of altitude in shaping cranial morphology. These results support the hypothesis that altitude plays a critical role in human cranial adaptation, with higher altitudes being associated with increased cephalic width and cephalic height. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how environmental factors, particularly elevation, influence human physical traits. This emphasises the dynamic interplay between geography and biological adaptation.

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Modelling Future Urban Land-Use Dynamics under Alternative Scenarios: A Case Study of Indore, India

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Introduction

Urbanization is a phenomenon that reshapes landscapes and societies, particularly in developing countries like India, where rapid population growth and economic development are major drivers (Singh et al., 2022). Indian cities have experienced unprecedented expansion, commonly referred to as urban sprawl, having increased fourfold between 1970 and 2000, and projected to triple again between 2000 and 2030 (Seto et al., 2011, 2012). This rapid spatial growth has resulted in the widespread conversion of agricultural lands, wetlands, and other ecologically sensitive areas into residential, commercial, and industrial zones, fundamentally altering land-use and land-cover (LULC) patterns (Lambin et al., 2001).

Indore, the largest city in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, exemplifies both the challenges and opportunities of such rapid urban growth. Industrialization, improved connectivity, and migration have significantly expanded the city's urban footprint over the past decades (Bakhtawar et al., 2022). This expansion has been accompanied by notable changes in land-use patterns, with increases in residential, commercial, and industrial land often occurring at the expense of agricultural and open lands (Vergel-Tovar, 2025).

The rapid and often unplanned growth of Indore leads to significant challenges for sustainable land management, threatening agricultural productivity, ecological balance, and water resource sustainability. To effectively plan for and mitigate the environmental and social impacts of urban expansion, it is crucial to anticipate how land-use and land-cover may evolve under different development trajectories. Scenario-based predictions of LULC can provide valuable insights for decision-makers, enabling the formulation of policies that balance urban growth with the conservation of natural resources.

Objectives of the Study

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- To forecast land-use and land-cover (LULC) changes and spatial patterns in Indore city under alternative scenarios using the Dyna-CLUE model.
- To analyse the potential impacts of these land-use changes on agricultural land and water resources

Methodology

The methodology of this study have two components: the generation of land-use and landcover (LULC) maps and the simulation of future LULC under alternative scenarios using the Dyna-CLUE model. Multi-temporal Landsat satellite images will be utilized to prepare LULC maps for Indore city. Landsat 5 TM images will be used for 2001 and 2011, while Landsat 8 OLI images will be employed for 2021. Image processing and classification will be performed in Google Earth Engine, applying the Random Forest classifier to produce five primary landuse classes: built-up, agricultural land, vegetation, water bodies, and barren land. The accuracy of the classified maps will be evaluated using overall accuracy, Kappa coefficient, producer's accuracy, and user's accuracy, with reference data obtained from high-resolution imagery and existing land-use datasets.

In addition to LULC maps, several spatial variables that influence land-use dynamics will be prepared. These include elevation, slope, aspect, distance to roads, distance to railways, and distance to water bodies. These factors will be derived using GIS and raster processing techniques to generate suitability maps for different land-use classes. The Dyna-CLUE model will then be applied to simulate future land-use changes by integrating non-spatial demand, representing projected changes in the area of each land-use class, with spatial allocation based on the suitability maps. The model will be calibrated using historical LULC maps from 2001 to 2021 and validated using standard accuracy metrics to ensure reliability.

Three alternative scenarios will be considered for future simulation: a Business-as-Usual scenario assuming continuation of historical urban growth trends, an Urban Growth Promotion scenario representing accelerated expansion along major infrastructure corridors, and an Agricultural Land and Water Conservation scenario in which urban expansion is restricted in high-value agricultural and water-sensitive areas to encourage compact and sustainable growth. The simulated future LULC maps will be analyzed to assess spatial patterns of urban expansion, conversion of agricultural land, and potential impacts on water resources. Comparative analysis across the scenarios will provide insights into the implications of different urban growth pathways for sustainable land management and resource conservation in rapidly urbanizing regions.

Expected Outcomes

The study is expected to generate accurate and validated LULC maps for Indore for the years 2001, 2011, and 2021, providing a reliable basis for understanding historical land-use transitions. The scenario-based simulations using the Dyna-CLUE model are anticipated to illustrate contrasting patterns of urban expansion and land-use change under the three proposed scenarios. Under the Business-as-Usual scenario, urban growth is likely to continue along existing trends, potentially resulting in widespread conversion of agricultural lands and increased pressure on water resources. The Urban Growth Promotion scenario is expected to demonstrate more accelerated expansion, highlighting areas at greatest risk of environmental stress and land degradation. In contrast, the Agricultural Land and Water Conservation scenario is anticipated to show a more compact urban form, with reduced encroachment on agricultural areas and water bodies, reflecting the potential benefits of sustainable planning strategies. Comparative analysis of these scenarios will provide insights into the spatial and environmental implications of different urban development pathways, supporting decision-making for sustainable land and resource management in rapidly urbanizing regions.

Keywords: LULC Prediction; Scenario-Based Modeling; Urbanization; Dyna-CLUE; Sustainable Land Management'

Session A3

Sociology

Chair: Dr. Rituparna Patgiri

Reimagining Digital Inclusion for Students with Disabilities in Indian Higher Education

Surabhi Gupta, Pawan Singh⁵⁰

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1. Research Background and Rationale

The digital turn in higher education has transformed pedagogical practices, access to learning, and knowledge dissemination. However, the promise of technology-driven inclusion remains unevenly realized, particularly for students with disabilities in India. While policies such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, and the UGC Accessibility Guidelines (2022) underscore equitable digital participation, the lived realities within Indian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) reveal persistent barriers. These include inaccessible Learning Management Systems (LMS), uncaptioned lectures, incompatibility with assistive technologies, and limited faculty awareness regarding digital accessibility (UNESCO, 2021; NCPEDP, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic further accentuated these inequities by normalizing online and hybrid learning environments that often-excluded students with visual, hearing, or locomotor impairments. Such digital exclusion undermines educational justice and questions the ethical commitments of inclusive higher education. Within this context, digital inclusion transcends technical access, it is a matter of justice, dignity, and capability expansion. Examining the intersection of disability, technology, and higher education through this lens provides critical insights into how Indian HEIs can operationalize digital justice as both a pedagogical and institutional imperative.

2. Research Objectives

Grounded in the intersecting frameworks of digital justice and inclusive education, this study aims to critically examine the accessibility, experiences, and institutional mechanisms shaping digital inclusion for students with disabilities in Indian higher education. The specific objectives are:

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1. To assess the accessibility and inclusivity of digital learning platforms, e-resources, and assistive technologies used in Indian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for students with disabilities.
2. To explore the lived experiences and challenges faced by students with visual, hearing, and locomotor disabilities in navigating digital education ecosystems, including online classrooms, examination systems, and institutional support mechanisms.
3. To evaluate institutional preparedness and faculty awareness regarding digital accessibility standards, inclusive pedagogies, and the integration of assistive technologies in teaching-learning processes.
4. To propose policy, design, and governance interventions aimed at enhancing digital inclusion and advancing educational justice in Indian HEIs, in line with the RPwD Act (2016), NEP (2020), and the UGC Accessibility Guidelines (2022).

3. Methodology

The study adopts an explanatory qualitative design with the potential for mixed-method integration depending on data accessibility. It seeks to generate in-depth insights into the digital experiences of students with disabilities in Indian higher education institutions (HEIs). Primary data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and small focus group discussions with students representing diverse disabilities, alongside faculty members and digital support staff. The sample will include approximately twenty to twenty-five students and ten faculty participants across two to three universities to ensure manageable yet diverse representation. The interviews will explore participants' experiences of digital learning platforms, accessibility of learning management systems (LMS), examination portals, assistive technologies, and institutional support mechanisms. Secondary data will be drawn from national and international policy frameworks such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016), National Education Policy (2020), UGC Accessibility Guidelines (2022), and reports by UNESCO (2021, 2023), the World Bank (2020), and NCPEDP. Data will be thematically coded using NVivo or manual analysis, focusing on recurring patterns of accessibility, autonomy, and digital barriers. The analysis will further triangulate institutional narratives and student perspectives to examine the intersections of technological inclusion, educational justice, and capability expansion.

4. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The study draws on Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, Nancy Fraser's Theory of Justice, and the Digital Divide Theory (van Dijk, 2020) to frame digital inclusion as both a pedagogical and

ethical concern. Sen's framework emphasizes education and technology as means of expanding human capabilities, where true inclusion is achieved when students with disabilities can exercise genuine freedom to learn and participate. Fraser's justice model-redistribution, recognition, and representation-further highlights how digital education must ensure equitable access to technology, dignity for learners with disabilities, and their participation in decision-making processes. The Digital Divide Theory situates these justice claims within structural inequalities, moving from access gaps to differences in skills and outcomes. Collectively, these perspectives enable a multidimensional understanding of digital inclusion, viewing it not merely as technological access but as a question of justice, agency, and institutional responsibility within Indian higher education.

5. Key Findings and Discussion (Anticipated)

Preliminary insights and literature synthesis suggest that digital education in Indian higher education remains only partially inclusive for students with disabilities. Despite progressive policy frameworks such as the RPwD Act (2016) and UGC Accessibility Guidelines (2022), implementation at the institutional level is inconsistent. Most Learning Management Systems (LMS), e-content, and virtual classrooms lack adequate accessibility features-such as screen reader compatibility, captioning, or keyboard navigation-making participation difficult for visually and hearing-impaired students. Faculty awareness of assistive technologies and inclusive pedagogical practices remains limited, and institutional audits on digital accessibility are rare. Consequently, students with disabilities often experience dual exclusion: infrastructural (devices, connectivity, software compatibility) and pedagogical (content design and delivery).

These challenges underscore broader justice gaps framed by Sen's and Fraser's perspectives-restricted capabilities, lack of recognition, and limited representation in decision-making. However, emerging examples of inclusive practices, such as UDL-based content design and accessibility training for educators, signal the potential for transformative change. The study anticipates that strengthening institutional accountability, investing in capacity building, and embedding accessibility into the digital ecosystem can advance both educational justice and digital resilience for marginalized learners in Indian HEIs.

6. Conclusion

This study seeks to foreground digital inclusion as an ethical and structural dimension of educational justice in Indian higher education. By centering the experiences of students with disabilities, it redefines technology not merely as an enabler of access but as a determinant of dignity, agency, and equality. The anticipated findings emphasize the urgency of institutional reform-through policy

alignment, universal design principles, and capacity building—to ensure that the digital transformation of education leaves no learner behind. In doing so, the research contributes to rethinking inclusion as a central pillar of India’s higher education reform and digital learning agenda.

Keywords: Digital Inclusion; Educational Justice; Disability; Higher Education; India

Perceptions of Academicians on Open Science and Intellectual Property in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: A Survey at the Central University of Jammu

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The arrival of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transformed the pattern of academic research practice, by changing how data is produced, investigated and utilised. As those cases have made their way into the public, they’ve rewritten our notions of who can author work, own it and how to ethically research. At the same time, the global move toward Open Science—calling for transparency, access, and collaboration—challenges current Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) models that protect innovation and creativity. Among the higher education system in India, the universities have begun embracing AI-based tools for publication and research. There has been minimal insight into the perceptions, awareness, and preparedness of academicians in balancing open-access philosophies and proprietary intellectual property within this new terrain. This study seeks to bridge that gap by investigating faculty perception, awareness, and preparedness at the Central University of Jammu (CUJ). Existing literature has discussed the legal and ethical aspects of AI in research (Floridi & Cowls, 2021; UNESCO, 2023) and the increasing relevance of open data and open access in scholarly communication (OECD, 2021). But work on the intersection of AI, open science and IP in the Indian research landscape is nascent.

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Recent work shows that while open-science methods accelerate innovation and inclusivity, they lead to conflicts over data ownership, authorship attribution, and the patenting of outputs produced by AI. Furthermore, AI-based tools seem to erase traditional boundaries between author and computer, which leads to the question of whether current IPR regimes are still appropriate. This research draws upon these findings by examining empirically how academicians view these changing issues and how institutional culture bridges their attitudes regarding open science and AI ethics. A descriptive survey research approach was followed. A structured questionnaire with closed- and open-ended questions was administered to faculty members of various disciplines at CUJ, such as sciences, social sciences, humanities, and engineering. Responses were collected using a five-point Likert scale to measure attitudes and perceptions. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify patterns, correlations, and disciplinary differences. Qualitative responses were thematically coded to capture nuanced insights into ethical and policy concerns.

Descriptive statistics data were described and analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, median, standard deviation) for patterns between means; correlation t analysis was employed to explore the relationship during pre–post approaches while disciplinary variation t-test for independent samples to examine differences based on discipline. Interview transcripts were thematically coded in order to gain a detailed insight into ethical and policy matters. Quantitative analysis such as reliability testing (Cronbach's alpha), cross-tabulation and correlation matrices were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 28). Qualitative answers were coded and thematically analyzed using NVivo 14 for content classification and pattern identification. Graphical outputs were created in Microsoft Excel and Tableau for ease of communication and visualization. This study contributes to the emerging theoretical debate regarding AI-mediated knowledge production by framing three conceptual dimensions—Open Science, Intellectual Property, and AI Ethics—within a single analytical framework. The study argues for establishing stronger institutional controls over open science, AI, and intellectual property within Indian universities. Protecting openness and integrity while ensuring both academic integrity and innovation requires an intentional compromise. Educational policy movements, AI literacy, ethics education, and institutional policy regarding open research

priorities can be advanced through purposeful policy intervention. The findings contribute to discussions regarding responsible AI governance frameworks for accountability in academia. Future work could explore comparative cross-national or multi-institutional research studies to examine cultural and disciplinary variations in more detail. Experimental studies could examine how training interventions impact faculty awareness and practice over time. Finally, policy studies could

contribute to standards in regulating AI access and open-science governance that protects innovation, equity, and ethics.

Keywords: Open Science; Intellectual Property Rights (IPR); Artificial Intelligence (AI); Perceptions of Academics; Research Ethics

Understanding Gender, Livelihood and Conservation in the Fringe Villages of Kaziranga National Park, Assam

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Gender is a pervasive ascriptive determinant of livelihood activities (Chambers and Conway, 1992) significantly shaping the division of livelihood activities between men and women. Sociological understanding of gendered dimension of livelihood becomes more complex when located in the context of environmental conservation. Women, because of their traditional, social, and familial roles, are more connected to and reliant on environment for the livelihood needs, engaged in activities such as collecting and gathering food, fodder, firewood, water, and other nontimber forest products. Bina Agarwal, highlights about gender differences in forest resource use. She emphasizes that there are no gender differences in intrinsic worth of forests, but instrumentally differences can arise between men and women in the use value of forests (Agarwal,2010). According to her, women's dependence on forests is different from, greater and more frequent than men. This difference emerges from the gender division of labour on the one hand, and the gender division of economic resources on the other. The former influences the nature of women's dependence on non-privatized local natural resources, and the later influences the extent of that dependence (Agarwal,2010). She further gives examples of rural south Asia to show that not only women and girls work longer hours, but they also bear responsibilities which links to forests and village common in particular ways. They are more responsible for cooking and cattle care and gathering fuelwood and fodder, hence

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they bear the primary costs of fuelwood and fodder scarcities. Men are responsible for timber related works like, making or repairing agricultural implements or house. The everyday nature of women's subsistence need for fuelwood and fodder, puts them under persistent pressure while occasional nature of men's need of timber allows them greater flexibility (Agarwal, 2010).

This paper is based on doctoral research which attempts to understand gender and livelihood in the fringe Villages of Kaziranga National Park (KNP), a world heritage site and the largest national park in Assam. The study was conducted in two fringe village, namely Borbeel Mising Gaon and Bhuiyan Gaon, inhabited by Mising and Adivasi community respectively. The two villages were selected through purposive sampling method considering the distinctiveness of gender and livelihood of tribal and Adivasi communities. Apart from census survey of these two villages, the researcher also conducted interviews with various stakeholders like forest officials, non-governmental organizations, and civil society organizations to gather data on diverse aspects of gender, livelihood and conservation

The primary data for this qualitative study are gathered through fieldwork using methods like in-depth interview, oral history, focus group discussions (FGDs), and personal observation apart from it the field diary was systematically maintained to document the narratives of diverse participants. The secondary sources used in the study mostly consisted of books, journals, magazines and newspaper articles. Along with it, local magazines and souvenirs of Kaziranga are used to collect data for this study. Secondary data is crucial to get a valuable insight into the historical context, contextualization of contemporary situations and identifying trends, patterns and situations over time.

The Fringe villages frequently have direct contact with the protected area and its natural surroundings. Due to their closeness to the protected area, fringe settlements may have particular opportunities and problems as well as distinct socioeconomic characteristics. In that context it will be an interesting aspect to study gender notion of livelihood among people living in a fringe village of KNP giving special focus on the Mising and Adivasi community (Tea Tribe), two distinct ethnic groups of Assam. Moreover, this study historically locates the women's dependence on environment for livelihood to understand the changing dimension of gendered nature of livelihood in the fringe villages of KNP. The paper also empirically locates the gender difference of forest dependence in the fringe villages of an ecological conservation site of Assam in contemporary time period giving special emphasis on what are the resources women collect and what are resources men collect.

Women navigate forests, hills and rivers to meet their subsistence needs, forming varied and complex relationships of care, respect, fear and revulsion. Women contribute largely to livelihood work, but not all interactions between women and ecology take place exclusively for the purposes of livelihood. Forests, fields and rivers are also spaces of respite, socialization and building epistemic knowledge (Dutta and Daulagupta, 2024). Women, in particular, regularly gather fuelwood, wild bamboo, and jungle vegetables from the Karbi Hills, located at some distance from their village. In that context the study primarily examines the diverse lived experiences of women collecting firewood from the Karbi hills, with a focus on their journey to hills, the time invested in travel, social interaction with fellow women and non- human elements and the embodied experience of carrying the load.

Moreover, the fringe villagers of KNP faces multiple restrictions that significantly shapes the villagers access to natural resources and livelihood opportunities. Understanding these dynamics reveals not only the impact of conservation on livelihood activities but also helps to comprehend the social relations, division of labour and access to resources in the fringe villages of KNP.

Key Words: Gender, Livelihood, Conservation, Fringe Village, Kaziranga National Park

Contesting Development: Informality, Exclusion and State-Society Negotiation in Assam-Arunachal Pradesh Border Region

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The border is located on the territorial periphery, where cultural groups are divided by state borders. Additionally, the presence of informal networks in these remote areas reflects their significant physical and mental distance from the central state (Vorrath, 2010, p.89). In a peripheral region, the discourse surrounding development is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of dynamics of border region. Border regions are frequently perceived by the government as isolated, underdeveloped, and disconnected areas, and development efforts in these regions often seek to reinforce state presence and territorial authority. In various instances, border areas turn into testing grounds for state intervention through initiatives like roads construction or industrial parks etc. These projects are defended in the name of modernization and national security, yet they frequently result in exclusion of traditional ways of life. Consequently, development in these areas primarily involves administrative coordination, the implementation of state policies, and local governance, rather than concerns related to national security or international diplomacy. Unlike other interstate borders, development in the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh often becomes a contested and negotiated process. While state authorities advocate for development through targeted projects, these interventions are often interpreted divergently by border communities. When state projects disregard local perceptions of development, informal practices arise as alternative systems of governance and survival. These practices challenge the formal state-centric development narrative by reinforcing community agency and localized control over land, resources, decision-making, and development initiatives.

In this context, this paper aims to explore the role of interstate borders in the development process, specifically focusing on the nature of development projects along the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border. The state has often introduced development initiatives in this border region; however, the question of implementation remains critical. This paper aims to examine the accessibility of development projects in this border area. Residents in border regions often find

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themselves excluded from development initiatives, which results in their lack of access to benefits. Additionally, the implementation of state-driven developmental projects can further exclusion of these communities. The paper investigates how such projects impact the daily lives of borderland residents and explores how state-led development efforts contribute to their exclusion and lack of accessibility led to exclusion of the communities. Moreover, the state's perception often overlooks the community's view on development within the region. Consequently, the community challenges the state's perspective and fosters its own understanding of development through informal mechanisms. This paper aims to examine the community's perspective on these informal mechanisms of development in the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border area.

This paper is based on fieldwork conducted as part of doctoral research in the border area between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, focusing specifically on the Margherita sub-division in Tinsukia district and the Miao sub-division in Changlang district. Margherita is known for its coal industry, which has significantly contributed to the economic growth of the state. Meanwhile, Miao functions as an administrative sub-division within Changlang. This transitional region is home to a diverse range of communities, and each community possessing their own unique cultures and traditions. This study examines state-led development, its implementation, and the related issues of informality, exclusion, accessibility, and community perceptions in borderland areas. In this context, each community and stakeholder has its own perspective on development. To gain a deeper understanding, a qualitative approach was employed, involving purposive sampling to conduct interviews from both subdivisions. Data was collected through various techniques, including observations, interviews, and focus group discussions.

To examine the complexities of development in the interstate border region, the respondents were selected from the members of various government bodies, socio-political organizations, and traditional institutions etc. along with the common people. Based on field work in Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border, it is observed that the key components of these state-led developments in the border area include infrastructure improvements, road construction, advancements in the health sector, and enhancements in education etc. While the government has initiated various development projects, the primary challenge remains the effective implementation of these projects. This paper aims to explore the state-led development initiatives in this border region and how the border itself influences the development process. Many government programs and policies tend to concentrate on key areas; consequently, residents of these border areas often find themselves excluded from the benefits of development projects, resulting in developmental injustice and inequality. In addition to that, the government has implemented development projects in the border region, including the coal industry, road construction, and the

tea industry, aimed at promoting economic growth in the state. However, these initiatives have not adequately addressed the needs of the community. As a result, these development projects have led to the alienation of community land and forest resources, as well as the displacement of local residents, which has resulted in the exclusion of the community.

In addition to the state's view of development, communities of this border area have their own interpretations, which differ from those of the state. This divergence emerges largely because the state's top-down approach often overlooks the local realities and fails to recognize how borderland communities define their own well-being. Development initiatives are frequently planned without adequate consultation or participation of local people, leading to a situation where projects are imposed rather than negotiated and contestation between state and non-state actors. In this context, based on the fieldwork done for doctoral research, this article seeks to examine how local communities challenge the state perception development through informal means such as traditional health care practices, community-driven education facilities at the grassroots level, community-led road construction, bridge construction and other community-driven developmental practices decision making process at local level.

Key Words: Border, Development, State-led-development, Exclusion, Informality

Surveillance in the Digital Age: Privacy, Power and Human Rights Challenges

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Abstract

The expansion of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed the way individuals, communities, and states interact. Alongside unprecedented opportunities for communication, governance, and economic development, the rise of digital tools has also facilitated new and more intrusive forms of surveillance.

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From biometric authentication systems to algorithm-driven monitoring by corporations and governments, surveillance has become an inescapable aspect of contemporary life. While often justified on grounds of national security, efficiency, or economic growth, such practices pose significant risks to the rights to privacy, freedom of expression, and democratic participation.

In the digital age, the tension between state security imperatives and individual liberties has reached a new threshold. The right to privacy, which has been judicially recognised as a fundamental human right and constitutional guarantee, is under increasing pressure. This paper situates digital surveillance within broader debates in law, humanities, and social sciences, examining its implications for human rights, constitutional safeguards, and social power relations.

Keywords: Digital Surveillance; Privacy; Human Rights

Research Objectives

The paper seeks to address three central objectives:

1. To analyse the constitutional dimensions of the right to privacy in the context of digital surveillance.
2. To evaluate the human rights challenges raised by digital surveillance.
3. To assess the socio-political implications of digital surveillance.

By engaging with these objectives, the paper demonstrates how digital surveillance must be understood not only as a legal and policy question but also as a broader socio-political and ethical challenge.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Surveillance, as understood in the social sciences, is more than the act of monitoring. It is also a form of power. Michel Foucault's concept of the *panopticon* illustrates how surveillance operates to discipline individuals and shape social behaviour. In the digital age, this logic has been intensified through big data analytics, facial recognition, and algorithmic profiling.

At the same time, the law provides a counterweight through constitutional guarantees and human rights protections. The recognition of privacy as an intrinsic part of dignity and autonomy (e.g., *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India* in India) exemplifies this trend. Yet, the ability of law to regulate surveillance effectively remains contested. This paper adopts an interdisciplinary approach, combining

socio-legal analysis with theoretical insights from the humanities and social sciences, to explore these tensions.

Methodology

The study employs a qualitative and doctrinal research methodology supplemented with a comparative socio-legal analysis. The key elements include:

1. **Doctrinal Legal Research** - Examination of constitutional case law (India, US, and EU) concerning privacy and surveillance; study of statutes such as India's *Digital Personal Data Protection Act (2023)* and Europe's *General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)*.
2. **Human Rights Analysis** - Review of international human rights instruments, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 12)*, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Art. 17)*, and UN reports on digital surveillance and privacy.
3. **Case Studies** - Discussion of selected case studies, such as the Aadhaar biometric system in India, the US NSA's PRISM program, and China's Social Credit System, to illustrate practical challenges.
4. **Interdisciplinary Approach** - Use of theoretical frameworks from social sciences (power relations, democracy, identity) to situate legal analysis in broader social contexts.

Key Findings and Discussion

1. Erosion of Privacy as a Fundamental Right

The analysis highlights how digital surveillance challenges the very foundation of the right to privacy. While courts in India (*Puttaswamy*), Europe (GDPR-related cases), and the US (*Carpenter v. United States*) have affirmed privacy as a constitutional or quasi-constitutional right, surveillance technologies continue to outpace legal safeguards.

This gap between law and practice results in a normalisation of surveillance, where citizens are increasingly monitored in everyday transactions, communication, and mobility.

2. Human Rights Concerns under International Law

International instruments such as the UDHR and ICCPR unequivocally prohibit arbitrary interference with privacy. However, surveillance is often justified under

exceptions like “national security” or “public order,” which are vaguely defined and easily misused.

Vulnerable groups, such as children (protected under the CRC), minorities, and political dissidents, face disproportionate risks. Surveillance undermines not only privacy but also the rights to expression, assembly, and equality.

3. Power and Asymmetry in the Digital Age

Surveillance reinforces asymmetries of power. States gain unprecedented capacities to control populations, while corporations accumulate massive datasets that allow them to shape consumer behaviour and even influence political processes.

4. Case Study Insights

The Aadhaar system in India demonstrates both the promises and perils of digital identification. While intended for welfare distribution, it has raised concerns over data security, exclusion, and mass surveillance.

The PRISM revelations in the US showed how mass surveillance was conducted secretly, sparking global debates about legality and accountability.

China’s Social Credit System exemplifies how surveillance can be integrated into governance, raising concerns about authoritarianism and the erosion of individual freedoms.

5. The Way Forward

The study underscores the urgent need for robust data protection frameworks that align with human rights principles. India’s DPDP Act (2023) represents a step forward but still lacks independent oversight and strong safeguards.

Surveillance must be regulated by the principles of necessity, proportionality, and legality, ensuring that it serves legitimate goals without eroding fundamental freedoms.

Beyond law, civil society, academia, and the humanities must contribute to shaping digital ethics and fostering critical awareness of surveillance practices.

Conclusion

Digital surveillance is more than a technological phenomenon; it is a socio-legal issue that touches upon the core of human rights, constitutionalism, and democracy. While the need for security and governance cannot be denied, unchecked surveillance risks transforming societies into digital panopticons. This paper

concludes that safeguarding privacy in the digital age requires an interdisciplinary approach that combines legal reforms with social critique and global cooperation.

The findings suggest that without transparent oversight, citizen participation, and stronger human rights safeguards, digital surveillance will continue to deepen inequalities and undermine democratic values. The study thus calls for a paradigm shift: moving from surveillance for control to surveillance under accountability, rooted in respect for human dignity.

Session A4

English

Chair: Dr. Kiran Keshavamurthy

Reclaiming the City: Environmental Racism and Indigenous Resilience in *There There*

Prastuti Dekka⁵⁵

Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University

Tommy Orange's *There There* (2018) addresses the urban Indigenous experience in Oakland as a powerful clash of colonial histories and resilient revival. It redefines environmental racism not as a distant concept but as a real experience and violence that affects Native lives. Through a mix of styles, including an essay-like introduction and fragmented character stories, Orange illustrates the "afterlife" of land loss. Historical massacres and the 1956 Indian Relocation Act resonate in today's polluted areas and noisy freeways that drown out ancestral wolf calls. However, the novel emphasises persistence as a moral duty. Indigenous ecological knowledge, rooted in the idea of "all our relations," helps transform these damaged urban environments into networks of memory and justice.

This paper argues that Orange's *There There* reimagines urban indigeneity as a form of decolonial ecology. It breaks down deep-rooted colonial ideas by highlighting Indigenous connections to land, water, and community in ways that resist being forgotten. The work challenges mainstream Western environmentalism's idea of "wilderness fetish." This notion values untouched natural spaces as the only places of ecological worth, often ignoring the essential stewardship of Indigenous peoples. Instead, Orange presents cities as dynamic, contested ecosystems. These areas serve as sites of Native sovereignty and sustainability, where Indigenous futures are not just remnants of a pre-colonial era but active practices woven into modern life.

Building on postcolonial ecocriticism, which looks at how literature disrupts Eurocentric views of nature and empire, and Indigenous environmental justice ideas stressing responsibility to kin and land, this analysis shows the novel's depiction of urban survival as a decolonial practice. The paper examines main characters like Tony Loneman, who battles opioid addiction; Dene Oxendene, an aspiring oral historian working to capture broken stories through a storytelling booth at a powwow; and Orvil Red Feather, who struggles with his family's hidden heritage. They navigate the damaging effects of "slow violence," a term for the subtle, often hidden harms of environmental racism and colonial dispossession. These harms build up over generations without drawing attention. In Orange's story, these

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characters turn alienation, instigated by settler colonialism, into revival through acts of reclaiming their identities, restoring traditional practices, and building community amid the chaos of Oakland streets. This process happens in a constant state of change, where knowledge is not fixed but fluid and collaborative. It challenges rigid colonial ways of thinking with Indigenous perspectives that value relationships over control. By exploring literature's role in mapping these changing landscapes, where colonial truths clash with resilient realities, it highlights the importance of centring Indigenous wisdom for fairer futures.

Spectral Narration, Narrative Prosthesis and Ethics in Postwar Narrative: A Reading of Shehan Karunatilaka's *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* (2022)

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The era being eminently political, “the specificity of the political” involves the “discrimination between friend and enemy” (Schmitt 26). With representational anxiety over memory and truth, and reconciliation being a buzz word in post-war Sri Lanka, there is a need to ethically reimagine necropolitical violence, especially when the “the veiled, simulacrum of a face” of the enemy channels the demand for “an originary surplus” into divine specters of terror (Mbembe 66). Shehan Karunatilaka's *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* (2022), set against the 1980's Sri Lankan civil war, is grounded in the real political context with state terror, abductions and disappearances. Framed within the whodunnit structure with a speculative turn, the novel follows Malinda Almeida Kabalana, the war photographer who following his mysterious death, awakens in the afterlife. As a spectral narrator remembering the who and whys of murder, Maali becomes the singular potential witness to testify to the creation of the bare lives, the burden of responsibility resting on him until he reaches the seventh moon. Karunatilaka attests to the challenges underlying the novel's publication, owing to the unfamiliar subject matter, its realist elements being

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a concession made to western audiences. The stakes of abandoning reality seemed frightening to the nationalist mind of rendering an ontological status in the larger interest of positivist history. The failure to take a post realist turn in the Sri Lankan English novel is translated towards a tendency to inscribe Sri Lanka within a conventional formula.

Research Question and Methodological Framework

The paper gives a close reading of *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* to analyze how spectral narration, metafictional play and prosthetic memory envisage alternative ethical acts of witnessing. Drawing on Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics, it examines how the novel's metaleptic structure reframes the historical enemy as an ontological and narrative challenge. The intersection of Alison Landsberg's prosthetic memory, narrative prosthesis and spectral ethics creates narrative resistance to state sanctioned necropolitical erasures, realist resolutions and simplified closures. Positioning speculative fiction as a literary form reconfiguring political agency, the paper uses Butler's and Levinasian understanding of ethics to bring the other into being. In doing so, the study foregrounds an ethics of reading that resists the epistemological apprehension of necropolitical reality, emphasizing our negotiation with it, renewing ways of reading postwar Sri Lankan narratives.

Scope of the Study

As Mbembe observes, "the reverse of the world [is] supposed to be part of its obverse (the invisible)", necropolitics is "literally," albeit paradoxically and ironically, on the table, but its existence is suspended as invisible, bringing about a narrative crisis in contemporary Sri Lankan fiction (145). The creation of the enemy, determined by a "quasi anal need for ontology" reconfigures the potential of speculative narratives which problematize long-standing constructions of implacable enmity, and seek means of re-creating the enemy (48). Spivak's emphasis on the potential of a (radical) imaginative work which humanizes the enemy and their causality hints at a new kind of speculative realism that disrupts the liberal ethnographic history's ideological fantasies of veiling the enemy's workings. The paper addresses the critical tension in speculative fiction to understand necropolitical violence and the spectrality of divine terror, reconceptualizing the genre as ethically charged and politically resistant, unsettling realist closures and narrative finality on the perpetrators' discourse.

Although committed to realist historiography that ontologically represents violence, it is this grounding that makes the speculative turn more radical, implying an ethical obligation to report in a manner faithful to the real-world referents. The formal enactment towards speculative realism evokes differential vulnerabilities,

foregrounding the potential narratives that have previously foreclosed necropolitical violence. Hayles considers speculative fiction as an entry point that "explores the outer edges of possibility...opening up spaces for envisioning alternative futures" (7). The rise of speculative elements in realist post war narratives is an attempt at deploying the affordances of speculation to capture the realities of the unacknowledged necropolitical violence. The differential logical causality towards the creation of the enemy exposes what the abstracted and decontextualized notion of ethnographic history does not, disrupting the liberal ethnic history in contemporary national histories. The narrative silence surrounding the creation of the enemy becomes the central cause of the novel's enigma- setting out to conquer "this terrifying object" (enemy), since dreaming it up translates towards a "sort of empty yet bewitching space" (Mbembe 43).

Unlike post war narratives that challenge the identification of perpetrators as a political or theoretical act, the novel remains a work in progress leaving the perpetrators discourse deeply unsettled. Since speculative fiction risks decontextualizing necropolitical terror and turning the dead into abstract hauntings, this very generic crisis is meant to reach a limit, as the author, text, and reader confront the ethics of witnessing the necropolitical dead in postwar narratives. Since the outcome is to understand what merits attention-historical accuracy or affect, he reimagines empathetically, transcending his self-determinacy to confront the face of the Other. Since "ethical imagination needs poetic license to access the world of the Other", Karunatilaka's narrative ethics implies reconciliation rather than representation of the necropolitical conflict: a process confronting "the uncertainty of imaginative play (poesis) and actively imagining oneself in another person's skin" (Kearney 368).

Undoing the Self: Cognition, Language and Memory in the Urban Imaginary of Jeet Thayil's *The Book of Chocolate Saints* (2017)

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Cognition, language, and memory are not passive faculties of the mind, they are the “mnemo-cognitive architectures” through which consciousness configures itself and the self gains narrative coherence. They constitute the very grammar of being-structuring perception, shaping emotion, and generating ethical awareness. In the accelerated transitions of contemporary urban India, these internal architectures become volatile sites of contestation. The self, caught between inherited epistemic legacies and modern contingencies, experiences cognitive dissonance: an incessant tension between what is felt, what can be spoken, and what resists articulation. This psychic dissonance exposes the fractured yet creative consciousness that defines the postcolonial urban condition. Jeet Thayil's *The Book of Chocolate Saints* (2017) serves as an incisive literary laboratory to study this convergence of cognition, memory, and language. The novel's rhythmic fragmentation, lyrical density, and shifting narratorial registers form a neuro-linguistic topology that mirrors the turbulence of modern consciousness. Thayil's characters- poets, exiles, addicts, seekers- inhabit a world where desire collides with despair, and moral exhaustion shadows artistic brilliance. Language here is not a vehicle of expression but the very architecture of thought; it both constructs and destabilizes cognition. Through its recursive temporality, oscillating between prose, poetry, and reportage, the text becomes a phenomenological enactment of memory and moral reflection, demonstrating how language shapes and transforms the cognitive process itself.

This novel was chosen for its rare synthesis of ethical intensity and linguistic experimentation. Memory in Thayil's narrative functions as a “palimpsestic archive”- a layered terrain where repression, recollection, and reinvention coexist. Language is the cognitive instrument that navigates this archive, structuring emotion, mediating ethical judgment, and translating chaos into rhythm. The text's alternating voices- lyrical introspection and polyphonic testimony- replicate the operations of consciousness itself, as thought strives to integrate its dispersed fragments into a

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unified, if unstable, narrative of being. In Thayil's fictional universe, cognition is not linear reasoning but rhythmic remembering, an act of continual self-construction.

To interpret this complex ecology of thought, this paper employs *Sāṃkhya* philosophy's triadic model of the *Guṇas*- *Sattva* (lucidity and equilibrium), *Rajas* (restless passion and drive), and *Tamas* (inertia and obscurity)- as a cognitive-philosophical framework. These principles illuminate the oscillations of clarity, agitation, and stagnation that mark Thayil's urban psyche. *Sattva* governs moments of insight and moral awareness; *Rajas* propels the creative and destructive energies of desire; *Tamas* signifies psychic inertia, addiction, and moral fatigue. This triadic dynamic renders the mind a site of "perpetual transformation"- never static, always in motion, charged with ethical consequence.

When placed in dialogue with Western cognitive paradigms, Festinger's cognitive dissonance, Ricoeur's narrative identity, and Husserl's phenomenology of experience- Thayil's novel emerges as a "literary-neurosemiotic ecology". It dramatizes the self as a mutable process rather than a stable essence, a consciousness ceaselessly rewritten through memory and linguistic articulation. The novel's fractured form mirrors the mechanics of cognition—association, suppression, recall, and imaginative synthesis. Readers, compelled to reconstruct coherence from discontinuity, participate in the novel's cognitive rhythm, mirroring the mind's own effort to generate meaning within fragmentation.

Methodologically, this study integrates Indian philosophical psychology with contemporary cognitive theory, bridging classical ontologies of mind with modern phenomenological inquiry. This synthesis addresses both a trend- the epistemic dialogue between Indic and Western cognitive models and a challenge- translating metaphysical concepts like *Guṇas* into the analytic vocabulary of literary and cultural studies. Through this approach, the paper demonstrates how literary texts function not merely as cultural artifacts but as epistemological experiments that reveal the dynamics of thought itself.

In the turbulent postcolonial cityscape, Thayil depicts- the human mind becomes an "ethical battlefield" where tradition, modernity, and desire intersect. Addiction, linguistic excess, and spiritual exhaustion signify a *Rajas-dominated* consciousness, driven, creative, and "self-destructive". Against this backdrop, *The Book of Chocolate Saints* (2017) performs a philosophical meditation on remembering as becoming: the act of recollection is at once cognitive, ethical, and existential.

Ultimately, this paper argues that Thayil's novel embodies a "mnemo-linguistic ecology of being"- a self-organizing system where cognition, memory, and language interweave to create the rhythm of consciousness. By integrating *Sāṃkhya* ontology with Western cognitive phenomenology, the research articulates a cross-cultural

grammar of selfhood- the mind as a “palimpsest” of perception, emotion, and linguistic creation. Literature, in this framework, is not a reflection of consciousness but its continuation, where thought becomes sound, memory becomes structure, and language becomes the living pulse of being.

Keywords: Cognition, Memory, Language, Sāṃkhya Philosophy, Mnemo-Linguistic Ecology, Cognitive Dissonance, Narrative Identity, Literary Consciousness

Double or Nothing: Reading Bollywood’s Double Roles Queerly

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Bollywood’s fascination with lookalikes has ensured that the double role film, where the same actor plays more than one character on screen, has become a staple of Hindi cinema. This paper approaches Bollywood’s double role film as a challenge to the prescriptive difference between sameness and difference and its normative regulation of the social order. Narratives involving twins separated at birth, father-son lookalikes, reincarnated doubles and even doppelgangers who are not related to each other by blood, have been a staple of Hindi cinema since its inception. Using doubles as its entry point into a queer theorisation of Bollywood cinema, this paper’s primary objective is to critically intervene in both Bollywood studies and queer theory, bringing out both the ways in which Bollywood can be read queerly, and the ways in which Bollywood can contribute to queer theory. It is particularly interested in thinking about the encounter with negativity brought forth by the double’s challenge to the boundaries between sameness and difference. It anchors its analysis in the assertion that the double role is an inherently queer signifier.

By closely examining Maneesh Sharma’s *Fan* (2014) and Farhan Akhtar’s *Don* (2006), it highlights how a character’s encounter with a double in the diegetic universe of the film exemplifies the spectator’s encounter with the double reality of the cinematic screen. It theorises this encounter with the help of Lacanian psychoanalysis to

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demonstrate that the encounter with the double is a repetition of the primary process of identification. In the Lacanian mirror stage, when the child confronts an image of itself latched on to the mother in the mirror, it performs a double operation: first, it perceives the mother and itself as images, establishing sameness; and second, it sees the mother as a distinctive presence, establishing difference, consequently granting itself a selfhood. An encounter with a double, whether as a lookalike in the narrative of a film or as a reflective screen in the cinematic apparatus, marks the psychic drama of the mirror stage as an ongoing process, thus carrying the potential to disrupt identity creation by confronting us with a figure that confounds the distinction between sameness and difference. The double's insistence on dislodging identity as a stable truth compels us to reflect on the relations between queerness and the double—on how the double makes the self exceed itself.

The phenomenon of the double in Bollywood extends beyond a simple plot device: it is a recurring structural condition of the cinema itself, one that offers a profound opportunity to destabilize and interrogate normative notions of identity. As actor Shah Rukh Khan, a central figure in this cinematic tradition, articulated while reflecting on his own double role in *Fan*, the experience was “very schizophrenic, very strange, very awkward... I started feeling like two people.” This paper reads the double role queerly not simply because it allows for coded effeminacy or homoerotic tension, but because its structure—two identical-yet-different bodies—violently rejects the foundational binaries that uphold cinematic and social reality: good/evil, original/copy, and stable, singular selfhood.

To unpack this structural critique, it conducts a close psychoanalytic analysis of two Shah Rukh Khan films *Fan* and *Don*. In *Don*, the double acts as a figure of aesthetic refusal, where the anti-hero's dandyism and detachment from narrative consequence operate as a rejection of aggressive, heterosexual masculinity. Whereas in *Fan*, the double acts as a figure of psychic crisis, where the star-fan relationship collapses the boundary between the screen image and the subject, leading to a spectacle of unhinged, homosocial obsession.

Drawing upon Christian Metz's work on the cinematic signifier and Jacques Lacan's concept of the Mirror Stage, this paper will analyze the disruptive force of the double. Metz's framework helps us to understand the fantastical disruption inherent in the double, where the two-in-one figure foregrounds the film's image as both perceptually real and fundamentally unreal—a crisis that is made violently explicit in the chaotic chase sequences of *Fan*.

Ultimately, the double role genre of Bollywood does more than entertain with plot twists; it forces a moment of reckoning. By presenting two indistinguishable and yet structurally discrete identities, these films expose the contingency of the self, proving that identity is not a fixed, continuous entity, but a fragile arrangement held together

only by the spectator's (and society's) constant, but easily challenged, assertion of its presence.

Keywords: Identity Making, Queer theory, Psychoanalysis

Rethinking Ecocriticism: Interrogating the Crisis of Meaning and the Persistence of the Nature–Culture Binary

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In today's time of ecological crisis and cultural confusion, the old separation between nature and culture feels more outdated than ever. This paper begins with a basic but important doubt: What really is ecocriticism today? Its meaning has become unclear. There are so many interpretations that deciding what to include and what to leave out has itself become a kind of crisis. In that sense, the crisis of meaning is not just in the outside world; it exists inside theory as well. The traditional binary of nature versus culture, which comes from Western thinking, has shaped how we study literature, society, and ecology. But this binary no longer fits our current reality. Nature and culture are not separate worlds. They constantly mix, overlap, and shape each other. As André Bételle said, Law determines how society should move, but it's culture that truly determines how society actually (Dimensions to Women Empowerment). In the same way, nature is not just a physical environment. It is part of culture, language, memory, and daily life. This paper argues that we must rethink ecocriticism as something open, evolving, and sensitive to cultural contexts. Definitions are tricky. They are not always helpful when the world itself is complex and unstable. Rather than trying to fix a single meaning, we need to stay with the questions. This study focuses on how the meaning of ecocriticism is changing, and why understanding the relationship between nature and culture beyond old binaries is necessary today.

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Session B1

History

Chair: Dr. Vipul Dutta

Colonial Railways and the (Re)Production of Space in Lucknow through a Lefebvrian Lens (1867-1930)

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The intersection of colonial railways and urbanism in India provides untapped ground to explore how space itself was produced, ordered, and lived under imperial dominance. Through the case of railways in colonial Lucknow (1867-1930), this paper analyses how spatial reconfiguration within Indian cities was triggered by colonial railways, transforming the city's morphological and social relational aspects via colonial polices and indigenous navigations. The railway system, its symbols, and materialities in Lucknow generated a social space that was (re)organised by colonial authorities to ideologically and practically shape the city's social geography, even as it was contested.

Following the British annexation of the Nawabi city in the aftermath of the 1857 revolt, Lucknow's existing spatial environment was altered to satiate imperialists' anxieties of safety and secure their political-economic interests through mobility, surveillance, and control. This was reflected in their planning and social engineering of the city, including railways too. The colonial state sought to produce space via explicit mechanisms of segregation, containment, and spatial inclusion/exclusion, while masking these acts under the rhetoric of urban development and modernity. Yet, the physical presence of substantial tracts of infrastructure, yards, and warehousing divided and segregated residential districts, which moulded race and class-based status differentials that contradicted the facade of a stable and just governance.

The paper's theoretical framework is primarily drawn from Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974), adapted to critically scrutinise colonial contexts. Lefebvre conceives 'space' as a dialectical social product arising from, and in turn conditioning, social practice in a continuous, ongoing process. His work links the focus on (spatial) practice and lived space with a critique of the political economy of space. He posits that each mode of production produces its own kind of space,

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always closely bound with power, dominance, and control. However, these processes are always subject to, and object of, power-struggles

for ideological dominance, between the imposed (colonial) and the situated (indigenous) practices. Lefebvre's analysis rests on three interlinked modalities of spatial production:

- 1) Perceived space – The sensory and perception-related routines and activities of everyday life, related to mobilities and spatial connections
- 2) Conceived space – The conceptualised representation of space framed by state and economic institutions
- 3) Lived space – The representational space(s) of representation directly lived through its associated images and symbols

This triadic approach creates a non-deterministic conceptual scheme that helps to study and critique the production of space as an open-ended arena; one that is perceived, conceived, and lived simultaneously.

However, rooted in a Eurocentric framework which is focused on critiquing capitalist modernity in Europe, Lefebvre's approach requires adaptation for colonial societies. Hence, this paper advances the methodological proposition of a critical spatial historiography that moves beyond simply treating space as a predetermined colonial construct. Instead, space is viewed as being formed via an active process of continuous social production that incorporates indigenous practices, perceptions, and contestations. It integrates a postcolonial archival perspective, extrapolating from primary sources to critically analyse the mechanisms of spatial production and reconfiguration within a Lefebvrian framework. For this, archival documents and maps from administration, revenue, and PWD files are scrutinised as contentious sources, rather than unproblematic documentary sources. This is supplemented via a historical-cultural reading of select travelogues of Indians, identifying indigenous discourses and perspectives regarding colonial railways, especially vis-à-vis Lucknow. These combined methodological processes are structured around two interlinked subjects of investigation, namely Lucknow's morphological intra-city railway network and its main station, Charbagh.

The ideological framework of the 'conceived space' regarding intra-city rail networks involved the British Raj constructing hegemonic and functionalist facts, using colonial rules

and procedures, to establish patterns of movement dubbed 'linear, smooth and safe' while legitimising and naturalising the existence of railways. Such perspectives had justified the destruction of 'obstructive' human and environmental features in 'Old' Lucknow. Meanwhile, as a 'perceived space', railways were presented as a driver of

modernity, substantiated by imperial discourses, while Indians began contesting such perceptions. The 'lived space' was, therefore, constituted of conflicts between assertions of modernity and fragmentations of the city, such as when rail tracks cut and segregated settlements of 'Old' and 'New' Lucknow along lines of race and class, even as they physically connected other parts of the city.

While the railway network restructured Lucknow's wider urban morphology, its nodal manifestation at Charbagh Station embodied the concentration of these spatial logics at a single site. Charbagh imbibed the 'conceived space' as a utilitarian military-economic structure, which facilitated troop movement and commerce, while functionally orienting local urban and commercial development. As a 'perceived space', its redeveloped iconic building (1925) operated as a symbol of architectural imperialism, while the subaltern perception viewed it as a principal centre of socio-economic life. The 'lived space', thus, involved commuters, workers, and hawkers continually mixing and re-appropriating this colonial premises through daily conversations, prevailing social norms, and popular imaginations. This culminated into the station becoming a self-contained urban site, influenced by contestations between the British assertions of colonial progress and the Lucknow-vites claims of the city's socio-economic degeneration, ranging from service quality to material infrastructure, often expressed in a multilingual mix of English, Urdu, and Hindustani.

Hence, by situating the railways within specific colonial context and utilising Lefebvre's conceptual framework, this paper moves beyond superficial studies of urban colonialism and railways to examine nuanced and multidimensional circulations of modes of colonial governance and social identity. The railway's failure to completely master the social space, as Lefebvre asserted, confirms that the sociopolitical forces that produced this space ultimately failed to dominate it completely. By re-examining Lucknow's colonial morphology through this lens, the study not only reconstructs a chapter of the city's past but also contributes to contemporary methodological debates about how the humanities can theorise

power and space in societies marked by historical layers of power and meaning, using interdisciplinary tools and frameworks.

Keywords: Colonial Railways, Henri Lefebvre, Lucknow, Colonial Space

The Landscape in the Playground of (Post)modernity: Geo-Cinematic Politics and the Making of Subaltern Spatiality in the Oeuvre of Satyajit Ray

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The paper aims to explore the cryptic spaces of rural and the urban landscape in the oeuvre of Indian Filmmaker Satyajit Ray from the perspective of film history. By taking current perspectives on the film studies, the paper examines the creation of cinematic space as contrary to the physical space through the visual- semiotic coordination where the spaces and places in Bengali cinema have been spatialized as moving images. My study uses films of Ray – *Pather Panchali* (1955), *Aparajito* (1956), *Apur Sansar* (1959), *Aranyer Din Ratri* (1970), *Sadgati* (1981), and *Agantuk* (*The Stranger*, 1991) – as primary sources to disentangle the layered visual-historical narratives and to question the notion of ‘civilizational cleavage’ and colonial objectification of (un)civilized ‘others.’ Based on a theoretical framework encompassing visual and cinematic modality entanglement, Socio-spatiality, and through an empirical analysis of power-geometries, my paper explores how landscape represented the symbolic space of colonial imageries of tension/contestation, and network of power/knowledge nexus to subjugate the discursive world of the ‘Orient.’ In a parallel exploration, the paper unravels on how Ray’s films through its visual cultural contention externalises the images of landscape as commodities, and objects of study, to designate a sense of ‘place,’ and therefore, to represent the experiential relationalities of Subaltern nationalism, challenging the notions of anti-ocular turn and fetishization of spaces in the context of post-colonial India.

Keywords: Landscape, power geometry, socio-spatiality, geo-cinematic politics, Bengali Cinema

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Friendship, Power and Politics: Autobiographical Perspectives on Friendship in Baburnama and Tuzuk -i Jahangiri.

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This paper investigates the evolving character of friendship within the Mughal courtly milieu by examining the autobiographical writings of the emperors Babur and Jahangir. I use friendship as a category of historical analysis that throws light on the role and representation of social bonds in imperial politics. In this paper, I question how friendship was understood in the Mughal social milieu and what it meant for emperors navigating the politically charged environment of the Mughal court. How did personal bonds intersect with structures of power, loyalty, and service within the intricate web of kinship, patronage and imperial hierarchy?

This study expands the definition of friendship from a private or apolitical sentiment to a relationship that, in early modern societies, was public and political. It follows Alan Bray's argument that friendship in earlier societies was significant in the public sphere, unlike friendship in the modern world, which ought to be private and personal. This study situates Mughal notions of sociability and companionship within a framework of visibility and performance of power. I argue that in the Mughal context, friendship was a deeply political relationship that functioned across lines of hierarchy, service and patronage.

This paper draws primarily on the autobiographical writings of two Mughal emperors, Babur and Jahangir. These biographies, Baburnama and Tuzuk-i Jahangiri were written roughly a century apart. Autobiographies are particularly valuable for such a study as they reveal a human and emotional side of the emperor. The Baburnama is both a self-legitimising text of a displaced Timurid prince and emperor as well as a didactic manual that later emperors, such as Jahangir, studied and engaged with. A close study of the Baburnama presents multiple anecdotes through which we get a picture of an emperor navigating friendship, betrayal, loss and reconciliation. Babur's companions were not merely subordinates but also independent begs who were closer to him in rank, some even shared his lineage and ambitions. His relationship with them offers a textured picture of early Mughal

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sociability. By the time of Jahangir, the political and emotional landscape of the empire had transformed. Jahangir inherited not only a vast empire but a well-defined ideological and ethical framework that supported a bureaucratic structure where relationships were increasingly structured through

formal hierarchies. This reflects a shift in power relations. By contrasting the Baburnama and the Tuzuk-i Jahangiri, I explore how social relations around the emperor evolved as the empire matured.

To complement these autobiographical accounts, I also engage with the *Mau'izah-i Jahangiri*, a moral treatise attributed to Jahangir's period. This text elaborates on the importance of friendship in the making of a virtuous and prudent man. The discourse on friendship in the *Mau'izah-i Jahangiri* provides us a window into the concept of friendship and its understanding in the Mughal court. While the autobiographies provide the lived and narrated experience of friendship the *Mau'izah* articulates an idealized vision of the relationship. Through these sources I investigate an understanding of friendship and social intimacy as it was understood, articulated and evolved in the Mughal court.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first section investigates the rituals of sociability. It looks at the social gatherings described in the Baburnama and *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* to understand how these social gatherings reflect the performance and experience of friendship in the Mughal society. I study the spaces of feasts, hunts and drinking parties to argue that these social gatherings were a physical display of friendship that the Mughal emperors shared with a select few.

In the second section, I look at ties of friendship where they interacted with, influenced and impinged on ties of kinship. In the Mughal court, the boundaries between political alliance, friendship and kinship were fluid. I investigate the extra kinship relationships that formed the nexus of the Mughal imperial household such as those formed through fosterage, the institutions of *ataliq* and marital alliances. I question how these relationships were formed and maintained? How social closeness to the emperor allowed these relations to navigate power and authority and what was the role of friendship and sociability in the Mughal imperial household.

The last section explores the anxieties around political friendships. What happened when friendship faltered and friends became a source of anxiety? How did the emperor deal with disloyalty and insubordination among those who were part of his closest social circle? In the Mughal emperor's social milieu, friendship and loyalty existed within a grey zone as neither power nor loyalty was absolute but constantly negotiated. The breakdown of trust among the friends and companions of the emperor created a political crisis. The resulting acts of clemency and punishment were influenced by social closeness to the emperor. I argue that it was in these

moments of anxieties when friendship becomes most visible influencing the consequences of political betrayal.

In conclusion, this paper argues that friendship in the Mughal courtly world was not merely a personal bond but a mechanism through which power was structured and sustained. Social relations, that were rooted in camaraderie and companionship formed the very foundation of the emperor's political support system, shaping imperial decisions of reward, forgiveness, and punishment. These bonds were performed and articulated in various social settings such as feasts, hunts and wine parties. This study highlights the evolving nature of friendship and sociability through the different phases of empire-building and reveals the need to explore friendship as a serious category of historical analysis that offers insight into how personal bonds and emotions shaped the political processes in early modern South Asia.

In a State of Suspicion: Criminal Tribes, Knowledge Production, and the Politics of Rehabilitation in Colonial and Postcolonial India

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The history of the “criminal tribes” in India reflects ongoing changes that shape both social experiences and the way we study them. The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 emerged from the colonial government's focus on maintaining order and clarity; it created a system aimed at fixing entire communities within a bureaucratic view of deviance and inheritance. What started as a way to control movement grew into a broader knowledge project that combined colonial anthropology's classification goals, the law's moral authority, and the power of surveillance. The term “criminal tribe” served not just as a legal label but as a tool through which colonial modernity defined civility, morality, and citizenship.

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This paper places the Criminal Tribes Act in the larger picture of the colonial state's worries about knowledge—its need to stabilize populations, define behavior, and make social complexities easier to understand. Using archival reports from the North-Western Provinces and Delhi, along with discussions in the Legislative Council and Indian newspapers, the paper shows how colonial ideas about “hereditary criminality” turned social biases into administrative facts. The Act marked an important link between science and government: it used contemporary anthropological and biological terms to justify collective punishment and ongoing surveillance. In this knowledge framework, groups like Sansis, Nats, and Baurias represented the anxieties of an empire grappling with its limits of control.

However, the move to independence did not eliminate these patterns of suspicion. In 1952, when the Criminal Tribes Act was repealed, its subjects were officially “denotified.” This repeal was quickly followed by the Habitual Offenders Act (1952), which brought back many of the same rules under different legal terms. This continuity highlights the postcolonial state's mixed feelings: while it rejected the clear racial hierarchies of colonial governance, it kept the bureaucratic systems of registration, surveillance, and “rehabilitation.” The so-called shift from punishment to welfare represents more of a change in form than substance—a move from control to developmental oversight.

The paper argues that these continuities show how the certainties of one period become challenges for the next, reflecting the theme of ongoing change. The colonial obsession with social issues, reinterpreted through postcolonial development, demonstrates how knowledge systems can change while still being rooted in older modes of exclusion. Initiatives like rehabilitation colonies and social welfare programs aimed to change the “denotified tribes” into productive citizens, but their efforts often reinforced the very hierarchies they sought to dismantle. The language of reform, grounded in science, morality, and law, continued to treat these communities as subjects needing correction rather than as individuals with rights.

In examining this historical path, the paper addresses key questions in the humanities and social sciences: how do systems of knowledge shape social realities? how do identity categories persist through institutional memories and bureaucratic practices? and how does the state balance order with freedom, reform with control? By following the journey of the “criminal tribe” across colonial and postcolonial times, the study highlights the stubbornness of administrative labels and the challenges of decolonizing governance and scholarship.

Methodologically, the paper combines archival analysis, legislative reviews, and critical historiography. It looks at official communications, police reports, and anthropometric surveys alongside writings from Indian reformers and social workers after independence. This interdisciplinary approach, drawing from history,

sociology, and legal studies, aims to map how knowledge, power, and identity interact. In doing so, it also reflects on how the creation of knowledge itself can obscure rather than clarify the experiences of marginalized communities.

Ultimately, this study prompts us to rethink the category of “criminal tribes” not as a fixed historical oddity but as a lively area of inquiry that reveals the conflicts between continuity and change, structure and agency, inclusion and exclusion. The ongoing stigmatisation of denotified tribes in Present-day India—through policing, media representations, and daily social interactions—demonstrates that the past continues to shape the present. Engaging with this history means confronting the deeper issue of how knowledge systems develop while remaining influenced by their origin, stigmatising the fluidity of concepts and the persistence of social hierarchies, the paper connects with the central question of the GRM: in a constantly changing world, how do we rethink the tools we use to understand continuity, justice, and identity?

Keywords: Criminal Tribes Act; Denotified Communities; Colonial and Postcolonial Governance; Identity and Power; Social Marginalisation

Unlikely Liaisons: Indians & International Networks Inside Internment Camps in Germany & Italy (1939-1945)

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Introduction

This paper explores the prisoner of war camp as a site of transformation and political world-making, going beyond its original purpose as a carceral institution. It focuses on the lives of Indian soldiers who were taken as prisoners to camps in

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Germany and Italy during the Second World War. The location of these camps in Europe and the presence of Indians there was a transformative experience not only for the prisoners but also for the Italian and German camp guards and the Swiss inspectors. The camp space provided for Indians to come into contact with other soldiers from different nationalities. The POW camps in Germany and Italy witnessed the formation of trans-national solidarities between Indian POWs and POWs from other allied nations, often through the exchange of rations amidst ration shortages during harsh conditions. Apart from being a site for transnational solidarities, the POW camps were also a site for propaganda. The Indian POW camps in Germany and Italy were visited extensively by volunteers of the Indian Legion who wanted to recruit soldiers in their campaign against the British colonial state. Thus, the POW camps were not self-contained spaces but often had interactions with the outside world as well. Through these interactions, these camps saw the collisions and entanglements of different political worlds.

Thus, this paper is an attempt to read the internment camp as a space that extends beyond its carceral origins, enabling the formation of international networks and occasionally transcending the constraints of race and class. It also seeks to demonstrate how the POWs' experiences at these camps complicated their understanding of each other and the global war.

Sources & Methodologies

I have used personal narratives as my primary sources for this paper. These narratives include the memoir of an Indian army captain and that of an Indian doctor who served in the Second World War, who were captured as POWs. I have also used the memoir of a German interpreter who worked with the Indian POWs in Germany. Mary Jo Haynes has argued that whether or not the narrator in the narratives are aware of the historical context within which their narratives are situated, the historian needs to take into account the larger historical forces within which these narratives are situated. Hence, it is important to keep in mind when these memoirs were written, how long after the particular event, and who the intended audience of these memoirs was.

Captain A. S. Naravane, in *A Soldier's Life in War and Peace*, has written about his own experience as a POW in the different camps of Italy. He was one of the few Indians who were appointed as a captain in the British Indian Army during the Indianisation scheme. He was accepted into the Indian artillery in 1938. The Indian artillery, till 1934, was exclusively for the British. During the Second World War, he was sent to Egypt as a part of the North African campaign in 1942 as a part of the 18th Cavalry Regiment. His memoir, which he wrote after his retirement, was published in 2004,

and it depicts his entire life from childhood to joining the British Indian army, fighting in the Second World War, being taken as a prisoner to Italian and German camps, and his life after the war till retirement. However, since his memoir was published so long after the Second World War, it is possible that events like the partition of India and India's independence and subsequent wars with Pakistan might have influenced his remembrance of the Second World War. Moreover, he was an officer in the army belonging to an upper-caste and upper-class family, which also shaped the ways he viewed his captivity. He could write his letters to his wife in English, which only a few could afford during that time. His rank in the army as a captain ensured that he remained in POW camps meant for only officers, which were better than the ones meant for soldiers or non-commissioned officers. Moreover, his work adopts the generic conventions of an adventure tale in the way he narrated the incidents during his captivity. For instance, he focused more on attempts to escape from the Italian camp at Aversa.

Likewise, Satyen Basu was a doctor from Calcutta who joined the Indian Medical Service and was posted in the army medical corps. He served in Iraq, Syria, and North Africa during the war. He was captured in 1942 and was a prisoner in the same Italian camp as Naravane in Aversa. He published his memoir in 1960. His work, *A Doctor in the Army* revealed how prisoners themselves experienced their captivity. For instance, he narrated how one cavalry officer mentioned that it was in this prison that he had spent some of the best moments of his life, and never before was he this free from worries and allowed to follow his own pursuits like reading books. Although it was a camp, Basu called it "the prison life" and found that it was not as bad as he had apprehended. He found it a life free from responsibility and comparatively free from danger, where he could get into a corner and read a book. He mentioned that Indians were more adaptable than other prisoners, owing to being ruled by autocratic authorities, and suggests that submitting to fate came "naturally" to the Indians. This is why, he argued, the Indian POWs adjusted well to the prison life. However, Naravane's account of living in the same camp gave a very different picture. He writes that different prisoners reacted differently to the "prison conditions". Some were stoic about the hardships while others broke down completely. Some could bear hunger better than others while some picked up the core of the apples thrown away into garbage and ate that. Some ate grass even. Thus, revealing how varied lived experience could be.

Session B2

Economics

Chair: Prof. Joydeep Baruah

Pedaling Toward Better Health: Evidence from a Bicycle Program in India

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Introduction and Research Gap

Women require frequent healthcare services throughout their lives, particularly during reproductive years when access to antenatal care, skilled birth attendance, and postnatal care becomes critical for maternal and child survival. Despite this, gender disparities in healthcare utilization in developing countries persist. While education policies have emerged as effective interventions for improving women's healthcare utilization, causal evidence remains limited.

This study examines the long-term health impacts of Bihar's Mukhyamantri Bicycle Yojana—a 2006 program providing cash transfers to girls enrolling in secondary education to purchase bicycles. While existing research documents substantial enrolment gains (30-60% increases) and improved empowerment outcomes, no study has investigated the program's impact on healthcare-seeking behavior among beneficiaries. We address this critical gap by examining whether educational improvements translated into better maternal and child healthcare utilization.

Research Objectives

Our primary objective is to estimate the causal impact of the bicycle program on healthcare utilization among its beneficiaries.

Methodology

Data Source: We utilize the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) which provides large-scale representative data on health, demographic, and socioeconomic indicators. We pool data from its fourth and fifth rounds conducted in 2015-16 and

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2019-21, respectively. These surveys were conducted 9 and 13 years post-implementation, allowing observation of healthcare utilization when beneficiaries have completed education, married, and begun childbearing.

Sample Construction: Our analysis focuses on married women aged 20-29 (round 4) and 24-33 (round 5) in Bihar (treated state) and five neighboring control states: Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, and Odisha. Our final sample comprises 82,816 women across six states.

Treatment Definition: Girls aged 11-15 in 2006 constitute the treated cohort (eligible for bicycles upon reaching grade 9), while those aged 16-20 in 2006 form the control cohort (too old for program benefits).

Identification Strategy: We employ a difference-in-differences framework exploiting variation across state (Bihar versus controls) and age cohort (younger eligible versus older ineligible). The main specification is:

$$y_{ihtst} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{age}_i + \beta_2 \text{bihar}_s + \beta_3 (\text{age}_i \times \text{bihar}_s) + X_{ihtst} + \mu_d + \epsilon_{ihtst} \quad (1)$$

where y_{ihtst} represents standardized outcome variables for woman i in household h in district d of state s in year t . The variable age_i is an indicator for the treated cohort (ages 11-15 in 2006), bihar_s indicates Bihar state, and their interaction captures the treatment effect. The vector X_{ihtst} includes individual and household-level controls. District fixed effects (μ_d) absorb time-invariant district characteristics, and standard errors are clustered at the district level. The coefficient β_3 represents our parameter of interest—the causal effect of the bicycle program on healthcare utilization.

Parallel Trends Validation: We verify the critical identifying assumption through three approaches: (1) graphical analysis showing similar patterns across birth cohorts for untreated groups; (2) placebo tests using 2005-06 pre-policy data showing largely insignificant effects across outcomes; and (3) placebo treatment assignment among never-exposed cohorts showing null or opposite-direction effects. We address compositional changes by progressively controlling for unbalanced covariates in our main specification.

Outcome Variables: We examine measures spanning: educational attainment and healthcare utilization during pregnancy, childbirth, postnatal phases, vaccination and child's illnesses.

Key Findings

The program significantly increased years of education. Substantial improvements also emerged across maternal and child healthcare utilization. For antenatal care, beneficiaries showed significantly higher rates of receiving prenatal checkups, facility-based care, doctor-conducted checkups, first-trimester initiation, and increased total visits. Delivery outcomes were mixed: facility delivery rates showed no significant change and doctor-assisted deliveries declined, though maternal postnatal checkups after discharge or home delivery increased significantly, indicating improved follow-up care. Child healthcare quality improved substantially, with increased facility-based baby checkups, doctor conducted checkups, and checkups within the first three days of birth. Vaccination coverage showed no significant improvements. Treatment-seeking behavior during childhood illness improved notably: for diarrhea, facility-based treatment increased substantially; for fever and cough, response time decreased and facility-based treatment increased.

Robustness: Our results remain robust across multiple specifications where we (1) exclude spillover states; (2) address grade-based contamination; (3) address confounding from women who were married at the time of the policy implementation; (4) analyze only second or higher-order births; (5) address intra-household dynamics; (6) conduct six subsample analyses to address confounding from healthcare supply concerns and programs.

Additionally, we implement an alternative specification using kernel-weighted propensity score matching combined with difference-in-differences (PSM-DID) framework. The estimates remain similar to our main results, with most outcomes retaining statistical significance and comparable effect magnitudes.

Heterogeneity: Among daughters-in-law facing greater household constraints, approximately half of the effects remain statistically significant with others showing positive patterns.

Mechanisms: Knowledge and awareness emerged as the primary mechanism: newspaper readership and exposure to family planning messages saw significant increase among beneficiaries. However, empowerment and economic gains mechanisms were unsupported.

Conclusions and Policy Implications:

This study provides novel evidence that Bihar's bicycle program generated sustained improvements in maternal and child healthcare utilization extending well beyond its primary educational objectives.

The policy implications are substantial. Educational investments delivering both learning gains and health benefits from one-time capital expenditures represent

highreturn strategies for resource-constrained developing countries. The program's effectiveness even among daughters-in-law facing household restrictions and in contexts of limited healthcare supply suggests broad applicability.

Important limitations warrant future research. Our focus on healthcare utilization rather than health outcomes leaves open questions about ultimate impacts on maternal and child health status. Future research should examine long-term health outcomes using subsequent survey rounds, evaluate similar programs in diverse contexts to assess external validity, and investigate how effects vary with local health system capacity and cultural norms affecting women's healthcare autonomy.

Cultural Narratives of Vaccination : How Parents Talk about Cervical Cancer Prevention in Rural Bihar

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Introduction

In rural India, conversations around cancer are not purely medical discourses and exchange of information. They are more of dialogues deeply rooted in moral and social values of people. These conversations reveal how families understand care, responsibility and make healthcare decisions. Cervical cancer, preventable by HPV vaccination continues to affect women across the globe. In rural Bihar where access to health information is limited and health inequity is wide, taboos around reproductive health of women hinder HPV vaccination of young girls. The decision to vaccinate daughters in rural settings navigates through different facets of family honour and responsibilities. This study examines how parents in rural Bihar make sense of cancer prevention through the lens of moral responsibility and social identity. It investigates the narratives through which parents interpret health risks, evaluate preventive action and justify (or resist) vaccination. With a focus on how

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people talk about health instead of their mere acts, this research expands cancer prevention to everyday communication and communal identity making mechanism.

Background

HPV vaccination studies for India show communication as a one way dissemination tool that is used to aware masses about cancer prevention but these studies overlook the relevance of everyday talks where parents see informed healthcare decision making (including vaccination) not as a preventive measure but as something that is respectable and socially acceptable. In rural Bihar, health literacy propagates through informal spaces like community gatherings and gossip networks. Decisions are collectively debated than individually taken.

Similarly, the reluctance to discuss reproductive health openly emerges not from mere ignorance but from an inherited morality that directly connects female sexuality with family honour. It is this morality that makes even preventive care for women a choice influencing family honour. By investigating these moral narratives for families in rural Bihar, this study contributes to both health communication and moral anthropology revealing how communicative behaviour shapes preventive behaviour in marginalised communities. The broader objectives of this study are to- examine how parents frame their health responsibility towards daughters, evaluate the impact of culturally tailored messages on vaccine hesitancy, and assess the impact of moral values and social norms on HPV vaccine uptake.

Methodology

The study adopts a mixed method experimental design under interpretive paradigm. It consists of two phases wherein first phase we conduct an experiment followed by narrative interviews.

In first phase, parents (n=60) of daughters aged between 9-14 years from four different blocks of Gaya were randomly assigned in control and experimental groups. Culturally tailored messages were shown to experimental group. Pre and post test scores of these individuals were calculated and compared through t-test to measure the change in HPV vaccine hesitancy. This message was designed in local dialects to aware them about HPV vaccination and address the already identified factors (like lack of trust, availability, distance, cost, etc.) that stops them from getting their daughters vaccinated. In the second phase, semi-structured narrative interviews were conducted with 17 parents of experimental group to evaluate their understanding of messages, how they frame it under their moral landscape and what factors were still stopping them from getting their daughters vaccinated. The interviews and their analysis were conducted iteratively following the principle of thematic saturation. The point of saturation was reached when no new themes emerged from interviews.

Preliminary Insights

Pilot interviews with parents residing in rural Bihar suggests that cancer prevention including HPV vaccination is a moral obligation linked to parenthood rather than a biomedical task. Mothers specifically think of vaccination as ‘doing the right thing’ for their daughters’ futures yet express reluctance in talking openly about a vaccine associated with sexual health. Fathers often described vaccination as part of their ‘duty’ to maintain family’s social reputation reflecting how moral respectability and public image intersect with health decisions.

Exposure to culturally tailored narratives appears to reduce vaccine hesitancy and moral tension around conversations for sexual health. It also increases trust on healthcare providers among the participants representing community. The early insights from this study point to how cultural resonance transforms moral comfort into collective responsibility to get vaccinated.

Discussion This study positions cancer prevention as a moral discourse of responsibility and care, adding a humanistic perspective to cancer communication. It explores HPV vaccine hesitancy as a communicative negotiation of values, emotions and identities instead of measuring it only with scales as done in previous studies. Theoretically, it argues that morality is a form of cultural reasoning that shapes interpretation of risk and prevention in context of diseases. Our findings suggest that effective public health communication in populations with low health literacy and high stigmatisation of diseases must engage with moral vocabulary and address culturally rooted determinants of vaccine hesitancy instead of relying solely on biomedical facts.

Conclusion

By reframing vaccine communication as a moral and cultural dialogue, this study underscores that healthcare decision making in rural India is not only about awareness. It is about purpose and meaning behind those decisions. Parents in rural Bihar navigate cervical cancer prevention and HPV vaccination through stories of love, duty, and propriety that define what it means to be a responsible parent. By focussing on these moral narratives, this research demonstrates that public health initiatives should not only pass on medical information but also address the ethical and cultural nuances of communities. It calls for a shift from dissemination of information by healthcare providers (or government) to trust cultivation through shared moral understanding where communication acts as a bridge allowing scientific rationality to meet cultural understanding. This study ultimately contributes to a broader discussion in health communication that explains how identities, culture and everyday talks shape collective wellbeing in cervical cancer prevention.

Health shocks from NCDs and borrowing-induced poverty in the states of India

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1. Introduction

The increasing burden of NCDs imposes considerable costs on households, which includes direct costs such as healthcare and indirect costs such as lost wages, lost income, and time lost for patients and caregivers. In low- and middle-income countries like India, healthcare is primarily funded via out-of-pocket payments, burdening households. Such underfunded healthcare financing systems force many households to sell assets, borrow money, take on debt, or collect money from friends or relatives to cover healthcare payments. These out-of-pocket expenditures not only impose financial burden but also push household into poverty. There is very limited amount of study which focuses on healthcare spending and its impact on poverty, particularly in the context of NCDs. Existing study has largely estimated poverty level due to expenditure by subtracting monthly health expenditure on NCDs (total annual health expenditure by 12) from monthly per capita expenditure, but have not explored the mechanism such as borrowing by which they finance the expenditure and whether it leads them to poverty or not. This study aims to address this gap broadly by two objectives. First, estimating percentage of people falling into poverty due to borrowing for NCDs. Secondly, disease-specific share in poverty due to borrowing for NCDs. The findings will provide guide to improved health financing reforms, strengthens financial risk protection and support progress toward Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

2. Methods

2.1 Data source

We used two rounds of the India Human Development Survey (IHDS). We gathered information on costs of diseases for each household member with NCDs. We also collected details on various other demographics of the household such as caste, income, poverty line, Monthly per capita consumption, savings, loans etc. Although IHDS is a panel data, our focus is on state-level estimates and incidence measures, rather than household level change, we considered as repeated cross-section data.

2.2 Outcome variable

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2.2.1 Poverty estimation

At first, we calculated OOPE related to NCDs, which is defined as direct payments made by individuals to healthcare providers at the time-of-service minus any reimbursements by medical insurance company or employer. IHDS provide data of both medical and non-medical expenses occurred. Medical cost consists of Service fee, diagnostic test, bed charges etc. Non-medical cost consists of travel cost and other cost.

Pre – poverty estimation – We defined the monthly per capita consumption (MPCE) of household i as $MPCE_i$, and the poverty line as PL (Tendulkar poverty line as defined by Planning Commission of India till 2014). The $OOPE_i$ incurred due to NCD treatment is denoted $OOPE_i$.

Poverty Headcount – A household is considered poor if its MPCE falls below the poverty line,

$$H_i^{Pre} = \begin{cases} 1, & \text{if } MPCE_i < PL \\ 0, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

Post – poverty estimation – It is assessed by adjusting Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE) to reflect the financial burden of healthcare spending. Previous studies have estimated the adjusted MPCE by subtracting one-twelfth of total out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE) from the original MPCE. However, during medical emergencies, households may finance healthcare through a combination of borrowing, utilizing current or past savings, or selling assets. Therefore, we calculated MPCE using two methods:

Model 1: We take total Health spending and divide it by 12, to compute monthly health spending and then subtract it from initial MPCE.

$$MPCE_i^{post} = MPCE_i - \left(\frac{HE}{12}\right)$$

Model 2: Here, we include only those who borrowed, also borrowings which were repaid through asset sales were excluded. Additionally, direct asset sales used to cover OOPE are not considered in our analysis. As our poverty measure is unidimensional, focusing solely on consumption-based poverty, and does not account for multidimensional poverty indicators such as asset depletion.

$$MPCE_i^{post} = MPCE_i - U_i$$

Where U_i is the adjustment which depends on the financing mechanism (EMI from loans). Households originally above the poverty line ($MPCE_i > PL$) are tracked to determine whether they fall below the poverty line post-OOPE.

2.2.2 Disease-specific poverty –

After computing change in head count, we calculate disease specific poverty:

$$R_i = \frac{D_i}{C_H} * 100$$

Where, R_i = Percentage of specific disease i

C_i = Total head count of specific disease i

C_H = Total head count

3. Results

Our findings suggest that the proportion of people with NCDs who had health insurance increased in almost all states from 2005 to 2012, except for Punjab and Tripura. However, the absolute number has increased in all states. Following health insurance, we checked the proportion of people opted for borrowing in each state. We observed that even though health insurance increased in all the states during this period, borrowing to finance NCDs expenditure increased in most states, except some states like Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, where borrowing decreased. Furthermore, we also observed that high borrowing states were experiencing high poverty level both in 2005 and 2012. Several states who were under short-term poverty (smaller or equal to 6 months) in 2005 moved to long term poverty (greater than 6 months) in 2012. Additionally, Orissa, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana moved into short term poverty in 2012. States such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan reported high percentage of borrowing and long-term poverty both in 2005 and 2012. When we used the exiting method, we found elevated level of poverty level in every state both in 2005 and 2012. Asthma, Paralysis, Chronic-long term diseases and Multimorbidity has highest share in poverty.

4. Conclusion

This study shows out of pocket expenditure on NCDs causes a significant portion of people to fall into poverty in India. There is also significant interstate differences in poverty level due to education, centre-state joint initiatives, good public infrastructure and economic growth. Diseases such as heart diseases, mental illness, other long-term diseases, multimorbidity, continues to push people into long-term poverty. Our findings reveal that current financial protection plan is not specifically targeted towards NCDs and suffer from implementation challenges. Strengthening these schemes with proper funding, effective implementation, regulation of private providers, expansion of outpatient care for early detection for the NCD patient is

crucial. Addressing these gaps will not only ensure household to come out of poverty but also pushes India toward SDG on health and poverty reduction.

A Lopsided Bargain: Women's Employment and the Persistent Gender Gap in Unpaid Work in India

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This study investigates how women's employment shapes the intra-household division of unpaid domestic labour within Indian couples. Despite significant gains in female education and steady economic growth, Indian women continue to bear a vastly disproportionate share of unpaid housework and caregiving responsibilities. On average, women devote nearly five times as many hours as men to unpaid domestic labour, a pattern that persists across socio-demographic groups (National Sample Survey Office, 2025). For women who enter the labour force, this imbalance translates into a punishing "double burden" of paid and unpaid work. Against this backdrop, we ask: Does a wife's employment meaningfully alter entrenched gender divisions of household labour, or does it simply add another workday to her existing domestic load?

Background

Theoretically, the relationship between women's employment and unpaid labour is ambiguous. Bargaining models posit that employment enhances a woman's intra-household bargaining power, allowing her to negotiate a more equitable division of housework (Manser & Brown, 1980). Relative resource theory similarly suggests that economic independence reduces women's reliance on men and should therefore lessen their unpaid workload (Blood Jr & Wolfe, 1960). However, competing perspectives rooted in the sociology of gender emphasise "doing gender" (West & Zimmerman, 1987). From this view, household tasks are symbolic performances of femininity and masculinity. When wives earn or work more than their husbands,

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men may resist participating in domestic labour to protect traditional notions of masculinity, a process referred to as “gender deviance neutralisation” (Brines, 1994; Schneider, 2012). Thus, while economics predicts convergence, gender norms predict persistence or even intensification of inequality. Our study provides a rigorous empirical test of these competing frameworks.

Data and Sample

We use unit-level data from the second Indian Time Use Survey (TUS 2024), a nationally representative survey conducted by the National Statistical Office. From this dataset, we have identified 119,230 married couples. This data provides one of the largest and most current analytical samples to study gendered divisions of labour in India.

Our primary outcomes measure the spousal gap in unpaid housework and care work, defined as the wife’s time minus the husband’s. We also analyse the individual time contributions of wives and husbands separately. The key independent variable is a binary indicator for the wife’s employment status (employed vs. out of the labour force/unemployed). To capture heterogeneity, we further examine the wife’s employment type (self-employed, casual wage worker, regular salaried) and work intensity (hours of paid work).

We control for a rich set of covariates, including spousal age and education, household demographics (children, adults, elderly), socio-economic status (MPCE quartiles, landholding, domestic help, housing quality, electricity, cooking fuel), and social/geographic variables (caste, religion, rural/urban residence). To reduce bias, we incorporate cluster fixed effects and district-age fixed effects, accounting for unobserved local gender norms and age-cohort-specific shocks.

Empirical Strategy

Our baseline analysis estimates OLS regressions of the spousal gap and individual contributions on wife’s employment, controlling for covariates and fixed effects. To strengthen our interpretation, we conduct robustness checks using Propensity Score Matching (kernel and nearest neighbour) and Oster bounds. These methods help us address selection bias and how strongly unobservables would need to influence selection to nullify results.

Results

Descriptive statistics reveal immense disparities: on average, wives perform 314 more minutes of housework and 43 more minutes of care work daily than husbands. Husbands contribute barely 51 minutes to housework, while wives spend over six hours. Employment narrows this gap; wives in employment spend less time on unpaid tasks, but husbands’ contributions increase only marginally. Our regression

estimates confirm these patterns. A wife's employment is associated with a 111 minute reduction in the spousal housework gap and a 21 minute reduction in the care work gap. Yet, disaggregating outcomes shows the adjustment is one-sided. Employed wives reduce their housework by 107 minutes and care work by 23 minutes, but husbands contribute just 11 additional minutes to housework and a negligible 1 minute to care work. Robustness checks reinforce these findings.

Heterogeneity by Job Type and Intensity

Reductions in the spousal gap are largest for women in regular salaried jobs (151 minutes for housework, 31 minutes for care work), followed by casual wage workers (132 and 21 minutes), and smallest for the self-employed (79 and 16 minutes). More formal and stable employment appears to offer women greater bargaining leverage or imposes time constraints so severe that unpaid work must be scaled back. A clear "dose-response" pattern emerges for work intensity. The longer a woman's paid workday, the larger the reduction in the spousal gap. Women working more than eight hours reduce the housework gap by 247 minutes and the care work gap by 44 minutes. Yet even these women continue to perform the vast majority of unpaid tasks, underscoring the resilience of domestic norms.

Mechanisms: Gender Deviance Neutralisation

To probe mechanisms, we analyse subsamples of unemployed couples and hypogamous couples (where wives devote more time to paid work than husbands). In both cases, husbands still perform less unpaid work than their wives. This suggests that resistance is not merely about time availability or income but reflects deeper gender identity preservation. Men appear to deliberately limit domestic participation to "do gender," while women continue to perform a "double shift."

Discussion

Our findings challenge economic models that predict women's employment will equalise household labour. Instead, they lend strong support to sociological theories of gender performance. Employment reduces women's unpaid workload out of necessity, but husbands' minimal response reveals a structural rigidity.

The results highlight that job quality and hours matter, but even under the best-case scenario of full-time salaried work, wives remain the primary domestic labourers. The implications extend beyond household fairness. Women's double burden constrains their career investments, limits their leisure, and exacerbates gender inequality in the labour market. Without redistributing unpaid work, policies focused only on job creation risk leaving women trapped in an unequal cycle.