

JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY INDIAN POLITY AND ECONOMY

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DARPAN PUBLICATIONS

M-451, Guru Harkishan Nagar, New Delhi-110087
Phone: 011-25254090, 09212209090.

Volume 19, Issue 1, January-March, 2026

Journal Of Contemporary Indian Polity And Economy

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Published by:
Darpan Mahajan on behalf of **Darpan Publications**
M-451, Guru Harkishan Nagar, New Delhi-110087
Phone: 011-25254090, 09212209090.

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(A Unit of Permanence Education Services Pvt. Ltd.)
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From Editor's Desk

Iran War is Sure to Bring Recession in US—Common Man in India will also Suffer

Attacks by the US and Israel on Iran have escalated into a 20-nation conflict, causing deaths, property damage, and oil/gas destruction. This has led to surging global energy prices, inflation, and a potential recession, fueled by US oil ambitions. The war severely impacts financial markets, national economies, food security, and development, ultimately devastating common people worldwide. For over two weeks now, following attacks launched by the United States and Israel against Iran, the flames of this conflict have spread to as many as 20 nations. Consequently, not only have thousands of lives been lost, but vast reserves of oil and gas have also been destroyed, and massive property damage has been incurred. Moreover, the entire world is currently grappling with surging oil and gas prices due to disruptions in vital maritime shipping routes. According to global agencies, this war could trigger a drastic escalation in global inflation, poverty, and food insecurity. The ongoing disruptions in supply chains, rising shipping costs, and shortages of critical components could trigger a global supply shock, throwing economies into chaos and recession. And the worst victim of the war between nations is the common people around the world. It is widely believed that the current conflict is driven by America's ambition to secure control over oil reserves. Although the initial pretext cited was that Iran was developing nuclear weapons—a development alleged to threaten peace in both the US and the wider world—members of the US administration are now saying that the US instigated this war without justification.

They are, in fact, holding Israel responsible for provoking the conflict. However, it must be understood that—first, the arrest and subsequent extradition of the Venezuelan President to the US, and now the attack on Iran—are viewed by experts as indications of America's attempt to seize control of the world's oil reserves. The international news agency Reuters notes that, before this, the US had already effectively secured control over Iraq's oil assets through regime change. Waging wars in this manner to assert dominance on the global stage is undesirable.

While any war typically serves as a catalyst for inflation, the involvement of Gulf nations—which fulfill the majority of the world's crude oil and gas requirements—in this conflict naturally drives up inflation through rising energy prices. Moreover, inflation is further exacerbated by shortages of goods and materials resulting from obstructions to maritime trade routes. As the war drags on, this problem is assuming increasingly dire proportions. The combination of diminishing purchasing power caused by inflation, shortages of essential commodities, and governments' reduced capacity to absorb these costs raises the spectre of social unrest. It is evident that the common man ultimately bears the direct brunt of the rising inflation and shortages of essential goods caused by the war. Then there is the social unrest, which will definitely be the common man's problem. In times of war, investors tend to play it safe. Business confidence wavers, and uncertainty prevails. Consequently, instead of investing in stocks and bonds, people begin purchasing more precious metals. Naturally, stock markets begin to decline. In the context of India, since the onset of the conflict, the Bombay Stock Exchange's (BSE) Sensex has fallen by over 7 per cent. A similar situation is being observed in global markets as well. A downturn in the stock market directly impacts ordinary people. On one hand, the value of their investment portfolio falls; on the other, the value of pension funds invested in the markets also declines.

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This is how war impacts the economies of developing nations like India. First and foremost, rising oil prices lead to an increased outflow of foreign currency, resulting in a depletion of foreign exchange reserves. Second, the local currency undergoes depreciation due to rising import bills and the outflow of capital by institutional investors. It is noteworthy that over the past three weeks of the conflict, the value of Indian currency has depreciated by approximately 3.0 per cent against the US Dollar—a trend that continues unabated. Third, in an effort to mitigate inflation, governments are compelled to provide increased subsidies on energy, food products, and fertilisers, or to reduce taxes. This places an increased burden on the public exchequer, which, in turn, has a direct repercussion on inflation—a burden that ultimately has to be borne by citizens. It is not only developing economies that will be affected; nobody will remain unscathed. Indeed, apprehensions regarding a severe economic recession in the near future are being voiced even within the US. International rating agency Moody's states that there is a 49 per cent probability that the US will succumb to a recession within the next 12 months, and averting it will be difficult. The factors cited behind this outlook include rising oil prices and international trade routes disrupted by war. With jobless economic growth on one hand and escalating prices driven by conflict on the other, a recession in the US is now considered almost inevitable.

Global food production is not distributed evenly across all nations—not every country is capable of ensuring its own food security independently. Such nations are compelled to rely on imports from food-exporting countries. War disrupts the movement of goods, thereby triggering a food security crisis in those nations. Although India is largely self-reliant regarding its food requirements, it nonetheless remains dependent on imports for certain commodities, particularly edible oils and pulses. A rise in the prices of these specific commodities can also have an adverse effect on the lives of ordinary citizens.

In the long run, war leads to disruptions in trade and heightened uncertainty, resulting in reduced investment and a consequent slowdown in global GDP growth. Second, increased expenditure on warfare and post-conflict reconstruction compels governments to borrow more, leading to an accumulation of public debt and creating future fiscal pressures. Third, war redirects the trajectory of technological innovation toward sectors such as defence, artificial intelligence (AI), and cybersecurity. While this may foster innovation in these specific fields, it simultaneously necessitates the diversion of resources away from social and developmental sectors. Overall, by altering economic priorities, war can undermine the prospects for balanced and sustainable global development. Today, the imperative is to restore global peace and ensure that development is not hampered. Post-Covid, global growth, which is hovering around 2.5 per cent to 3.0 per cent, has not come to the pre-Covid level of 3.5 per cent to 4.0 per cent. It is projected that, due to ongoing conflicts, the global economic growth rate could further contract by an additional 0.2 per cent to 1.0 per cent. Given the devastating consequences of war—ranging from the destruction of life and property on one hand, to declining growth rates, inflation, unemployment, and food insecurity for the common citizen on the other—such a scenario can in no way be deemed beneficial for the world. Nations across the globe must redouble their efforts to bring an end to these conflicts.

Dr Ashwani Mahajan
Chief Editor

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The Influence of Nutritional Information on Sustainable Consumer Behaviour in the Health Sector

Neelam Kumari Dhusia

Abstract: With increasing global problems like climate change, natural resource depletion, and pandemics, consumers are also becoming more conscious of health and sustainability. Nutritional labelling in health products encourages sustainable consumption. This paper looks into how the combination of transparent nutrition information with sustainable claims alters the consumers' awareness and their purchasing decisions. Simple, easy-to-understand and accurate nutrition information enables customers to make good decisions for themselves and the environment, erasing the gap between health preferences and the environment. In addition, the study demonstrates how the emerging concept of ethical consumerism is creating a new culture of product consumption. The impact of nutritional labelling on the selection of health products and sustainable consumption is the main emphasis of this study, which examines the relationship between consumer behaviour, sustainability, and health. Customers are giving more weight to goods that reflect sustainable and ethical principles as environmental and health concerns rise. This paper presents valuable information on consumer behaviour and the regulatory landscape, as well as the digital opportunities as a roadmap for marketers, policymakers, and manufacturers of health products to promote sustainable consumption. This research therefore calls for solutions such as consumer education, cross cultural analysis and technology adoption for problems such as greenwashing, consumers' price sensitivity and their lack of knowledge. This study adds to the growing body of knowledge in the health-sustainability-consumer behaviour interface by identifying how nutritional labelling may be deployed to enhance the attainment of sustainability objectives. The

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January-March, 2026

(1)

study shows that there is need for more cross-disciplinary research, to move labelling techniques forward, compare consumer reactions, and develop a model for promoting environmentally friendly consumption across the globe.

Keywords: Sustainable Consumption, Health-Conscious Consumer Behavior, Ethical Consumerism, Eco-Friendly Products, Nutritional Labeling, Transparency in Labeling, Sustainability Marketing.

1. Introduction

Over the last few years, the links between health, sustainability and consumer behaviour have become the one of the most exciting research topics (Syed et al., 2024). The knowledge of environmental conservation and customer's health has altered the consumers' attitude towards the purchasing of environmentally and health conscious products (Cam, 2023). This shift has been most apparent in the health product category where information on nutrient content of products is critical to the consumer (Ali & Ali, 2020; Firoozzare et al., 2024). Purvis et al. (2019) state that from the information provided, the idea of sustainability has evolved from the environmentalist point of view to social, economic, and health. Global climate change, availability of resources, and consumerism have impacts on consumers' behavior (Ogiemwonyi et al., 2023).

Awareness of the surroundings and social impacts of the items consumed has continued to increase, and the consumer primarily desires to see sustainability (Maduku, 2024). This awareness is perhaps most felt in healthcare products and services since people are becoming more sensitive to products that not only promote health but are also eco-friendly (Prosen et al., 2023; Sarfraz et al., 2022). Ethical consumerism, rejecting products and services associated with harmful social and environmental values, has gained prominence in the food and personal care industries. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly raised people's expectations regarding the level of transparency regarding health products and sustainable procurement and manufacturing of the ingredients (Parashar et al., 2023).

With regard to this trend, consumers are more reliant on the product labels to obtain information about both the nutritional value of products they consume and the environmental footprint of the products they purchase (Isabel Sonntag et al., 2023; (Sobaih & Abdelaziz, 2022). Food nutrition data, which is usually labelled on packs, is strategically vital in decision-making processes, especially regarding health-oriented consumers. The visibility and legibility of nutritional information do

influence consumer awareness and their choices to a great extent (Priya & Alur, 2023; Folkvord et al., 2021). Clear and comprehensible nutritional labels positively impact consumers' awareness of health effects and preference for healthier, more environmentally friendly products (Oswald et al., 2022).

Today's consumers are more aware of the consequences of poor diet choices, such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes, among others. Thus, they require information on the nutritional values of the foods they consume (Mozaffarian, 2016; Meyerding & Ahrens, 2024). Product labels containing information about calories, sugar, fat, protein, and vitamins may help consumers make the right food choices, which should lead to improved health (Afroza et al., 2024; Hawley et al., 2012). In addition, systems like "traffic light" color-coded nutrient information, which visually alert the consumers of the levels of fat, sugar and salt, have been considered to enhance the understanding and choices made by the consumers (Becker et al., 2015; Sonnenberg et al., 2013). Nutritional information is an effective determinant of health-related decisions. Still, other factors, including the presence of environmental sustainability claims on the health product labels (e.g., "organic," "fair trade," and "eco-friendly"), can also shape consumers' choices (Bastounis et al., 2021).

The combination of sustainability with information about the nutritional value is considered as the possibility to meet the needs of those consumers who are not only concerned about their health but also the environment (Dorna & Sobczak, 2024). Nutrition and label information linked to sustainable products are now one of the most critical issues discussed in modern marketing and consumer research (van Bussel et al., 2022). Over time, there is a rising need not only for the nutritional value declaration but also for the environmental impact of the product (Tharun, 2024). Nutritional transparency is the process of delivering appropriate, accurate and comprehensible information about the nutritional qualities of the products its constituents, and sourcing transparency provides consumers with confidence and commitment to their patronage, hence a relationship often linked to sustainability-sourced products (Dove et al., 2020).

In particular, consumers tend to select goods where information about their positive effects on health and the environment is disclosed. Apart from expecting products to be healthy for the body, consumers are also interested in products that can be used to support the health of the planet (Parashar et al., 2023). Healthy products are gradually becoming more valued due to the actualization of the effects of

production and its environmental consequences (Baviskar et al., 2024). Marketers and policymakers face the challenge of promoting sustainable consumption for the long term, a complex process that extends beyond purchase decisions to include conscious lifestyle choices despite the simplicity of product labelling (Sipilä et al., 2024).

Nutritional value and sustainability labels are therefore crucial in promoting sustainable consumption of foods and health products. Manufacturers, policymakers and consumers have the responsibility of promoting sustainability at different stages in the consumption of products (Ran et al., 2022). Consequently, it pays significant attention to information about nutrition as the health product sector is progressing step by step towards sustainable consumption. This paper aims to find out the impact of nutrition labelling information on the level of awareness, purchase intention and the social aspect of sustainable consumption. Besides, it aims to find out how nutritional transparency can help consumers make better decisions on healthier products that are produced with sustainability.

2. Objectives

1. To study the customer awareness and buying behaviour towards sustainable solutions with respect to the nutrition information on health product labels.
2. To study the consumers' perceptions regarding nutritional transparency in the consumption of health products derived from sustainability.
3. To study how nutrition data on the health products, may foster sustainable consumption.

3. Literature Review

Details regarding the nutritional value of foods and beverages have been presented with regard to how relevant it is in enhancing consumers' purchase decisions, particularly regarding healthcare foods and beverages (Priya & Alur, 2023). For the consumers who want to choose the correct diet for their bodies and health, the problems of correct nutritional information and its availability are critical (Tharun, 2024). Food labels are better prepared for working with consumers to encourage them to make correct choices of healthier foods (Mazzù et al., 2024). Promising and comprehensive information about the nutritional content of foods assists the consumer in making informed decisions in relation to the health risks of the products they consume (Wang, 2024).

Sobaih & Abdelaziz (2022) suggested that when consumers are presented with clear nutrition facts, they are inclined to perceive the product as healthy, and this affects their buying decisions. Such labelling practices have emerged especially crucial in markets where risks associated with obesity, diabetes, and heart diseases are well reflected (Mehanna et al., 2024). The customers who came across the nutritional labels had more inclination towards calories, low sugar and high protein products, especially among the conscious segments. With this increased awareness, one can influence the consumer to choose healthier products to consume and make the consumption pattern healthier and more sustainable (Prathiraja & Ariyawardana, 2011; Fredrik Fernqvist et al., 2024).

In the context of sustainable consumption, the labelling of health products is essential in creating the link between health conscious and the environment. Consumers today have adopted environmental consciousness into their purchasing decisions as part of their healthy living. This has been associated with efforts to seek extended consumer benefits that encompass well-being together with environmental and ethical standards (van Bussel et al., 2022). It is noteworthy that when the nutritional information is accompanied by sustainability claims like organic or environmentally friendly sources, the consumers are more likely to be swayed by these two kinds of attributes, hence integrating healthy and sustainable consumption (Cam, 2023). Nutritional content, which can be described as the extent to which information about foods is made available to consumers through labels, has a significant impact on consumers' decisions (Priya & Alur, 2023).

Consumers are becoming more conscious about food's environmental impact, using labels like "traffic light" to indicate reduced sugar, fat, and salt content, allowing choices (Folkvord et al., 2021). The knowledge of the nutritional content of the product helps consumers to make better decisions (van Bussel et al., 2022). Nutritional transparency aids consumers in making informed decisions, mainly when health products are linked to sustainability. There is increased consumer consciousness of environmental and ethical issues in the global healthcare market (Cam, 2023). According to Sreenivasan & Suresh (2024), sustainable health products are those that have been manufactured and processed, and their ingredients and the entire supply chain are socially and environmentally friendly.

Products that are sourced in this manner are typically branded with such labels as "The Fair Trade", "Organic", or "Eco-Friendly", which are general indications of proper sourcing (Nygaard, 2023). This shift

in the consumer base implies that there is increased emphasis on the use of labelling to convey the sustainability of health products (Parashar et al., 2023). Nutrition information is one of the instruments that support consumers with sustainable consumption by providing them with information on the nutritional and sustainability profile of a product (van Bussel et al., 2022). According to the research carried out by Firoozzare et al. in 2024, consumers are willing to purchase sustainable products with a guarantee that the nutrients provided meet their nutritional needs. Ethical consumers are commonly concerned with the purchase of goods that reflect their values concerning sustainability (Šálková et al., 2023).

Such consumers are always willing to pay premium prices in order to buy products that reflect their ethical values and are not harmful to the environment (Ali & Ali, 2020). Eco-labels with information about sustainably sourced nutrition information and ingredients have been accepted by consumers as credible, thus enhancing the consumers' confidence and brand loyalty in the longrun (Dove et al., 2020). If health products indicated the source of the materials used in the products, consumers were willing to purchase such products despite the fact that their prices were higher than those of the other products (Thøgersen, 2023). Combined with sustainability claims such as "locally sourced" or "fair trade", alongside clear nutrition labelling, increased consumers' preference towards the products (Bastounis et al., 2021). Promoting sustainable consumption involves a multifaceted approach that involves understanding the values, knowledge, and attitudes of the population, in addition to implementing transparent nutrition information (Syed et al., 2024). Transparent labelling and accurate nutrition facts foster informed, health-conscious customers, promoting sustainability and health as core values (Huang et al., 2024).

Whenever consumers are constantly influenced by sustainable product labels particularly those bearing health and environmental impact labels, then consumers are likely to adopt such values in their total purchase behavior. Long-term consumption patterns for sustainability might be developed owing to the consistently highlighted health and sustainably oriented labels (van Bussel et al., 2022). Another essential factor necessary to build up for sustainable consumption over the long run is the level of consumers' awareness (Uniyal, 2024). The duration for which the behavior change will persist could be enhanced through the knowledge customers possess on the impacts of their consumption patterns on the environment and their health as espoused by Ogiemwonyi et al., (2023).

It is possible to state that the decisions regarding long-term sustainability are critically defined by the nutritional content transparency, which at the same time informs the customers about value and ethical and environmental concerns (van Bussel et al., 2022). Furthermore, consumer engagement activities, including awareness creation and product branding that aims at letting the consumer know the effects that food production has on the environment help improve sustainability over time (Ammann et al., 2023). Awareness, engagement, and eventual behavioral change may occur from campaigns that promote environmental and health concerns, interactions with sustainability and nutrition labels (White et al., 2019).

Studying the effects of nutritional information on consumers and their sustainable consumption is still in its early stages, but there are some issues to be discussed. These comprise inadequate consideration of nutrient information and sustainability claims, the inability to capture durable behavioural change towards sustainable consumption, and the effect of nutrient information on consumers' segments. There is limited research on cross-cultural differences in consumer response to nutritional transparency and sustainable labelling, as well. Non-traditional labelling formats have not been researched intensely, and there is little known about consumer acceptance of the nutritional and sustainability claims. There is a growing body of literature on how government regulations affect product labelling practices, but few studies have examined the extent to which these regulations affect consumers' attitudes toward sustainable consumption in the health product sector. Social media and influencers influence consumers' perceptions of health and sustainability, but little is known about the effect of social media on consumer responses to nutritional information and sustainability claims on health product labels.

4. Discussion

Nutritional information is a key tool that helps consumers learn about the health consequences of their decisions, but it also helps consumers make sustainable decisions (van Bussel et al., 2022). The available literature evidence indicates that enhanced, comprehensible, and comprehensible nutritional information exerts a direct impact on consumers' choices. If the consumer is able to comprehend labels on the food products, they are able to make the right decisions in their purchase. Apart from enhancing user cognition about the value of consuming better products, it also assists in making consumers more sensitive to the other environmental and ethical factors of purchasing products (Priya & Alur, 2023).

Nutritional labels are more efficient in encouraging sustainable decisions when they are combined with sustainability messages like organic or fair-trade labels (Duckworth et al., 2022). Health and sustainability information can be integrated into labelling practices to reach a deeper level of consumer understanding of both health and sustainability issues (Cook et al., 2023). Consumers with knowledge of the health benefits of high-fiber products may be equally attracted to products with sustainability claims, as they link healthy food with sustainable food (Pinto et al., 2021). Further, the convenience at which consumers procure the nutrition information also affects the consumers' decision-making at the time of purchase, such as in stores or online stores (Priya & Alur, 2023).

Yet, the influence of nutritional information on purchase behaviour with regard to sustainable products is not the same. Customers who are really concerned about the environment or their health, for example, will be readily swayed by these labels (Borin et al., 2011). Values, expertise, and socioeconomic position all influence how conscious customers are of sustainability and nutritional value; less knowledgeable consumers place a higher priority on cost and preparation time than sustainability (White et al., 2019). In order to modify their purchasing preferences, consumers are increasingly selecting nutritionally transparent, sustainably produced products that highlight their sourcing practices, environmental effects, and nutritional attributes (Cook et al., 2023). Consumers are more likely to pay for sustainably sourced products if they trust the nutritional and sustainability information provided, particularly among the healthy consumer segment (Huang et al., 2024).

Product labels with local sourcing, environmental-friendly tags, and clear nutritional information are preferred by consumers, enhancing credibility and preference for sustainably sourced food products (Bastounis et al., 2021). Full disclosure labelling also enhances credibility for brand and this product credit is core when talking of sustainable products. Consumers remain skeptical especially on sustainability because of green washing, which is a phenomenon that refers to the practice where companies overstate or even lie over environmental improvements (Isac et al., 2024; Shahrin et al., 2017). Particularly, when coupled with believable sustainability assurances, nutritional being-forth engenders lesser suspicion and consumers are willing to incur extra cost for sustainably obtained goods. Therefore, the more there is labelling the more consumers are likely to purchase sustainably sourced health products (Vecchio and Annunziata, 2015).

Different consumers can have different attitudes towards sustainability. Nutritional transparency is shown to mitigate the relationship between consumers preference for sustainable health products and the degree of consumer values. It is possible that some consumers are more sensitive to health attributes than to environmental ones, while others may have the opposite preference; hence, there is a need to understand both aspects influence choice (Huang et al., 2024). To change the perception and behaviour of consumers for the long term in the promulgation of sustainable consumption, consumers' beliefs, perceptions, and practices besides socio-market trends, promotions, and education-oriented programmes have to be understood to ensure long-term change in health and sustainability (Syed et al., 2024).

Therefore, nutritional information can be a helpful in constructing sustainable consumption but at the same time consumers' information processing capacity hinders the use of the information (Vermeir et al., 2020). People who selectively decide in favour of products with less sugar or more nutrients might develop a habit of doing this with respect to all food and health products, which would correspond to a sustainable and healthy choice in the long term (Pinto et al., 2021). Consumer education is crucial for sustainable consumption, and nutritional labelling is only effective when consumers understand the information it provides and its benefits. A lack of understanding may hinder the long-term adoption of sustainable choices (Cook et al., 2023). Thus, apart from requiring appropriate labelling, actions that help consumers understand the extent to which their decisions affect the environment, for instance, the effects of food choices on the climate or the advantages of sustainable supply chain management, are essential for long-term behavioural change (Huang et al., 2024).

Technology, particularly the web and digital tools, significantly promotes sustainable consumption in the long run, enabling consumers to engage with information and adopt sustainable practices (Jiang et al., 2024). Such applications are becoming more popular as people use applications that help track their purchases, compare them based on nutritional or sustainability indexes, or receive bonuses for making sustainable decisions. These tools can assist in maintaining long-term behavioural change through the use of nutritional transparency and sustainability that is more interactive than conventional label systems (Ran et al., 2022). Sustainable long-term consumption based on nutritional information faces challenges due to increasing consumer interaction and new labelling systems. Adopting sustainability aspects

is crucial for replacing health-based consumption with multiple, sustainable, and environmentally friendly patterns (Cook et al., 2023).

5. Conclusion and Future Scope

In this research paper, an attempt has been made to understand how nutritional information can be instrumental in promoting proper consumer behaviour toward the purchase of health products in the long run. The study also points out that with nutritional labelling information being used together with sustainability claims, there is room for altering the general public awareness, buying choices, and behaviour in the long run. The study indicates that simple and concise nutritional labels not only assist the consumer in choosing a healthier food option but also opt for environmentally friendly goods. Furthermore, this paper established that information about nutrition, both health-wise and sustainability, has a central role in influencing consumers to choose products that are in line with their perceived ethical requirements per health and sustainable living. The research also suggests that the role of nutritional information in influencing consumers towards sustainable consumption is not equal across all consumers. Health consciousness, environmental consciousness, income levels, and cultural trends were found to dictate consumers' significant interpretation of nutritional and sustainability claims.

Moreover, the use of nutritional labelling in encouraging sustainable consumption requires constant interaction with consumers as well as knowledge and integration of technology into labelling systems. Finally, the findings suggest that providing more nutritional information and communicating sustainability information on food labels are potential managerial strategies to promote sustainable food consumption. Since health product consumers are becoming more concerned about their health and the environment, the health product industry has to focus on educating consumers to change their behaviour and preferences in the long run. This work adds to the knowledge of the multifaceted interconnection between nutrition information and sustainable consumer behaviour and emphasizes the need for continued investigation of this crucial area in the dynamic shopping environment.

Further studies should investigate cross-cultural and cross-regional differences in the impact of nutritional and sustainability labelling, thus offering rich information for global marketing and differentiated approaches to different consumers. The study also points out that nutritional labelling could help drive sustainable consumption, but more longitudinal research is required to determine the impact that it has

on the buying habits of consumers in the long run. Research should be done on how digital labelling works alongside conventional nutritional labels to improve customers' awareness of health and sustainability for sustainable consumption by people who are involved in the use of technology.

Subsequent studies should build on trust as the antecedent of the believability of sustainability claims, consumer buying behaviour and the reliability of certifications, especially in relation to the use of a more transparent labelling system, third-party certifications, as well as consumer awareness. There is a research gap on how regulatory environments affect consumer behaviour, which needs to be addressed to inform policymakers on healthier and sustainable options available from mandatory nutritional labels, eco-labels, and sustainability certifications. The paper shows that price sensitivity remains a barrier to long-term product adoption, and future studies should explore its effects on nutritional and sustainability labels to help make sustainable products affordable to low-income consumers.

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Literature and Society: Contemporary Perspectives

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Abstract

Literature has historically maintained a dynamic, evolving, and reciprocal relationship with society, functioning both as a reflection of social realities and as an influential force in shaping cultural values, ideologies, and collective consciousness. In the contemporary era, this relationship has grown increasingly complex due to the rapid processes of globalization, technological advancement, and the transformation of social, political, and economic structures. These changes have significantly altered not only the themes and concerns of literary works but also their modes of production, circulation, and reception.

This article critically examines the role of literature as both a mirror and a medium of critique within modern society. It explores how contemporary literary texts engage with pressing issues such as identity formation, social inequality, gender dynamics, migration, and cultural transformation. Through diverse narrative strategies and perspectives, literature provides insight into the lived experiences of individuals and communities, while simultaneously questioning dominant ideologies and power structures. In this sense, literature becomes an active participant in social discourse, fostering awareness, empathy, and critical reflection among readers.

Furthermore, the study investigates the impact of modern literary forms and digital platforms on the accessibility and function of literature. The emergence of digital media, online publishing, and interactive storytelling has expanded the boundaries of literary expression, enabling wider participation and global dissemination. These developments have not only democratized literary production but also reshaped the relationship between authors and audiences.

The article concludes that contemporary literature extends beyond mere representation of social issues; it actively engages in processes of resistance, negotiation, and transformation. As a result, literature

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January-March, 2026

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continues to serve as a vital and dynamic medium through which societal experiences are articulated, contested, and reimagined, ensuring its enduring relevance in an ever-changing world.

Keywords: Literature, Society, Contemporary Perspectives, Culture, Identity, Social Change, Digital Literature, Globalization

Introduction

The relationship between literature and society has long been a central subject of scholarly inquiry, as both exist in a deeply interconnected and mutually influential dynamic. Literature is not created in isolation; rather, it emerges from the social, political, economic, and cultural contexts of its time. As such, it is often regarded as a mirror that reflects the conditions, values, conflicts, and aspirations of the society in which it is produced. At the same time, literature functions as a powerful agent that shapes human thought, influences behavior, and contributes to the formation of societal norms and collective consciousness. This dual role—both reflective and transformative—makes literature an essential component in understanding the evolution of societies across different historical periods.

In earlier eras, literature primarily served as a means of storytelling, moral instruction, and preservation of cultural heritage. Classical epics, religious texts, and folk narratives were often used to transmit ethical values, social codes, and historical knowledge from one generation to another. The didactic function of literature was particularly prominent, as it sought to guide individuals toward socially accepted behavior and reinforce prevailing moral frameworks. However, as societies evolved and became more complex, the function of literature expanded beyond mere instruction and entertainment to include critical reflection and social commentary.

In the contemporary world, this expansion has become even more pronounced. The advent of globalization has led to increased interaction among cultures, resulting in a blending of perspectives and the emergence of diverse literary voices. Simultaneously, rapid technological advancements—especially in digital communication and media—have transformed the ways in which literature is produced, distributed, and consumed. Digital platforms, online publishing, and social media have made literature more accessible and participatory, allowing writers and readers from different parts of the world to engage in shared cultural dialogues.

As a result, contemporary writers address a wide range of pressing issues that define modern society. Themes such as migration, identity crises, environmental degradation, gender equality, and social justice have become central to literary discourse. Through their works, authors explore the complexities of living in an interconnected and rapidly changing world, often highlighting the struggles of individuals navigating multiple identities and cultural expectations. Moreover, contemporary literature does not merely reflect these issues; it actively challenges dominant ideologies, questions power structures, and gives voice to marginalized and underrepresented communities.

In this context, literature serves as both a site of representation and a platform for resistance and transformation. It encourages readers to critically engage with societal realities, fostering empathy, awareness, and a deeper understanding of diverse human experiences. Therefore, the study of literature in relation to society remains highly relevant, as it provides valuable insights into the ongoing processes of cultural change and social development in the modern era.

Literature as a Reflection of Society

One of the most fundamental and enduring functions of literature is its ability to reflect the realities of the society in which it is produced. Literature serves as a mirror that captures the social, political, economic, and cultural conditions of a particular time and place. Through various literary forms such as novels, poetry, drama, and short stories, writers portray the lived experiences of individuals and communities, allowing readers to gain a deeper understanding of the world around them. In this sense, literature becomes a valuable record of human life, preserving the complexities, struggles, and aspirations of different societies across time.

In the contemporary era, literary works increasingly depict the multifaceted nature of modern life. Issues such as economic inequality, political instability, globalization, and cultural diversity are central themes explored by many writers. These themes reflect the realities of a rapidly changing world, where individuals often face uncertainty, conflict, and transformation. By addressing such issues, literature not only documents societal conditions but also invites readers to reflect critically on them.

Moreover, literature provides insight into the diverse social contexts that shape human experiences. Writers often draw upon their personal backgrounds, cultural identities, and social environments to create narratives that resonate with authenticity. As a result, readers are

exposed to a wide range of perspectives, enabling them to understand lives and experiences that may differ significantly from their own. This capacity of literature to foster empathy and cross-cultural understanding is particularly important in an increasingly interconnected world. A prominent feature of contemporary literature is its exploration of themes related to identity and belonging. In a globalized society, individuals frequently grapple with questions of race, gender, nationality, class, and cultural heritage. Literary characters often embody these struggles, navigating complex social realities and searching for a sense of self in a constantly evolving environment. Such narratives reflect the challenges faced by individuals in modern society, including issues of displacement, marginalization, and cultural hybridity.

Literature as a Tool for Social Critique

Beyond merely reflecting social realities, literature also functions as a powerful instrument of social critique, enabling writers to question, challenge, and reinterpret the structures and values that govern society. In the contemporary context, literature often goes beyond passive representation to actively engage with issues of injustice, inequality, and oppression. Through creative expression, authors are able to expose the limitations and contradictions within social systems, encouraging readers to think critically about the world around them.

Contemporary writers frequently address and challenge established social hierarchies and power structures. They bring attention to issues such as gender discrimination, caste inequality, racial injustice, and environmental degradation, which continue to shape the experiences of individuals and communities. By highlighting these issues, literature plays an important role in revealing the hidden or normalized forms of inequality that may otherwise go unnoticed. It disrupts complacency and compels readers to confront uncomfortable truths about society.

One of the distinctive strengths of literature as a tool for critique lies in its use of artistic and narrative techniques. Devices such as satire, symbolism, irony, and allegory allow writers to present critical perspectives in subtle yet impactful ways. For instance, satire can expose the absurdities of social practices, while symbolism can represent deeper social and political meanings beyond the surface of the text. These techniques enable literature to communicate complex ideas and critiques without being overtly didactic, making the message more engaging and thought-provoking for readers.

Moreover, literature provides a platform for marginalized and underrepresented voices, allowing them to articulate their experiences and challenge dominant narratives. In many societies, certain groups have historically been excluded from mainstream discourse. Contemporary literature seeks to address this imbalance by giving voice to those who have been silenced or overlooked. Through personal narratives and diverse perspectives, literature fosters empathy and understanding, helping readers to recognize the humanity and struggles of others.

In addition to raising awareness, literature also has the potential to inspire social change. By encouraging critical reflection and emotional engagement, it motivates readers to question existing norms and consider alternative possibilities. While literature alone may not directly bring about structural change, it contributes to the broader process of social transformation by shaping public opinion and influencing cultural attitudes.

Impact of Globalization on Literature

Globalization has emerged as one of the most influential forces shaping contemporary literature, significantly expanding both its scope and its audience. In an increasingly interconnected world, the boundaries that once confined literary production to specific regions or nations have become more fluid. Writers today are no longer limited to local contexts; instead, they engage with global themes such as migration, displacement, cultural identity, transnational experiences, and the effects of economic and political interdependence. As a result, literature has evolved into a more inclusive and diverse space where multiple voices and perspectives coexist and interact.

One of the most notable outcomes of globalization is the rise of cross-cultural narratives. Contemporary authors often draw upon diverse cultural influences, blending traditions, languages, and storytelling techniques to create works that resonate with a global audience. This has led to the emergence of hybrid literary forms that reflect the complexities of modern identity in a globalized world. Writers who live between cultures or belong to diasporic communities frequently explore themes of belonging, alienation, and cultural negotiation, thereby enriching the literary landscape with nuanced and multifaceted representations of human experience.

The role of translation in this process cannot be overstated. Translations have made it possible for literary works to travel beyond their original linguistic and cultural boundaries, allowing readers to

access stories from different parts of the world. In addition, the rise of digital publishing and online platforms has further enhanced the accessibility and dissemination of literature. E-books, online journals, blogs, and social media have transformed the way literature is produced, distributed, and consumed. These technological advancements have democratized literary access, enabling both established and emerging writers to reach international readerships with relative ease.

However, the impact of globalization on literature is not without its challenges. One of the primary concerns is the risk of cultural homogenization, where local and indigenous literary traditions may be overshadowed by dominant global cultures, particularly those associated with widely spoken languages. The increasing dominance of certain languages, such as English, in global literary markets can lead to the marginalization of regional languages and voices. This raises important questions about representation, authenticity, and cultural preservation.

Digital Age and New Literary Forms

The rise of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the production, distribution, and consumption of literature, giving birth to new literary forms and reshaping the relationship between writers and readers. In the contemporary era, literature is no longer confined to printed books; instead, it exists across a wide range of digital formats such as e-books, blogs, online journals, social media writing, podcasts, and interactive storytelling platforms. These developments have not only expanded the definition of literature but have also made it more dynamic, immediate, and accessible. One of the most significant changes brought about by the digital age is the participatory nature of literature. Unlike traditional print culture, where communication between author and reader was largely one-directional, digital platforms allow for direct interaction and engagement. Writers can share their work instantly with a global audience, receive feedback in real time, and even modify their content based on reader responses. Similarly, readers are no longer passive consumers; they actively participate in discussions, interpretations, and even the creation of literary content through comments, reviews, and collaborative writing platforms. Interactive storytelling is another important feature of digital literature. In such formats, readers may influence the direction of the narrative, making the reading experience more immersive and personalized. This shift challenges traditional narrative structures and redefines the role of authorship, as storytelling becomes a shared process rather than an individual endeavor.

Furthermore, the digital revolution has democratized literary production by lowering barriers to entry. Aspiring writers who may not have had access to traditional publishing avenues can now publish their work independently and reach a wide audience. This has led to a proliferation of diverse voices and experimental forms of expression, enriching the literary landscape.

However, these changes also raise important concerns. The ease of publication has led to questions about the quality and credibility of literary content. Without rigorous editorial processes, the distinction between well-crafted literature and unrefined writing can become blurred. Additionally, the concept of authorship is evolving, as collaborative and digitally mediated forms of writing challenge the traditional idea of the author as a singular creative authority. Issues of authenticity, originality, and intellectual property have become increasingly complex in this digital environment.

Literature and Identity Formation

In the contemporary era, literature plays a vital role in shaping, expressing, and negotiating individual as well as collective identities. As societies become more diverse and interconnected, questions of identity—related to gender, ethnicity, class, nationality, and culture—have gained increasing prominence in literary discourse. Writers use literature as a means to explore these complex dimensions of identity, offering insights into how individuals perceive themselves and their place within society.

Modern literary works often depict characters who grapple with issues of belonging, self-definition, and cultural conflict. In a globalized world, many individuals experience hybrid identities, influenced by multiple cultural backgrounds and social environments. Literature captures these experiences by portraying the struggles and negotiations involved in constructing identity in a rapidly changing context. Through such narratives, readers gain a deeper understanding of the challenges associated with identity formation, including marginalization, displacement, and cultural assimilation.

Moreover, literature serves as a powerful platform for underrepresented and marginalized groups to express their voices and assert their identities. Historically, many communities were excluded from mainstream literary traditions, resulting in limited representation of their experiences. Contemporary literature seeks to address this imbalance by amplifying diverse perspectives and challenging stereotypes. Writers from marginalized backgrounds bring authenticity

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and depth to their narratives, highlighting issues such as discrimination, social exclusion, and cultural resilience.

In addition to representing identity, literature also contributes to its formation. By engaging with literary texts, readers are exposed to different viewpoints and experiences, which can influence their own understanding of self and society. Literature fosters empathy and encourages individuals to reflect on their beliefs, values, and assumptions. In this way, it plays an important role in shaping social consciousness and promoting inclusivity.

Furthermore, literature acts as a space for cultural preservation and transformation. It documents traditions, languages, and histories while also adapting to contemporary realities. This dual function ensures that cultural identities are both maintained and reimagined in response to changing social conditions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the relationship between literature and society remains as vital as ever, though it has evolved significantly in the contemporary context. Literature continues to reflect social realities while also acting as a catalyst for critical thinking and social transformation. It provides a space for dialogue, resistance, and creativity, enabling individuals to engage with complex issues and diverse perspectives.

Despite the challenges posed by globalization and digitalization, literature retains its fundamental role as a medium of human expression and cultural reflection. Its ability to adapt to changing times ensures its continued relevance in shaping and understanding society. Therefore, literature must be valued not only as an artistic form but also as a powerful instrument of social awareness and change.

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Tourism Marketing: Planning Strategies and Development

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Abstract

Development of the tourist sector is a major contributor to the work of the construction industry in many developing countries. This paper is concerned with one important aspect of tourist development planning. Planning is designed to link an organisation's goals and resources to its marketing opportunities. This may result in making the best use of its resources. As the marketing environment is subject to constant change, the failure to develop a strategic marketing plan, which responds to that change, may result in collapse of an organisation. This approach focuses its attention on the development of a tourism marketing planning model, which might be very useful for tourism administrators in a country like Libya. This model consists of a number of major stages. The major consideration is that the plan designed should be comprehensive and integrated to assure that the basic objectives of the organisation are achieved.

Keywords: Development, Marketing, Planning, Strategies, Tourism,

Introduction

Currently tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. For many countries, tourism represents a significant potential for future development as well as offering diversification for national economies. In addition, sections in society are affected in one way or another by this fast growing and important industry.

It plays an important role in providing jobs in places, where there are limited job opportunities.

Moreover, money generated from tourism can be used to improve the local infrastructure, which requires the active involvement of the

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construction industry and other related sectors. Investment in fixed assets provided by construction work cannot be removed from the country. For example, as cited by Eccles (1995), tourism in southern Italy has been used as a development tool to improve public infrastructure rather than manufacturing.¹

After covering each stage in the marketing plan, promotional activities could be commenced. Also, the marketing plan has to be comprehensive and integrated into the nation's socio-economic and political policies as well as the natural and built environment and socio-cultural traditions.

In many developing countries where infrastructure represents a major problem, many tourism market segments cannot be targeted unless the requisition for these kind of market segments can be offered. As a result, the revenue generated from a specific market segment could be invested in tourism related services to target more market segments gradually.²

Destination Planning

In order to succeed, the development needs to be carefully planned, so as to extend or harness its life cycle. Typically, problems may arise when tourism development is rushed, taking little or no consideration of the product's life cycle or the environment. In order to sustain product development in the future there needs to be collaboration between both the public and private sectors.

There is a strong relationship between the construction industry and the tourism sector. Sustainable tourism development cannot be achieved without a wider construction revolution. As infrastructure represents a very important role in developing the tourism industry, governments should be more concerned about increasing local and foreign investment in the tourism sector. In Egypt for example, a tax holiday exists for 10 years for the full investment in tourism facilities.

Developing countries of the world are particularly renowned for using tourism as a way to supplement economic output.

The prevailing view is that good economic opportunities exist if more money would be spent on building the infrastructure of the destination as well as devoting more efforts to attracting tourists from local and regional markets.³

The Business Environment

Planning is an essential process to identify goals, resources, and existing opportunities for the organisation. In addition, planning is

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needed to meet short and long-term objectives. In the short term, planning is required to identify where a company is now, and where it will be next week. The money, which will flow into the organisation may not be easily predictable. Thus, it will be impossible to predict whether funds will be adequate to meet the organisation's running costs.

The marketing plan determines what needs to be sold in a given period, at a given price, and how this is to be achieved to meet operating costs. Beyond this, the organisation must plan to achieve its longer-term objectives. A marketing plan should not be isolated. It must be integrated and co-ordinated with the financial plans, organisational plans, purchasing plans and other aspects of the organisation's total activity. By the use of marketing activity, an organisation could be able to identify new product and marketing opportunities, evaluating them and taking action to develop them.⁴

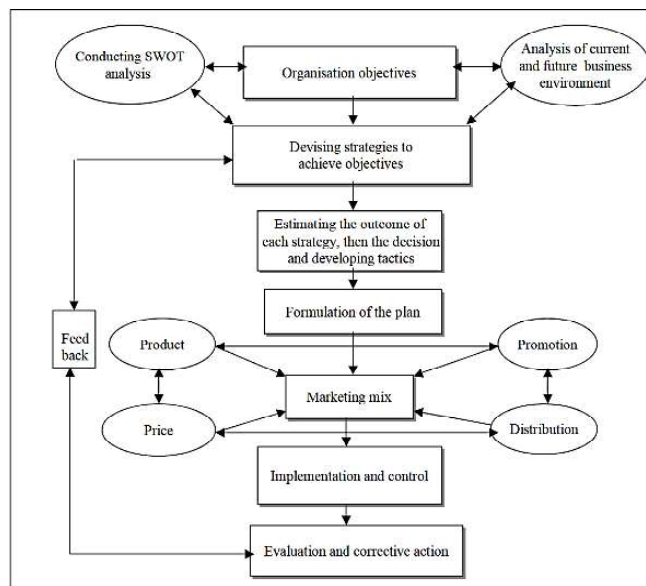


Figure 1 *Tourism marketing planning stages model*

Typically, the setting-up of a marketing plan, should be a balance between two different dimensions, establishing rigid bureaucratic guidelines and a dependency upon entrepreneurial 'flair'.

Planning models have to be flexible to meet and adapt with the changing conditions. New opportunities would be missed by the organisation during the plan's implementation, if it sticks too rigidly to its pre-established plans. For example, the failure of a specialist

tour operator to reach the target market may result in turning to a new market, which may have been considered before. In other words, drawing up another alternative in any plan may be considered to be very important to allow flexibility, especially, when the current plan has faced some unexpected circumstances during implementation stage. On the other hand, if an organisation were to avoid or even ignore its plan, it may result in a danger of heading off in a number of different directions, not only disrupting the organisation's overall planning, but also might be over-stretching its resources.⁵

The applicability of the marketing planning model, in a dynamic market place depends on its flexibility and adaptability to market changes. Marketing decision-making activities, must be compatible with the organisation's resources constraints and objectives.

For example, a tour operator, to achieve an increase in the return on capital invested, might choose to raise prices, to find ways to reduce costs, to seek higher productivity from present resources, to push for increased sales to present markets served or to introduce a product to new markets. Any of these will depend upon the analysis of the current market situation in which the company is operating. Moreover, an understanding of the current and future business environment is an essential prerequisite for planning.⁶

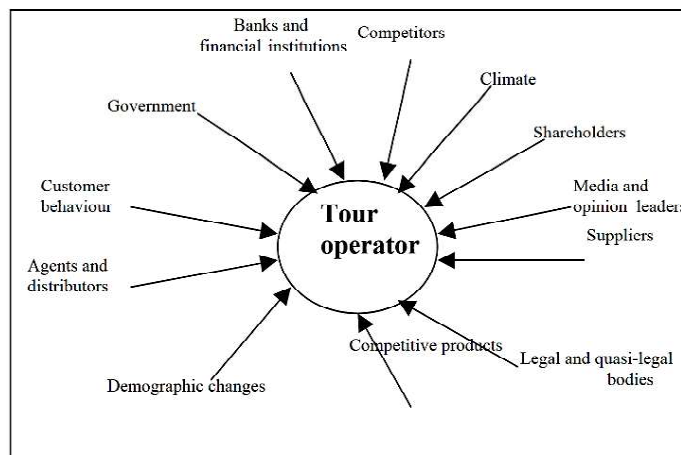


Fig. 2 The business environment of a tour operator (Holloway and Robinson, 1995)

According to Briggs (2001), for a current situation an overview should be taken for three main areas: product, current markets and trends, which might affect the business.

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Most tourism products are made up of several components, which can be quite complicated. Selling experiences and benefits rather than features, is the key to success. In addition, for the future, customer research should be conducted to find out what kind of modifications will be needed for a product to meet customer needs and wants.

According to Font and Ahjem (1999), developing a new tourism related product or service, requires intensified efforts at the initial stages in order to gain a proportion of the market share and then to maintain this position in the medium to long run. For example, a country like Libya that views tourism as an economic alternative for gaining economic growth should make investment as easy as possible for prospective investors. Consequently, this could lead to an increase in the tourism market share and be an ability to compete more effectively.⁷

Typically, new destinations are needed to meet tourists' requirements and monitor changes in consumer motivations and satisfaction with the product in order to keep it up-to-date. For instance, Libya is one of the countries, which is bidding to host the 2010 Football World Cup. For Libya to compete more effectively, a huge budget has to be devoted to improving infrastructure and establishing a number of new hotels and other tourism related services to meet these specific market requirements. Therefore, the need for promotional and marketing activities becomes essential. The Commonwealth Games, which were hosted by Manchester in 2002, generated considerable construction activity both in terms of new construction work and refurbishment of facilities. From that, it is obvious that tourism might be used as a tool for improving the infrastructure of a destination, which requires the involvement of various parties under government guidance.

For current markets, it is very essential to have an idea about who comes to visit an area or attractions. Typically, it is easier to attract more of the same type of people than to reach completely new markets. This is due to their familiarity with the product, which they already know.

There are a number of general trends, which need to be considered in the context of their impact on the business. Some of those trends are: the state of the economy, economic and political changes overseas, published survey and research material on growing or diminishing markets, technological developments, changes in leisure activities and increasing tendencies towards independent travel, increases in the number of short break holiday takers or increased demand for special interest holidays.⁸

Objectives Strategies and Tactics

According to Lumsdon (1997), objectives refer to more specific goals or targets, which an organisation wishes to achieve within a given timescale.

Holloway and Robinson (1995) state that the objectives likely to be sought by any organisation will include:

- Achieving a certain level of sales growth within a given period of time.
- Increasing the profitability of the organisation by a given percentage within an agreed time scale.
- Obtaining a given percentage share of the market within a given period of time (new product) or within the period (existing product).
- Reducing business risk by diversifying the product range.
- Obtaining a measured increase in the return on capital employed by the company.

Lumsdon (1997), also states that strategy refers to how an organisation might achieve such objectives. Otherwise, strategy can be based on inaccurate or out-dated information, which may lead to disaster in a highly competitive marketplace.

Tactics follow from the strategic framework. Tactics can be distinguished from strategies by their short-term, narrow-focused nature and greater specificity in level of detail.⁹

The Marketing Mix

The concept of the marketing mix is one of the most important in marketing.

It provides the marketing manager with the techniques to optimise his budgetary expenditure. Moreover, it determines how the marketing budget is allocated, and forms the foundation of the marketing plan's strategy.

Marketing tools can be grouped together into four categories: product, price, place and promotion. There are several ways in which a marketing manager can decide to distribute the budget between these tools. Expenditure on tools varies from one to another. For promotion and price, expenditure can be changed at very short notice while, new product development and channels of distribution are likely to take much longer to alter. Any plan, which a company introduces, must be subject to control. In order to avoid over-budget expenditure on control, the performance of each element in the plan should be continually monitored to ensure the plan is on target.

Strategy Frameworks

There are a number of strategic frameworks adopted by organisations in tourism

Table. 1 Strategic framework

Strategy	Aim	Focus
Market leader	New product offerings, diversify services, innovation, wide distribution channels, market led, flexibility, and defensive.	Emphasis on market expansion and market share
Market follower	Well resourced, competitive prices, service quality, flexibility, and innovative.	Building market share and strong brand.
Market challenger	Low risk strategy, price follower, inadequate resource base to challenge, complementary offerings.	Maintain market share, some degree of differentiation, learning from market leaders.
Niche marketer	Small scale, specialist market offerings.	Segmented market specialist offering, niche marketing.

Marketing Leader Strategy

In order for this strategy to be crafted, major skill and determination are required. To dominate in terms of volume and value of sales or bookings is not an easy job. Such power allows the company to establish benchmarks or standards in the market to make it difficult for competitors to remain in the market. A typical marketing audit reviews the company's products in comparison with competitors' volumes, appeal to market sectors and their contribution to the organisation's revenue and costs.

Consequently, this may assist in decision-taking to allow for the organization to construct the business plan over the next period. The traditional starting point for a marketing plan is a diagnosis of an organisation's current market performance. In addition, other factors may be considered to be significant, such as changes to relevant legislation, or new conditions in the economy. Diagnosis provides a detailed platform for prognosis of the fore-casting of future trends for each of the market sectors of interest to the organisation.

Regarding this strategy, the company can develop a policy of either leadership or product differentiation. In this way a company may avoid the danger of trying to be the leader in everything but excelling in none.

In this strategy, diversification is particularly important, when the organization spreads its risk across a number of markets, and sees the opportunity of purchasing a brand or company. The Bass purchase of the American Holiday Inn chain is an example of diversification.

Laws (1991) emphasised that advertising is one of the most important ways of differentiating services and therefore creates and then reinforces significant barriers against companies entering a market. Any newcomer has to buy exposure to overcome established companies' awareness and brand loyalty.¹⁰

Follower Strategy

If the company did not achieve success in such a short term to become market leader, the company could use this framework, to allow it to maintain a strong position in the market close to the leader. Thus, the company will hold a large market share and will adopt, as a matter of course, a similar strategic direction to the market leader. The strategy is dependent on intensive competitor intelligence, flexibility and speedily executed tactical campaigns. The ultimate goal will be to become a challenger to the market leader when market conditions permit.

This kind of strategy can be adopted to specialise in certain kinds of products, which are not provided by its competitors. It can also focus on quality, justifying a higher price than the large competitors, by offering improved value. As an example of this strategy, major hotel chains have identified a steady rise in the number of business women to whom they are catering, they have responded by providing facilities to meet their needs including more feminine décor, cosmetic mirrors, hairdryers, etc.

In 1994, Virgin Atlantic Airways introduced Arcadia, a personal in-flight entertainment centre featuring films, cartoons, computer games and a sky map depicting the route with graphical flight information.¹¹

Challenger Dstrategy

This is a framework used when the company is not in a position to follow a market leaders strategy or follower strategy, due to resource limitations. The use of this strategy is to maintain a company's position in the market place by copying the strategy of the market leader in a diluted format. The company will be slower to respond to the market changes and not be innovative. However, the company might be capable of staying within an outer zone of competition. The emphasis of the strategy lies in copying the successful formula of market leaders in

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order to remain in the market. For example, Virgin airlines, is trying to copy the strategy of other renowned airlines such as BA.

Time and money can be saved, by keeping a keen eye on market leaders' activities, learning by their success and failures. Finding a marketing leader's advantages means learning and competing more effectively. Whenever possible tour operators need to see the marketing leader's brochures and know what sort of products are on offer.

It will be very helpful, if conscious efforts can be made to carry out a fairly formal analysis every few months, jotting down findings to decide how the information can be used, analysing their prices, their welcome for visitors, facilities and promotional activities.¹²

Niche Marketing Strategy

This is adopted when a company or an organisation appreciates that what it has to offer serves a limited number of market segments, or conversely that there is a limited market which can be readily served. The assumption lies in the fact that there will be limited competition.

These companies can operate within niche markets, which are too small to attract market leaders. Briggs, (2001) suggested that a focused approach is particularly suitable for those who wish to develop closer and more direct relationships with their clients.

As an example, Preserve Commercial Confidentiality Hotel in Scotland is a three-star hotel with a wide range of leisure facilities and has an excellent reputation. It is open for only part of the year, from April to the end of October.

Although, the hotel is profitable, it wishes to maximise occupancy levels within a relatively short season. There is increased competition from other hotels in the area, including some of the newer budget-style operations.

A SWOT analysis showed that the hotel already had a unique sales proposition, which wasn't fully promoted. The hotel took three important steps for its niche market, developed a range of short breaks for children and adults, reprinted new brochures, which were aimed at children, focusing on the wide range of children's facilities, and developed a programme of public relations activities to the profile of the hotel.

The hotel has been successful in promoting itself to a wide range of special-interest publications. Moreover, other activities have included using vouchers to stimulate word-of-mouth recommendations and to encourage guests to return at off-peak periods. Direct mail has been

particularly effective, especially with the introduction of the separate children's brochure.¹³

Conclusion

Tourism is interdependent sector. Construction is a major aspect which may play an important role in improving tourism potential needed for a destination to cope with an influx of tourists. A country like Libya, which entered the market only recently, should invest heavily in the construction industry in order to prepare to meet the international tourist market requirements. Tourism investment legislation should be treated as a special case in order to be more attractive to both local and foreign companies.

Marketing tourism has been undervalued by those who are responsible for drawing up tourism policies, which as a result leads to misunderstanding of the nature and the value of the marketing discipline for the travel and tourism industry.

Planning within tourism marketing is the only possible way to assist achieving organisational objectives and growth as well as improving performance in a fast and ongoing changing market. A need, therefore, exists to analyse carefully the many variables affecting tourism marketing. Marketing plans should not be isolated. Modifications and flexibility are essential to meet and adapt the changing of the market conditions.

Tourism development is seen as a way of improving a country's economy and social well-being. Tourism can be a tool to motivate governments to inject more money in improving infrastructure, especially in the initial stage of tourism development. Many developing countries cannot afford to finance construction internally. Thus, the need for cooperation between public, private and foreign investment becomes essential.

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Russia–Ukraine War and U.S.–Iran Conflict: Shifts in Global Power Balance

Dr. Gautam Kumar

Abstract

The contemporary international system is undergoing a profound and multidimensional transformation, driven largely by major geopolitical conflicts such as the Russia–Ukraine war and the ongoing tensions between the United States and Iran. These conflicts have not only intensified regional instability but have also generated far-reaching consequences that extend across political, economic, and security domains at the global level. The Russia–Ukraine war, as a manifestation of renewed great power rivalry, has challenged the post-Cold War European security architecture, disrupted global supply chains, and heightened military tensions between Russia and Western powers. Simultaneously, the prolonged confrontation between the United States and Iran, rooted in ideological divergence and strategic competition, has continued to destabilize the Middle East through proxy conflicts, nuclear tensions, and recurring crises in energy markets.

Together, these conflicts have significantly reshaped the global distribution of power by exposing the limitations of the existing unipolar order dominated by the United States. The ability of regional and global actors such as Russia, Iran, and China to resist Western pressure and assert their strategic interests reflects the gradual erosion of American hegemony. At the same time, the resurgence of strategic alliances and counter-alliances—such as the strengthening of NATO on one side and the deepening cooperation between Russia, Iran, and China on the other—illustrates the emergence of a more fragmented and competitive international system.

In addition, these conflicts have redefined the role of energy politics as a central determinant of global power. The disruption of energy supplies, fluctuations in oil and gas prices, and the strategic use of

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energy resources as geopolitical tools have underscored the interconnectedness of security and economic interests. Furthermore, advancements in military technologies, including cyber warfare, drone systems, and precision weaponry, have transformed the nature of modern conflict, making warfare more complex and multidimensional.

This article critically examines the ways in which these conflicts have altered global alliances, economic structures, energy dynamics, military strategies, and diplomatic engagements. It also highlights the growing role of emerging powers and the Global South, which are increasingly adopting strategies of multi-alignment to safeguard their national interests in an uncertain international environment. Ultimately, the article argues that the combined effects of these conflicts have accelerated the transition from a unipolar to a multipolar world order, characterized by competing centers of power, strategic realignments, weakened global governance institutions, and heightened geopolitical uncertainty.

Keywords: Global Power Balance, Multipolarity, Russia–Ukraine War, U.S.–Iran Conflict, Geopolitics, Energy Security, Strategic Alliances

Introduction

The nature of international politics has historically been shaped by a complex interplay of conflict, cooperation, and the distribution of power among states. From the classical balance-of-power system in Europe to the bipolar rivalry of the Cold War, global politics has continuously evolved in response to shifting geopolitical realities. The end of the Cold War in 1991 marked a critical turning point, ushering in a unipolar world order dominated by the United States. During this period, the United States enjoyed unprecedented military superiority, economic strength, and ideological influence, enabling it to shape global institutions, norms, and policies in accordance with its strategic interests. Liberal democracy, free-market capitalism, and multilateral governance emerged as defining features of this era.

However, the durability of this unipolar order has increasingly come under question over the past two decades. The relative decline of U.S. dominance, combined with the rise of new and resurgent powers such as China and Russia, has contributed to a gradual yet discernible shift toward a more multipolar and contested international system. This transformation has been further accelerated by growing dissatisfaction among non-Western states with the existing global order, which many perceive as unequal and disproportionately influenced by Western

interests. As a result, the contemporary international system is characterized by heightened geopolitical competition, strategic uncertainty, and the re-emergence of power politics.

Among the most significant developments contributing to this transformation are the Russia–Ukraine war and the ongoing tensions between the United States and Iran. These conflicts are not merely regional crises; rather, they are emblematic of deeper structural changes in global politics. The Russia–Ukraine war, which escalated into a full-scale conflict in 2022, represents the most serious military confrontation in Europe since World War II. It reflects the resurgence of great power rivalry, particularly between Russia and the Western alliance led by the United States and NATO. The conflict underscores competing visions of regional security, sovereignty, and geopolitical influence, while also exposing the fragility of the post-Cold War European security architecture.

In parallel, the long-standing conflict between the United States and Iran highlights the enduring nature of ideological and geopolitical struggles in the Middle East. Rooted in the legacy of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, this conflict has evolved into a multifaceted confrontation involving economic sanctions, nuclear negotiations, proxy warfare, and regional power competition. The U.S.–Iran rivalry not only destabilizes the Middle East but also has broader implications for global energy security, international diplomacy, and the balance of power in the wider international system. Taken together, these conflicts illustrate how regional disputes can have global repercussions in an increasingly interconnected world. They have intensified geopolitical polarization, reshaped strategic alliances, and disrupted economic and energy networks. Furthermore, they have highlighted the limitations of existing international institutions in managing major conflicts and maintaining global stability.

This article seeks to analyze how the Russia–Ukraine war and the U.S.–Iran conflict have influenced the global balance of power in the 21st century. It examines the transformation of alliances and partnerships, the centrality of energy politics in shaping strategic decisions, the role of emerging powers and the Global South, and the challenges faced by international institutions such as the United Nations. By integrating these dimensions, the study aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the evolving dynamics of contemporary international relations. Ultimately, the article argues that these conflicts are accelerating the transition from a unipolar to a multipolar world order. This emerging order is characterized by

multiple centers of power, shifting alliances, and increasing competition among major actors. While this transformation presents significant risks, including the potential for further conflict and instability, it also creates opportunities for new forms of cooperation and a more balanced global governance structure.

Historical Background of the Conflicts

The Russia–Ukraine War - The roots of the Russia–Ukraine conflict lie in the complex historical, political, and cultural ties that developed during and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine emerged as an independent and sovereign state, inheriting significant strategic assets, including a large industrial base, agricultural resources, and, initially, the world’s third-largest nuclear arsenal. Ukraine’s decision to relinquish its nuclear weapons under the Budapest Memorandum in exchange for security assurances from Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom was seen as a milestone in nuclear non-proliferation. However, the subsequent deterioration of relations raised questions about the effectiveness of such guarantees.

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, Ukraine pursued a delicate balancing act between maintaining close ties with Russia and seeking integration with Western institutions such as NATO and the European Union. This dual orientation created persistent tensions, particularly as Russia viewed NATO’s eastward expansion as a direct threat to its security and sphere of influence. These tensions intensified during key political events such as the Orange Revolution, which signaled Ukraine’s growing inclination toward democratic reforms and Western alignment. A decisive turning point occurred in 2013–2014 during the Euromaidan protests, when mass demonstrations erupted in response to the Ukrainian government’s decision to suspend an association agreement with the European Union. The protests led to the ousting of President Viktor Yanukovich and the establishment of a pro-Western government. In response, Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 through a controversial referendum that was widely condemned by the international community as a violation of international law and Ukrainian sovereignty. This annexation marked the first forcible redrawing of European borders since World War II and triggered a series of economic sanctions by Western countries against Russia.

Simultaneously, conflict erupted in eastern Ukraine, particularly in the Donbas region, where Russian-backed separatists declared independence in areas such as Donetsk and Luhansk. Despite attempts

at conflict resolution through agreements like the Minsk Agreements, the situation remained unstable, characterized by intermittent fighting, ceasefire violations, and a protracted stalemate. This phase of the conflict represented a form of “hybrid warfare,” involving a combination of conventional military operations, irregular forces, cyberattacks, and information warfare.

The conflict escalated dramatically on February 24, 2022, when Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Russian leadership justified the invasion on the grounds of protecting Russian-speaking populations, preventing Ukraine’s potential NATO membership, and addressing perceived security threats posed by Western military expansion. However, many scholars and analysts interpret the invasion as part of a broader strategy by Russia to reassert its dominance in the post-Soviet space and challenge the existing Western-led international order. The 2022 invasion transformed the conflict into one of the most significant geopolitical crises of the 21st century. It led to widespread destruction of infrastructure, significant loss of life, and a massive humanitarian crisis, with millions of Ukrainians displaced internally and externally. The war also prompted an unprecedented response from Western countries, including extensive economic sanctions, military aid to Ukraine, and efforts to diplomatically isolate Russia. Moreover, the conflict has had far-reaching global implications. It has disrupted global supply chains, particularly in energy, food, and fertilizer markets, given the strategic importance of both Russia and Ukraine as major exporters. It has also revitalized NATO, strengthened transatlantic cooperation, and heightened geopolitical polarization between Western and non-Western powers. In a broader sense, the Russia–Ukraine war represents more than a territorial dispute; it is a manifestation of competing geopolitical visions, historical grievances, and power struggles that continue to shape the evolving international order.

The U.S.–Iran Conflict - The conflict between the United States and Iran is one of the most enduring and complex rivalries in contemporary international politics, shaped by a combination of historical grievances, ideological differences, and strategic competition. Its modern origins can be traced to the Iranian Revolution, which resulted in the overthrow of the pro-Western monarchy led by Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and the establishment of an Islamic Republic under Ayatollah Khomeini. This transformation fundamentally altered Iran’s foreign policy orientation, replacing a close alliance with the United States with a posture of resistance against Western influence,

particularly American political and cultural dominance. The immediate aftermath of the revolution further deepened hostility, most notably during the Iran Hostage Crisis, when Iranian students seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and held American diplomats hostage for 444 days. This incident not only severed diplomatic relations between the two countries but also entrenched mutual mistrust and antagonism that continues to define their interactions. Over the subsequent decades, the U.S.–Iran relationship has been characterized by recurring cycles of tension and limited engagement. A central issue in this conflict has been Iran’s nuclear program, which the United States and its allies have long suspected of having potential military dimensions, despite Iran’s insistence that it is intended for peaceful purposes. In response, the United States has imposed a series of economic sanctions aimed at restricting Iran’s access to global markets and curbing its nuclear ambitions. These sanctions have had significant economic consequences for Iran, affecting its oil exports, currency stability, and overall economic development.

Another critical dimension of the conflict is Iran’s regional strategy, which involves supporting non-state actors and allied groups across the Middle East. Organizations such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and various militias in Iraq and Syria are often cited by the United States as instruments of Iranian influence. This has contributed to the emergence of a “proxy conflict” dynamic, where the United States and Iran indirectly confront each other in multiple regional theaters, including Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and the Persian Gulf.

Efforts to de-escalate tensions reached a significant milestone with the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015 between Iran and major world powers. The agreement aimed to limit Iran’s nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief, representing a rare instance of diplomatic engagement between Iran and the United States. However, this progress was short-lived. In 2018, the United States unilaterally withdrew from the agreement under the Trump administration and reinstated stringent economic sanctions as part of a “maximum pressure” campaign. This move not only undermined the agreement but also heightened tensions, leading Iran to gradually scale back its compliance with the deal. The period following the U.S. withdrawal witnessed several escalatory incidents that brought the two countries to the brink of open conflict. These included attacks on oil tankers in the Gulf region, strikes on Saudi oil facilities, and the targeted killing of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani by a U.S. drone strike in 2020. Iran’s retaliatory missile strikes on U.S. military bases

in Iraq further demonstrated the volatility of the situation. In addition to military and political tensions, the conflict has significant implications for global energy security. The strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz, through which a substantial portion of the world's oil supply passes, makes the region particularly sensitive to disruptions caused by U.S.–Iran tensions. Any escalation in the conflict has the potential to trigger global economic repercussions, including fluctuations in oil prices and disruptions in trade routes.

Furthermore, the U.S.–Iran conflict is deeply embedded in the broader geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. It intersects with rivalries involving regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and Israel, both of which view Iran as a strategic threat. This has led to shifting alliances and the formation of new security arrangements, often with the United States playing a central role. In a broader analytical context, the U.S.–Iran conflict exemplifies the persistence of ideological confrontation and asymmetric warfare in the modern international system. It highlights the limitations of military and economic coercion in achieving long-term political objectives and underscores the importance of diplomacy in conflict resolution. At the same time, it reflects the challenges faced by global powers in managing regional conflicts that have far-reaching global consequences.

Overall, the U.S.–Iran conflict is not merely a bilateral dispute but a multifaceted geopolitical struggle with significant implications for regional stability, global energy markets, and the evolving balance of power in international politics.

Decline of Unipolarity and Rise of Multipolarity - One of the most profound consequences of the Russia–Ukraine war and the U.S.–Iran conflict is the visible erosion of the unipolar world order that emerged after the end of the Cold War. For nearly three decades, the United States functioned as the principal global hegemon, exercising unparalleled influence over international institutions, security arrangements, and economic systems. However, the cumulative impact of prolonged military engagements, economic challenges, and the rise of alternative centers of power has gradually weakened this dominance.

The Russia–Ukraine war has served as a critical turning point in this transformation. By launching a large-scale military intervention despite strong opposition from Western powers, Russia has demonstrated both its willingness and capability to directly challenge the Western-led international order. Although subjected to extensive economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation, Russia has managed to sustain its military operations and maintain internal political stability.

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This resilience has exposed the limitations of sanctions as a tool of coercion and has encouraged other states to explore alternatives to Western-dominated financial systems, including the use of local currencies and parallel economic frameworks.

Simultaneously, the U.S.–Iran conflict underscores the constraints of American power in a region that has historically been central to its strategic interests. Despite decades of economic sanctions, military presence, and diplomatic pressure, the United States has been unable to decisively curb Iran’s regional influence. Iran’s ability to project power through asymmetric means, including proxy networks and ideological alliances, reflects a broader shift in the nature of power from purely conventional military strength to more diffuse and adaptive forms of influence. Moreover, the rise of China as a global economic and strategic powerhouse further accelerates the transition toward multipolarity. While not directly involved in these conflicts, China has benefited from the weakening of Western cohesion and has positioned itself as an alternative center of economic and diplomatic engagement. Together, these developments indicate that global power is no longer concentrated in a single state but is increasingly distributed among multiple actors with competing interests. This emerging multipolar order is characterized by intensified geopolitical competition, fluid alliances, and strategic uncertainty. Unlike the relatively stable bipolar system of the Cold War, multipolarity introduces greater complexity, as multiple powers interact simultaneously across different regions and issue areas. While this diffusion of power can create opportunities for balance and cooperation, it also increases the risk of miscalculation, conflict escalation, and instability in the international system.

Transformation of Global Alliances - The Russia–Ukraine war and the U.S.–Iran conflict have significantly reconfigured global alliance structures, leading to both consolidation and fragmentation within the international system. One of the most notable developments has been the revitalization of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which had faced questions about its relevance in the post-Cold War era. The war in Ukraine has reinforced NATO’s central role in European security, prompting member states to increase defense spending, enhance military coordination, and expand the alliance’s strategic posture. The accession processes of Finland and Sweden into NATO reflect a significant shift in European security perceptions, as traditionally neutral countries seek collective security guarantees in response to perceived Russian aggression. This expansion not only strengthens NATO militarily but also signals a broader consolidation of Western alliances.

However, this unity is not without internal tensions. European countries remain divided on key issues such as the extent of military assistance to Ukraine, the economic costs of sanctions, and long-term energy security strategies. Differences in national interests, economic dependencies, and domestic political considerations have created subtle fractures within the Western bloc, highlighting the challenges of maintaining cohesive alliances in a multipolar world. On the other side, Russia has actively pursued the strengthening of alternative partnerships, particularly with China and Iran. These relationships are not formal alliances in the traditional sense but are grounded in shared strategic objectives, including resistance to Western dominance and the promotion of a more multipolar international order. Such alignments reflect a shift from rigid alliance systems to more flexible and interest-based partnerships. In the Middle East, the U.S.–Iran conflict has contributed to a significant realignment of regional alliances. Countries such as Saudi Arabia and Israel have strengthened their strategic ties with the United States, driven largely by concerns over Iran’s growing influence and nuclear ambitions. At the same time, Iran has expanded its network of allies and proxy groups across the region, including in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen, thereby enhancing its strategic depth and deterrence capabilities. These evolving alliance patterns illustrate a broader transformation in global politics, where traditional, rigid alliances are increasingly supplemented—or even replaced—by flexible, issue-based coalitions. This trend reflects the complexities of a multipolar system, where states prioritize strategic autonomy and adaptability over long-term commitments.

Energy Politics and Global Economic Impact - Energy has emerged as a central pillar of contemporary geopolitics, and both the Russia–Ukraine war and the U.S.–Iran conflict have underscored its critical role in shaping global power dynamics. The Russia–Ukraine war, in particular, has had a profound impact on global energy markets, exposing vulnerabilities in Europe’s long-standing dependence on Russian natural gas. The disruption of energy supplies following the imposition of sanctions and countermeasures led to sharp increases in energy prices, triggering economic instability and inflationary pressures across multiple regions. In response, European countries have accelerated efforts to diversify their energy sources, investing in alternative suppliers, liquefied natural gas (LNG) infrastructure, and renewable energy technologies. This shift not only reflects immediate security concerns but also indicates a longer-term transformation in

global energy strategies aimed at reducing dependence on geopolitically sensitive regions. Russia, for its part, has adapted by redirecting its energy exports toward emerging markets, particularly China and India. This realignment has allowed Russia to mitigate the economic impact of Western sanctions while simultaneously strengthening its economic ties with non-Western powers. It also highlights the growing importance of alternative economic networks in a multipolar world. The U.S.–Iran conflict similarly plays a critical role in global energy politics. Iran possesses one of the world’s largest reserves of oil and natural gas, but its ability to fully exploit these resources has been constrained by U.S. sanctions. These restrictions have contributed to fluctuations in global oil supply and prices, particularly during periods of heightened tension. Moreover, the strategic significance of the Strait of Hormuz—through which a substantial portion of the world’s oil supply passes—makes the region highly sensitive to geopolitical instability.

These developments underscore the growing interdependence between energy security and geopolitical strategy. States are increasingly recognizing that control over energy resources, supply chains, and transit routes constitutes a key dimension of national power. Consequently, there has been a global push toward energy diversification, strategic reserves, and the development of renewable energy sources as a means of enhancing resilience and reducing vulnerability.

Militarization and Technological Transformation of Warfare - The Russia–Ukraine war and the U.S.–Iran conflict have collectively accelerated the militarization of international politics and transformed the nature of modern warfare. These conflicts illustrate a shift from traditional, large-scale conventional warfare to more complex, hybrid forms of conflict that integrate advanced technologies, information warfare, and asymmetric strategies. The Russia–Ukraine war, in particular, has served as a testing ground for cutting-edge military technologies. The extensive use of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones), precision-guided munitions, satellite intelligence, and cyber capabilities has demonstrated the growing importance of technological superiority in contemporary warfare. Ukraine’s effective utilization of Western-supplied weapons systems, combined with real-time intelligence sharing, has enabled it to resist a numerically superior adversary, highlighting the evolving dynamics of military power. At the same time, Russia has employed a range of hybrid tactics, including cyberattacks on critical infrastructure, disinformation campaigns, and electronic warfare. These methods are designed not only to achieve military objectives but also to undermine public morale, disrupt governance,

and influence international opinion. Such strategies reflect the increasing convergence of military, informational, and psychological dimensions of conflict. The U.S.–Iran conflict further illustrates the growing significance of asymmetric warfare. Unlike conventional state-to-state conflicts, this rivalry is characterized by indirect engagements, proxy warfare, and the strategic use of non-state actors. Iran has developed advanced missile and drone technologies, which it has deployed both directly and through allied groups across the Middle East. These capabilities serve as a form of deterrence, enabling Iran to counterbalance the superior conventional military power of the United States. Additionally, cyber warfare has emerged as a critical domain in both conflicts, with state and non-state actors engaging in cyber espionage, sabotage, and information manipulation. The increasing reliance on digital infrastructure has made cyber capabilities an essential component of national security strategies. Overall, these developments indicate that the future of warfare will be increasingly shaped by technological innovation, hybrid strategies, and the integration of multiple domains, including land, air, sea, space, and cyberspace. This transformation has profound implications for global security, as it lowers the threshold for conflict, complicates deterrence, and increases the potential for rapid escalation.

Impact on the Global South and Emerging Powers - The repercussions of the Russia–Ukraine war and the U.S.–Iran conflict have been particularly severe for countries in the Global South, exposing structural vulnerabilities in developing economies and highlighting their limited capacity to absorb external shocks. Unlike major powers, which possess diversified economic bases and strategic reserves, many developing nations remain highly dependent on imports of energy, food, and essential commodities. As a result, disruptions caused by these conflicts—especially in global supply chains—have led to rising inflation, fiscal imbalances, and increasing socio-economic instability.

One of the most immediate impacts has been the surge in global food and energy prices. Both Russia and Ukraine are key exporters of wheat, fertilizers, and other agricultural commodities. The disruption of supplies from the Black Sea region has significantly affected food-importing countries in Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia, exacerbating food insecurity and heightening the risk of humanitarian crises. Similarly, fluctuations in oil and gas prices, partly driven by sanctions on Russia and tensions involving Iran, have placed additional pressure on energy-importing economies, widening trade deficits and straining public finances. In response to these challenges, major

emerging powers such as India, China, and Brazil have adopted pragmatic and flexible foreign policy approaches. Rather than aligning exclusively with either Western or non-Western blocs, these countries have pursued strategies of “multi-alignment,” engaging simultaneously with multiple centers of power to safeguard their economic and strategic interests. For instance, India has maintained strong defense and energy ties with Russia while deepening its strategic partnership with the United States and other Western countries. Similarly, China has strengthened its economic engagement with both developing nations and Western markets, positioning itself as a key player in global trade and infrastructure development. This trend reflects a broader shift in the agency of the Global South. Countries that were once passive recipients of global power dynamics are increasingly asserting their autonomy and shaping international outcomes. Forums such as BRICS and the G20 have provided platforms for these states to articulate their interests and influence global decision-making processes. The growing economic weight, demographic strength, and diplomatic assertiveness of these nations indicate that they will play an increasingly central role in the evolving international order.

At the same time, the Global South faces a delicate balancing act. While multi-alignment offers flexibility, it also requires careful navigation of competing pressures from major powers. The risk of becoming entangled in great power rivalries remains significant, particularly in regions where geopolitical competition is intensifying. Consequently, the ability of emerging powers to maintain strategic autonomy while contributing to global stability will be a defining feature of the future international system.

Challenges to International Institutions - The Russia–Ukraine war and the U.S.–Iran conflict have exposed deep structural weaknesses in global governance institutions, raising critical questions about their effectiveness, legitimacy, and capacity to manage contemporary geopolitical crises. Among these institutions, the United Nations has faced the most visible challenges, particularly in its role as a guarantor of international peace and security.

A central limitation of the United Nations lies in the structure of its Security Council, where the veto power held by permanent members often leads to paralysis in decision-making. In the case of the Russia–Ukraine war, Russia’s position as a permanent member has effectively prevented the Security Council from taking decisive action, thereby undermining the credibility of the institution. Similarly, divisions among major powers have hindered coordinated responses to the U.S.–

Iran conflict, limiting the scope for diplomatic resolution through multilateral frameworks. Beyond the United Nations, international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have also encountered significant challenges. These organizations have been tasked with addressing the economic fallout of these conflicts, including inflation, debt crises, and disruptions in global trade. However, their responses have often been constrained by limited resources, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and governance structures that disproportionately reflect the interests of advanced economies.

Furthermore, the growing fragmentation of the global order has led to the emergence of parallel institutions and alternative frameworks, particularly among non-Western countries. Initiatives such as the New Development Bank (associated with BRICS) and regional financial arrangements reflect a desire to reduce dependence on Western-dominated institutions and create more inclusive mechanisms of global governance.

The credibility of international institutions has also been affected by perceptions of selectivity and inconsistency in the enforcement of international norms. Critics argue that the application of principles such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, and human rights is often influenced by political considerations, undermining the legitimacy of these institutions in the eyes of many states.

These challenges underscore the urgent need for institutional reform. Proposals include expanding the membership of the Security Council to better reflect contemporary geopolitical realities, revising voting mechanisms to reduce gridlock, and enhancing the representation of developing countries in global financial institutions. Without such reforms, the ability of international institutions to effectively manage conflicts and maintain global stability is likely to remain limited.

Toward a New Global Order - The cumulative impact of the Russia–Ukraine war and the U.S.–Iran conflict points toward the gradual emergence of a new global order characterized by multipolarity, regionalization, and intensified strategic competition. Unlike the relatively stable and hierarchical unipolar system of the post-Cold War era, the emerging order is more decentralized, fluid, and unpredictable. At its core, this new order reflects the diffusion of power across multiple actors, including established powers, rising states, and influential non-state entities. Major powers such as the United States, China, and Russia will continue to compete for influence across different regions

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and domains, including military, economic, technological, and ideological spheres. This competition is likely to be sustained and multifaceted, encompassing not only traditional security concerns but also issues such as technological dominance, supply chain resilience, and climate governance. Regionalism is expected to play a more prominent role in this evolving system. As global institutions struggle to provide effective solutions, regional organizations and alliances may assume greater responsibility for managing security and economic challenges within their respective areas. This could lead to the emergence of multiple, overlapping spheres of influence, each shaped by the interests and capabilities of regional powers.

For smaller and middle-sized states, the new global order presents both challenges and opportunities. On one hand, increased competition among major powers may create risks of coercion, instability, and conflict. On the other hand, it also provides opportunities for strategic maneuvering, allowing these states to leverage their positions and extract benefits from competing powers. The concept of “strategic autonomy” is therefore likely to become increasingly important in the foreign policy calculations of many countries. At the same time, the persistence of global challenges such as climate change, pandemics, and economic inequality underscores the continued need for international cooperation. While geopolitical rivalry may dominate the landscape, it is unlikely to completely displace the necessity for collaborative efforts in addressing shared problems. The future international system will therefore be characterized by a complex interplay of competition and cooperation.

Conclusion

The Russia–Ukraine war and the U.S.–Iran conflict have emerged as defining developments in the transformation of the contemporary international system. Far from being isolated or purely regional crises, these conflicts have fundamentally altered the global balance of power and accelerated structural changes that were already underway. Most notably, they have hastened the decline of the post-Cold War unipolar order dominated by the United States and contributed to the gradual emergence of a more complex and contested multipolar world. These conflicts have reshaped global alliances and strategic alignments in significant ways. The revitalization of Western security cooperation, particularly through organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, contrasts with the simultaneous strengthening of alternative partnerships among non-Western powers. At the same time,

regional dynamics—especially in Europe and the Middle East—have been reconfigured, with states reassessing their security priorities and forging new alliances based on shifting threat perceptions. This evolving landscape reflects a broader transition from rigid, bloc-based alignments to more flexible and interest-driven partnerships.

Economically, the repercussions of these conflicts have been far-reaching. Disruptions in global supply chains, volatility in energy markets, and rising inflation have underscored the deep interconnectedness of the global economy. The strategic use of sanctions, trade restrictions, and energy resources as instruments of geopolitical competition has further blurred the line between economic policy and security strategy. These developments have compelled states to rethink their economic dependencies, diversify their trade and energy partnerships, and enhance their resilience against external shocks.

In the realm of security, both conflicts have demonstrated the evolving nature of warfare in the 21st century. The integration of advanced technologies—such as cyber capabilities, unmanned systems, and information warfare—has transformed the conduct of military operations, making conflicts more complex, multidimensional, and difficult to contain. At the same time, the prominence of asymmetric strategies and proxy engagements highlights the limitations of conventional military power in achieving decisive outcomes. Importantly, these transformations have created both challenges and opportunities for emerging powers and the Global South. Countries such as India, China, and Brazil are increasingly asserting their influence by adopting strategies of multi-alignment and strategic autonomy. Their growing economic and political weight positions them as key actors in shaping the norms, institutions, and practices of the evolving international order. However, their ability to navigate great power competition without becoming entangled in major conflicts will remain a critical challenge. Looking ahead, the emerging global order is likely to be characterized by multipolarity, strategic competition, and heightened uncertainty. While this transition increases the risk of instability and conflict, it also offers opportunities for the development of a more balanced and inclusive system of global governance. The interplay between competition and cooperation will be a defining feature of this new order, as states seek to protect their interests while addressing shared global challenges such as climate change, economic inequality, and security threats.

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Situating Djibouti in India's Western Indian Ocean Strategy

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Abstract

The Western Indian Ocean has emerged as a critical arena in contemporary maritime geopolitics, shaped by the convergence of strategic chokepoints, intensifying great power competition, and growing concerns over maritime insecurity. Situated at the entrance of the Red Sea and adjacent to vital Sea Lines of Communication, Djibouti occupies a distinctive position as a geostrategic pivot linking the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea, and the wider Indian Ocean. This article argues that India's engagement with Djibouti reflects a transition from symbolic diplomatic engagement toward a functional maritime security framework rooted in strategic access, operational flexibility, and cooperative security. Moving beyond conventional interpretations of influence based solely on military presence, the article conceptualizes Djibouti as an enabling strategic node that mitigates India's structural vulnerabilities in the Western Indian Ocean. Through an analysis of chokepoint geopolitics, India's SAGAR vision, bilateral cooperation, anti-piracy operations, and the challenges of strategic congestion, the article demonstrates that integrating Djibouti into India's maritime strategy is essential to securing India's long-term interests and sustaining a resilient maritime order in the region.

Keywords: Western Indian Ocean, Djibouti, India, maritime security, SAGAR, strategic autonomy

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1. Introduction: The Western Indian Ocean as a Strategic Theatre

The Western Indian Ocean has increasingly become central to contemporary geopolitical and maritime security debates emerging as a critical strategic theatre. As a peripheral maritime expanse situated between the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific, commerce, naval strategy, and geopolitical rivalry converge in this region. This transformation indicates towards a necessary reorientation in strategic thinking placing maritime spaces including chokepoints, ports, and oceanic corridors, at the centre of contemporary power politics (Till, 2018).

The elevated significance of the Western Indian Ocean can be attributed to several reasons. Firstly, the region hosts some of the world's most vital Sea Lines of Communication linking Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. A substantial proportion of global maritime commerce and hydrocarbon flows transit through these routes rendering the region indispensable to global trade and energy security. Secondly, the region has become a site where traditional and non-traditional security challenges converge. From piracy and terrorism to great power military presence and emerging geoeconomic competition, the region has become strikingly relevant geopolitically. (Bueger, 2015). Thirdly, at the core of this strategic location lies the Bab El Mandeb Strait which connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden. This narrow passage serves as a critical gateway linking the Indian Ocean to the Suez Canal and Mediterranean region. Its significance lies not merely in the traffic it carries, but also in the vulnerabilities linked with disruption. Instability affecting this corridor can generate consequences extending far beyond the immediate region. Recent crises in the Red Sea especially involving the Houthi rebels have only reinforced the strategic centrality of this maritime chokepoint.

Within this context, Djibouti assumes importance. Despite its small size and limited conventional capabilities, Djibouti has emerged as a state of disproportionate strategic relevance. Its significance lies not in conventional material power, but in positional agency which concerns capacity to cultivate strategic influence through its geopolitical location embedded within critical infrastructures of circulation and security. Therefore, Djibouti can be understood not as a passive object of major power competition in the region, but as an active node within contemporary maritime geopolitics.

For India, this evolving regional landscape carries profound implications. India as a maritime power is increasingly dependent upon secure Sea Lines of Communication for trade and energy imports. In this context, its security interests increasingly extend into the Western Indian Ocean. India's maritime outlook has also seen a significant transformation, from a primarily littoral orientation toward a broader strategic conception rooted in maritime connectivity, cooperative security, and sustained regional presence (Brewster, 2014).

The expression of this shift is visible in initiatives such as Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR), which emphasizes maritime cooperation, regional stability, and shared security. Within this broader framework, engagement with strategically situated partners has become increasingly important. Djibouti's significance for India should therefore be situated within this broader evolution of Indian maritime strategy.

India's engagement with Djibouti can be understood as a transition from symbolic diplomacy to a functional maritime security framework. More specifically, Djibouti functions as a strategic safety net for India in the Western Indian Ocean. Safety net encompasses an enabling architecture through which vulnerabilities can be mitigated, operational flexibility can be enhanced, and continuity of presence is sustained under uncertain conditions.

This moves beyond the conventional interpretations where security is primarily understood through alliance building or formal basing. Instead, it suggests that geographically situated partnerships may generate strategic reassurance through distributed access, nodal support, and resilience-oriented cooperation. Strategically located smaller states may exercise relevance through their embeddedness in critical geopolitical infrastructures. For India, engagement with such a state reflects a broader strategic adaptation to increasingly networked forms of maritime security.

The article proceeds to first examine the geopolitical logic that makes Djibouti a critical gateway in the Western Indian Ocean. It then situates India's engagement within the evolution of its broader maritime strategy, before analysing bilateral security cooperation, operational synergies, and the implications of strategic congestion associated with China's expanding presence. It concludes by assessing what the Djibouti-India relationship reveals about the future of maritime security in the region.

2. The Geopolitical Logic of Djibouti: Gateway to the Bab El Mandeb

The strategic significance of Djibouti in the Western Indian Ocean derives from its geography translated into political and security utility. It functions as a nodal gateway through which broader architectures of maritime order are mediated. The strait connects the Indian Ocean with the Red Sea and, through the Suez Canal, with Mediterranean and European markets. It facilitates major volumes of container traffic, hydrocarbon transport, and naval movement. Disruption within this corridor therefore carries consequences extending far beyond the immediate region which affects global supply chains, energy markets, and maritime security.

Traditional geopolitical analyses view chokepoints primarily as narrow passages that acquire significance when facing blockage or disruption. Contemporary maritime scholarship treats chokepoints as spaces of strategic leverage, where commercial flows, energy routes, naval mobility, and geopolitical dependencies converge (Kaplan, 2010). Seen in this light, the Bab El Mandeb is not simply a vulnerable passage but a strategic assemblage.

For India, this strategic geography has direct implications. India's trade with Europe and substantial portions of its energy imports rely upon routes connected to this corridor. Security in the Bab El Mandeb cannot be pushed to periphery as it is linked to India's wider economic and strategic stability. Djibouti's relevance also emerges from its embeddedness within the wider security architecture surrounding this vulnerability. This is where the concept of positional agency acquires analytical importance. The ability of a state to derive strategic influence from its embeddedness in critical geographical and infrastructural configurations challenges assumptions that agency is reducible to material capabilities alone. It suggests instead that strategic location may itself generate forms of leverage and Djibouti exemplifies this dynamic.

Strategic importance is primarily shaped by concentration of dependencies organized around its location which has enabled it to acquire significance disproportionate to its territorial scale. This is particularly visible in Djibouti's role as host to multiple foreign military facilities. The coexistence of American, French, Chinese, Japanese, and other military presences has often been seen through the lens of great power rivalry. However, viewing Djibouti solely as an arena of competition risks obscuring the agency exercised by Djibouti itself.

Rather than simply being acted upon by larger powers, Djibouti has often leveraged this strategic density or congestion into diplomatic and economic utility, negotiating its relevance through coexistence rather than exclusivity (Styan, 2013). Great power presence also provides a stable, secure environment for international shipping against threats like Somali piracy.

Its significance is further amplified by its continental gateway role for East Africa. The Ethiopia-Djibouti corridor links one of Africa's major inland political economies to global maritime circulation through Djiboutian port infrastructure. Over 95% of Ethiopian trade is dependent on this premier maritime outlet. Key facilities such as the Doraleh Container Terminal, Doraleh Multipurpose Port and Tadjourah and Goubet Ports extend Djibouti's relevance beyond chokepoint geopolitics into infrastructural interdependence. With this "state-of-the-art port complex" including railways, and logistics corridors, the country has transformed into an interface between oceanic and continental spaces. This gives Djibouti a dual strategic function which is as a maritime gateway and continental conduit.

This dual strategic interface of Djibouti as a maritime gateway for global shipping and a continental conduit for landlocked African markets is significant to India's Western Indian Ocean strategy. Djibouti's relevance lies in its infrastructural power through which it operates control or mediation of flows which explains why a materially small state can acquire structural significance in regional security thinking. Djibouti serves as an access to landlocked powerhouses like Ethiopia which forms a major part of India's trade component. By establishing a presence in Djibouti, Indian businesses can gain a stepping stone into the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). With China's first overseas military base located there, India views Djibouti as a critical site for maintaining maritime domain awareness and ensuring a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific". India counters the "continental conduit" monopoly of others by extending Lines of Credit (LOC) for infrastructure projects, such as the Ali Sabieh cement plant, and providing technical training via the ITEC initiative to Djiboutian officials. This is why India's engagement with Djibouti should be understood not as episodic cooperation but as rooted in deeper strategic logic.

Djibouti's nodal centrality also generates vulnerability. The concentration of strategic functions may expose Djibouti to militarization, coercive pressures, and spillovers from regional instability. Yet this duality reinforces the complexity of Djibouti's role

rather than negating it. Its significance lies in this coexistence of leverage and exposure. This becomes especially relevant in an era marked by instability in the Red Sea and intensifying geoeconomic competition. Therefore, strategically situated nodes become more important because they can contribute to resilience under uncertainty. Viewed in this light, Djibouti is a gateway through which maritime security, continental connectivity, and geopolitical interdependence intersect. It is this layered significance that makes Djibouti central to India's expanding maritime security framework.

3. India's Expanding Maritime Security Framework: SAGAR and Beyond

India's contemporary engagement in the Western Indian Ocean reflects a transformation in how India conceptualizes maritime space, strategic responsibility, and regional order. In the post-independence period, India's strategic outlook was shaped predominantly by continental security concerns. Maritime strategy often remained secondary to land-centric calculations associated with border security and continental threats. The Indian Ocean was important but not always conceptualized as a principal theatre through which wider geopolitical interests would be articulated. Over the past two decades, however, this orientation has changed significantly. Several factors have contributed to this shift which includes India's expanding trade dependence, increasing energy imports, concerns over maritime vulnerabilities, and increasing external engagements. This realization has encouraged a strategic transition from coastal defence towards a wider conception of maritime responsibility extending across the broader Indian Ocean region (Brewster, 2014). This broader orientation is critical for understanding India's approach to the Western Indian Ocean and its engagement with Djibouti.

A central articulation of this shift is found in Security and Growth for All in the Region, or SAGAR which was introduced as a guiding framework for India's regional maritime engagement. SAGAR emphasizes cooperation, capacity-building, secure sea lanes, and shared security across the Indian Ocean. It reflects an attempt to frame maritime security in relational rather than narrowly competitive terms (Indian Navy, 2016). Under SAGAR, maritime order is conceived as something sustained through partnerships, institutional cooperation, and resilience of the commons. Such a framework naturally elevates importance of Djibouti as a strategically situated partner whose location and capabilities can contribute to this resilience. This broader strategic

evolution is also reflected in India's growing operational role in the Indian Ocean. Anti-piracy deployments in the Gulf of Aden, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions, evacuation operations, and expanding naval diplomacy have all signalled a widening conception of India's maritime responsibilities. These activities have often been interpreted as evidence of India's aspiration to act as a net security provider in the region. India's approach has often relied less on permanent military infrastructure abroad than on partnerships, distributed access, and flexible engagement. This is important because it differs from classical models of maritime projection associated with overseas bases and formal alliance structures. Security is not generated solely through concentration of force, but through access to enabling infrastructures and partnerships that support continuity of action. Djibouti's relevance becomes intelligible precisely in these terms.

The Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative has reinforced this broadening of India's maritime imagination. Grounded in the SAGAR initiative, it underscores that developments in the Western Indian Ocean cannot be treated as isolated from wider Indo-Pacific dynamics. It encompasses geographical inclusion of western Indian ocean, the Arabian sea and African littoral nations in India's definition of the Indo-Pacific. This matters because it elevates the strategic significance of western maritime nodes within India's larger geopolitical calculus. The concept of strategic autonomy also remains central here. Djibouti aligns strongly with this orientation. Partnership with Djibouti enhances access and strategic flexibility without requiring India to adopt models of formalized overseas basing. This is particularly important in the context of growing strategic congestion in the Western Indian Ocean. As external powers deepen military and geoeconomic presence, India's challenge is not simply to compete symmetrically, but to preserve room for manoeuvre in a crowded strategic environment. Distributed partnerships contribute to precisely that flexibility. India's engagement with Djibouti should be understood as rooted in a broader strategic reorientation toward maritime resilience and cooperative security. That broader reorientation is what makes Djibouti important in more than bilateral terms. It transforms the relationship into part of India's expanding maritime security framework.

4. Djibouti–India Bilateral Security Cooperation

India-Djibouti relations have often received less scholarly attention than India's ties with larger African partners, yet their strategic

relevance has grown steadily. Their diplomatic engagement increasingly has acquired a security-oriented dimension shaped by maritime concerns, regional instability, and converging interests. Hence, it is not reducible to defence cooperation alone. Diplomatically, Djibouti's maritime location has given the relationship a strategic distinctiveness beyond conventional diplomatic ties. India's growing outreach to Africa, reflected in summit diplomacy, development partnerships, and capacity-building initiatives, has created a broader political context within which relations with strategically situated African states have gained prominence (Bhatia, 2022). Within this framework, Djibouti's importance lies partly in how bilateral engagement intersects with India's maritime concerns in the Western Indian Ocean.

Development cooperation has played an important role in this regard. Indian technical assistance, training programmes, and educational cooperation have contributed to a relationship built not solely on hard security considerations but also on longer-term institutional engagement. This matters because such forms of cooperation often provide political trust that can underpin more strategic forms of partnership. This relational dimension is significant. Maritime security partnerships are rarely sustained by strategic calculation alone as they often depend upon wider diplomatic and institutional foundations.

The security dimension of the relationship has become increasingly visible through maritime cooperation. India's sustained anti-piracy deployments in the Gulf of Aden have provided one important context in which Djibouti's strategic value has become evident. Since India's naval presence in anti-piracy operations has often required sustained operational flexibility in the wider region, the presence of a reliable strategic partner situated adjacent to the operational theatre acquires importance. This should not be understood narrowly in terms of logistical convenience. Rather, it illustrates how strategically situated partnerships can support maritime resilience without requiring formal basing arrangements.

India's evacuation operations, particularly Operation Rahat during the Yemen crisis, highlighted the growing overlap between maritime strategy and crisis response. Such operations emphasised the importance of access to proximate enabling nodes in sustaining operational responsiveness under volatile conditions. Djibouti's importance in such context acquires heightened prominence as maritime security in contemporary practice often depends as much on

access, coordination, and support infrastructures as on naval platforms themselves.

Bilateral security cooperation is not limited to defence agreements or military exercises, but includes support for operational continuity under uncertainty. As India has expanded attention to information-sharing and maritime situational awareness in the Indian Ocean, partnerships with strategically located littoral states have assumed greater importance. Djibouti's location near one of the region's most sensitive maritime corridors naturally reinforces its relevance within this emerging security agenda. The idea of Djibouti as a strategic safety net acquires practical expression as it contributes to mitigating vulnerability, supporting flexibility, and sustaining continuity of engagement.

Djibouti matters because it contributes positively to India's capacity to operate in the Western Indian Ocean. This utility is reinforced by the congruence between India's strategic preferences and Djibouti's gateway role. India has generally favoured partnership-based engagement over overtly territorialized military projection. Djibouti's significance aligns closely with this orientation. Although the relationship remains constrained by various factors like asymmetries of capacity, limited institutionalization compared with some of India's other strategic partnerships, and the broader uncertainties in regional security environment, yet, these limitations do not negate its importance. Rather, they underscore that the relationship's significance lies less in formal alliance structures than in flexible enabling cooperation. This flexibility is itself a strategic asset. India's multiple concerns in the Western Indian Ocean such as piracy, maritime instability, crisis contingencies, and geostrategic uncertainty cannot solely be addressed through logic of traditional alliance. They often require distributed support structures and flexible partnerships. Viewed in this light, the India-Djibouti bilateral cooperation forms an important component of India's maritime framework. It transforms strategic logic into practical security cooperation.

5. Strategic Congestion, China and the Future of India's Maritime Security Framework

Assessment of Djibouti's significance for India's maritime strategy remains incomplete without addressing the strategic environment in which the relationship operates. That environment is increasingly shaped by strategic congestion involving coexistence of multiple powers. The overlapping military presences accompanied by geoeconomic

competition, and competing visions of regional order are of equal concerns. Djibouti sits at the centre of this dynamic geopolitical and economic crossroads.

China's expanding presence has become a central element of this environment. The establishment of China's military support facility in Djibouti as a part of the Belt and Road Initiative has intensified debates regarding strategic competition in the Western Indian Ocean (Larsen, 2024). These geoeconomic and infrastructure developments have primarily been interpreted through the rivalry lens where Djibouti is casted as an arena of competitive positioning among major powers. While rivalry is undoubtedly an important part of the strategic picture, interpreting Djibouti solely through zero-sum competition is analytically limiting. It risks obscuring both Djibouti's own agency and the more nuanced ways in which India navigates strategic congestion.

For India, the significance of China's presence lies in how such presence reshapes the strategic environment within which India must preserve access, flexibility, and autonomy. This is where the concept of strategic congestion becomes useful. Congestion does not refer merely to military crowding. It denotes a layered condition in which multiple strategic actors operate in overlapping ways within confined space, generating both constraints and opportunities. Under some conditions, it may also create forms of negotiated coexistence and strategic manoeuvrability.

India's maritime engagement has generally sought to avoid rigid bloc politics while preserving strategic autonomy. Within a congested environment, this often translates into preserving flexibility rather than seeking exclusivity. Djibouti's value for India partly lies in supporting such flexibility. Interpreting India's engagement with Djibouti primarily as response to China risks reducing Indian strategy to reactive behaviour and underestimating the autonomous logic of India's maritime framework. Exclusivity is neither feasible nor necessarily desirable in the region under consideration. Therefore, strategically situated relationships that preserve manoeuvre acquire heightened importance. In this context, Djibouti functions not as an instrument of balancing alone, but as part of an enabling maritime architecture.

China's expanding infrastructural engagement in the region also raises geoeconomic questions that intersect with maritime security. Ports, logistics networks, and connectivity projects increasingly operate not merely as economic assets but as strategic infrastructures. This reinforces the importance of understanding maritime security through

geoeconomic as well as naval lenses. This necessitates India's engagement with Djibouti to extend beyond military-strategic calculations and to be understood in relation to infrastructure politics, supply chain resilience, and emerging forms of maritime connectivity. The Western Indian Ocean is increasingly shaped not only by conventional naval competition but by digital maritime infrastructures, surveillance architectures, and contested technological spaces. These transformations suggest that future strategic relevance may depend as much upon informational and infrastructural resilience as upon physical presence. This has direct implications for India's maritime strategy thereby heightening Djibouti's relevance as preserving strategic autonomy in such an environment may require not only naval capability but deeper integration into distributed regional partnerships capable of supporting resilience under uncertainty.

At the same time, the relationship is not without risks. Strategic congestion can intensify vulnerability as well as utility. Greater rivalry may narrow room for manoeuvre, complicate diplomatic balancing, and heighten exposure to pressures beyond the control of smaller actors. Acknowledging this is important because it prevents the argument from becoming overly deterministic. Djibouti's role as strategic node does not eliminate uncertainty but it helps manage it. China's presence does not simply represent a challenge to India's engagement with Djibouti. It sharpens the strategic rationale for understanding that engagement through resilience, flexibility, and distributed security rather than through competitive binaries alone. This perspective also points toward the future of India's maritime strategy. As the Western Indian Ocean becomes more contested and strategically dense, partnerships with nodal states such as Djibouti are likely to assume greater significance.

6. Conclusion

Situated at the intersection of critical maritime routes, continental connectivity, and intensifying geopolitical competition, Djibouti has emerged as an enabling strategic node within India's expanding maritime security framework. Its relevance lies not in conventional material power, but in the strategic consequences of location translated through partnership, infrastructure, and operational utility. Maritime security in the contemporary maritime order is increasingly shaped through nodal spaces, infrastructural interdependence, and distributed forms of strategic support. Djibouti's significance derives its significance from this growing need for strategically located states. Even as a

‘pocket-sized’ state, it acts as a gateway through which access, resilience, and strategic flexibility in the western Indian ocean is mediated.

The increasing ‘chokepoint geopolitics’ demonstrates how Djibouti’s strategic relevance stems not merely from proximity to a critical corridor, but also from embeddedness in the infrastructures through which that corridor operates. This positional agency helps explain why a materially small state can acquire significance in the strategic calculations of a larger maritime security architecture. India’s engagement with Djibouti also reflects wider doctrinal shifts associated with cooperative security, strategic autonomy, and distributed maritime presence. While equating Djibouti with a strategic safety net for India in the Western Indian Ocean, a form of security support distinct from traditional alliance guarantees or basing models was asserted. It emphasizes support through buffering vulnerability, enhancing flexibility, and sustaining resilience. It suggests that small-state agency in contemporary geopolitics may be exercised not solely through diplomacy or balancing behaviour, but through nodal intermediation and infrastructural significance. It further suggests that maritime security in strategically congested regions may depend not only on major powers, but on the enabling roles of smaller but strategically situated actors. Rather than reducing the Djibouti-India relationship to a reactive response to rivalry with China, the article argued that strategic congestion itself heightens the value of partnerships that preserve access and manoeuvre within contested space. This perspective moves beyond competitive binaries and points toward a more relational understanding of maritime security.

As the Western Indian Ocean becomes increasingly central to questions of trade security, regional order, and geopolitical competition, partnerships with nodal states such as Djibouti are likely to become more important. This is especially true in a regional environment marked by both traditional threats and emerging technological and geoeconomic uncertainties. The future of maritime security in the Western Indian Ocean may depend less on singular hegemonic arrangements than on adaptive and distributed architectures of cooperation. The Djibouti-India relationship offers one example of how such architectures may be taking shape.

The significance of Djibouti for India lies not in size, nor in conventional military power, but in the strategic consequences of nodal position transformed through partnership. That is what makes Djibouti important within India’s expanding maritime security framework, and

why its relevance is likely to endure as the geopolitical landscape of the Western Indian Ocean continues to evolve.

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Economy of Bihar during the Colonial Period

Dr. Alok Kumar Mishra

Abstract

The colonial period in Bihar marked a profound transformation in the region's economic structure, agrarian relations, trade networks, and social organization. Under British rule, Bihar was integrated into the colonial economy primarily as a supplier of raw materials and revenue. The Permanent Settlement of 1793 fundamentally altered land ownership patterns and strengthened the zamindari system, which led to agrarian exploitation and rural indebtedness. Commercialization of agriculture encouraged the cultivation of cash crops such as indigo, opium, and later jute and sugarcane, often at the expense of food security. Colonial economic policies also contributed to the decline of indigenous industries, including textile production and handicrafts, while railways and communication systems were developed mainly to facilitate extraction and export. Famines, poverty, peasant uprisings, and migration became defining features of Bihar's colonial economy. At the same time, colonial rule witnessed the emergence of modern education, limited industrialization, and new political consciousness among peasants and middle classes. This article examines the major features of Bihar's economy during the colonial period, focusing on agrarian structure, revenue systems, trade, industries, famines, labor migration, and peasant resistance. The study argues that colonial economic policies transformed Bihar into a dependent agrarian economy characterized by exploitation, unequal development, and chronic poverty whose effects continued even after independence.

Keywords: Bihar, Colonial Economy, Permanent Settlement, Zamindari, Indigo Cultivation, Peasant Movements, British Rule, Agriculture, Migration, Industrialization

1. Introduction

Bihar has historically been one of the most fertile and culturally significant regions of India. Ancient Bihar was known for prosperous

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agriculture, trade, learning centers such as Nalanda and Vikramshila, and flourishing urban settlements. However, the coming of British colonial rule drastically transformed its economic structure. During the colonial period, Bihar became increasingly integrated into the British imperial economy, where economic policies were designed not for local development but for maximizing revenue and serving British commercial interests.

The colonial state introduced new land revenue systems, promoted cash crop cultivation, and reorganized trade patterns. These changes altered traditional agrarian relations and weakened rural self-sufficiency. The economy of Bihar gradually became dependent on agriculture, particularly on exploitative systems dominated by zamindars and moneylenders. The peasantry suffered from excessive taxation, indebtedness, forced cultivation, and recurring famines.

At the same time, colonial infrastructure such as railways, roads, and river transport linked Bihar to global markets. Yet these developments largely benefited British industries and merchants rather than local producers. Indigenous industries and handicrafts declined due to competition from machine-made British goods. Industrial growth in Bihar remained limited except in sectors such as coal mining, sugar, and plantation-related activities.

The colonial period also witnessed important social and political responses to economic exploitation. Peasant movements, indigo revolts, tribal uprisings, and nationalist mobilizations emerged as reactions against oppressive economic structures. Thus, the economic history of colonial Bihar reflects both exploitation and resistance.

This article critically examines the economy of Bihar during the colonial period, focusing on agrarian systems, commercialization, industrial changes, labor migration, famines, and socio-economic consequences.

2. Bihar before Colonial Rule

Before British domination, Bihar possessed a relatively diversified economy. Agriculture formed the backbone of economic life, supported by fertile alluvial plains nourished by rivers such as the Ganga, Gandak, Kosi, and Son. Farmers cultivated rice, wheat, pulses, oilseeds, and sugarcane. Traditional irrigation systems and village-level cooperation sustained agricultural productivity.

Bihar was also known for handicrafts, weaving, metalwork, saltpetre production, and regional trade. Patna emerged as an important commercial center during the Mughal period. Saltpetre from Bihar

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was exported to Europe for gunpowder manufacturing. Textile production and silk weaving also contributed to local prosperity.

Village economies operated with a degree of self-sufficiency. Artisans, peasants, traders, and pastoral communities formed an interconnected rural structure. Although social inequalities existed, the economy was not fully subordinated to external markets.

The East India Company's acquisition of Diwani rights in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa in 1765 marked the beginning of colonial economic intervention. From this point onward, Bihar increasingly became a source of land revenue and raw materials for the British Empire.

3. Permanent Settlement and the Zamindari System

One of the most significant changes introduced by the British was the Permanent Settlement of 1793 under Lord Cornwallis. This settlement permanently fixed land revenue demands and recognized zamindars as hereditary landowners responsible for collecting revenue from peasants.

The Permanent Settlement had far-reaching consequences in Bihar:

3.1 Rise of Zamindari Exploitation

Zamindars became intermediaries between the colonial state and peasants. Their primary objective was maximizing rent collection to meet British revenue demands and maintain their estates. Peasants lost customary rights over land and became vulnerable tenants.

High rents, illegal cesses, forced labor, and eviction became common. Many zamindars were absentee landlords who had little concern for agricultural improvement. The burden of revenue collection ultimately fell upon poor peasants.

3.2 Rural Indebtedness

Peasants often borrowed money from mahajans (moneylenders) to pay rent and taxes. High interest rates trapped them in cycles of debt. Land alienation increased as indebted peasants lost control over their holdings.

3.3 Agricultural Stagnation

The Permanent Settlement provided little incentive for agricultural investment. Zamindars focused on rent extraction rather than improving irrigation, technology, or productivity. As a result, agriculture remained backward despite Bihar's fertile land.

3.4 Social Stratification

Colonial policies strengthened upper-caste landlord dominance while marginalizing lower-caste peasants and tribal communities. Economic exploitation reinforced social inequalities and caste hierarchies in rural Bihar.

Thus, the Permanent Settlement created an exploitative agrarian structure that became a defining feature of colonial Bihar's economy.

4. Commercialization of Agriculture

British colonialism transformed agriculture from subsistence production to commercial production. Bihar increasingly cultivated crops demanded by international markets.

4.1 Indigo Cultivation

Indigo became one of the most important commercial crops in colonial Bihar, particularly in Champaran and Tirhut regions. European planters forced peasants to cultivate indigo under oppressive conditions.

The "Tinkathia System" required peasants to cultivate indigo on a portion of their land regardless of profitability. Planters offered low prices and used coercive methods, including violence and intimidation.

Indigo cultivation reduced food crop production and impoverished peasants. Resistance against indigo planters eventually culminated in the Champaran Satyagraha led by Mahatma Gandhi in 1917.

4.2 Opium Production

Bihar became an important center of opium cultivation under British monopoly. The East India Company controlled opium production and exported it to China.

Farmers were compelled to grow opium under contract systems that favored colonial authorities. While opium generated revenue for the British, peasants received limited benefits.

4.3 Sugarcane and Other Cash Crops

The colonial period also saw expansion of sugarcane cultivation, especially in north Bihar. Sugar mills emerged in some districts during the twentieth century. However, peasants often remained dependent on intermediaries and traders.

Commercialization increased peasants' dependence on fluctuating market prices and intensified rural vulnerability.

5. Decline of Indigenous Industries

The colonial economy adversely affected Bihar's traditional industries and handicrafts.

5.1 Textile Industry Decline

Before colonial rule, Bihar had a flourishing handloom industry producing cotton and silk textiles. British industrial goods flooded Indian markets after the Industrial Revolution, making local products uncompetitive.

Cheap machine-made textiles from Britain destroyed local weaving communities. Thousands of artisans lost employment and were forced into agriculture or wage labor.

5.2 Decline of Artisans

Metalworkers, potters, leather workers, and craftsmen also suffered from colonial economic changes. Traditional patronage systems weakened, and imported goods replaced indigenous products.

5.3 Deindustrialization

Colonial policies promoted India as a supplier of raw materials and a market for British manufactured goods. Bihar experienced deindustrialization, where traditional industries declined without adequate modern industrial replacement.

This process increased dependence on agriculture and worsened rural poverty.

6. Railways, Trade, and Infrastructure

The British introduced railways, roads, telegraphs, and river transport networks in Bihar during the nineteenth century. These developments had mixed economic consequences.

6.1 Expansion of Railways

Railways connected Bihar to Calcutta and other commercial centers. Agricultural goods, raw materials, coal, and opium could now be transported more efficiently.

However, railway development primarily served colonial interests by facilitating extraction and export rather than balanced regional development.

6.2 Growth of Trade

Trade expanded under colonial rule. Patna, Muzaffarpur, Bhagalpur, and Gaya became important commercial towns. Agricultural commodities and minerals were exported to national and international markets.

Yet profits were largely controlled by British merchants and intermediaries. Peasants and local producers gained little from expanding trade.

6.3 Unequal Development

Infrastructure development remained uneven. Areas connected to trade routes experienced some growth, while remote rural regions continued to suffer from poverty and lack of investment.

Thus, colonial infrastructure integrated Bihar into the imperial economy without ensuring equitable development.

7. Mining and Limited Industrialization

Although Bihar remained predominantly agrarian, certain industries developed during the colonial period.

7.1 Coal Mining

The coalfields of Jharia and Bokaro became major industrial centers. Coal mining expanded rapidly due to increasing demand from railways and industries.

Mining generated employment but also led to harsh labor conditions, accidents, and environmental degradation. Workers often lived in poor conditions with low wages.

7.2 Sugar Industry

Sugar mills emerged in north Bihar during the early twentieth century. The sugar industry created some industrial employment but remained dependent on fluctuating agricultural production and colonial market policies.

7.3 Tata Iron and Steel Company

The establishment of Tata Steel in Jamshedpur in 1907 marked an important milestone in eastern India's industrial development. Though present-day Jharkhand was then part of Bihar, industrialization remained regionally concentrated.

7.4 Industrial Limitations

Despite these developments, industrial growth in Bihar remained limited compared to regions such as Bombay and Bengal. Colonial policies discouraged broad-based industrialization that could compete with British industries.

8. Famines and Poverty

Colonial Bihar experienced recurring famines, food shortages, and chronic poverty.

8.1 Causes of Famines

Several factors contributed to famines:

- Excessive land revenue demands
- Commercialization of agriculture
- Lack of irrigation investment
- Natural disasters such as floods and droughts
- Export-oriented policies

The colonial state often failed to provide adequate relief measures.

8.2 Bengal Famine and Bihar

Although the Bengal Famine of 1943 mainly affected Bengal, Bihar also suffered from food shortages and rising prices. Poor transportation and wartime policies worsened conditions.

8.3 Chronic Poverty

Rural poverty became widespread during colonial rule. Peasants lacked access to land, credit, education, and healthcare. Malnutrition and indebtedness remained common.

Colonial economic policies prioritized revenue extraction over social welfare, deepening Bihar's underdevelopment.

9. Labor Migration

Economic hardship led to large-scale migration from Bihar during the colonial period.

9.1 Indentured Labor Migration

After the abolition of slavery, the British transported laborers from Bihar to plantations in Mauritius, Fiji, Trinidad, Guyana, and Suriname under indentured labor systems.

Poverty, indebtedness, and lack of opportunities forced many peasants to migrate. Conditions on plantations were often harsh and exploitative.

9.2 Internal Migration

Many laborers migrated to Calcutta, Assam tea plantations, and industrial centers in search of employment. Seasonal migration became a survival strategy for rural households.

Migration reflected the inability of Bihar's colonial economy to provide sufficient livelihood opportunities.

10. Peasant and Tribal Movements

Economic exploitation during colonial rule generated widespread resistance.

10.1 Indigo Revolts

Peasants protested against forced indigo cultivation and planter oppression. The Champaran movement became a landmark in India's nationalist struggle.

10.2 Tribal Uprisings

Tribal communities in the Chotanagpur region resisted colonial land policies, forest restrictions, and exploitation by landlords and moneylenders.

Movements led by leaders such as Birsa Munda challenged colonial authority and demanded restoration of tribal rights.

10.3 Kisan Movements

Peasant organizations emerged during the twentieth century demanding lower rents, debt relief, and abolition of zamindari. Leaders such as Swami Sahajanand Saraswati mobilized farmers against landlord exploitation.

These movements reflected growing political awareness and resistance to colonial economic oppression.

11. Socio-Economic Consequences of Colonial Rule

The colonial economy left long-lasting effects on Bihar's social and economic structure.

11.1 Agrarian Backwardness

Agriculture remained technologically backward and dependent on monsoons. Lack of investment and exploitative land relations hindered productivity.

11.2 Unequal Land Distribution

Large zamindari estates concentrated land ownership in few hands. Landlessness and tenancy became widespread.

11.3 Educational and Social Changes

Colonial rule introduced modern education and administrative institutions. A new middle class emerged, contributing to nationalist politics and social reform movements.

11.4 Underdevelopment

Despite Bihar's natural resources and fertile land, colonial policies prevented balanced industrial and economic development. Poverty and migration persisted even after independence.

12. Conclusion

The colonial period profoundly reshaped Bihar's economy. British economic policies integrated Bihar into the global imperial system primarily as a source of revenue, raw materials, and cheap labor. The Permanent Settlement entrenched zamindari exploitation and weakened peasant rights. Commercialization of agriculture promoted indigo, opium, and cash crops while undermining food security and rural stability.

Traditional industries declined due to colonial trade policies and competition from British manufactured goods. Although railways, mining, and limited industries developed, these primarily served colonial interests rather than local development. Recurrent famines, indebtedness, migration, and agrarian distress became defining features of Bihar's colonial economy.

At the same time, colonial exploitation generated important resistance movements. Peasant struggles, tribal uprisings, and nationalist mobilizations reflected growing opposition to economic injustice. These movements played a crucial role in India's broader freedom struggle.

The legacy of colonialism continued to influence Bihar after independence. Agrarian inequality, industrial backwardness, poverty, and migration remained major challenges. Therefore, understanding the colonial economy of Bihar is essential for understanding the region's contemporary socio-economic problems and developmental trajectory.

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Health Status of Pre-school Children in Rural Areas of North Bihar

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Abstract

Objectives: To study the Socio-Economic factors, Feeding Practices and Nutritional Status of Preschoolers Residing in Rural Community of Bihar.

Methods: It was a cross sectional study carried out in rural areas of Sakra Block, Muzaffarpur district, Bihar. 340 preschoolers (1–6 years) were selected randomly for the study. The parents were interviewed to get the necessary information. Food consumption of the subjects was assessed using a 3-day 24-hour Dietary Recall Method. For grading Under Nutrition, Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP) classification was adopted.

Results: Majority of the mothers (62.5%) were illiterate. Majority of 75.2% of subjects had unsatisfactory knowledge about supplementary foods. Majority of the subjects (70.4%) gave normal diet to their preschoolers age and only 20% give special diet (e.g. milk, egg, pulses and legumes etc.). Only 40% have vaccinated their children because they know the importance of vaccination.

Conclusion: Results indicate an overall poor nutritional status of preschool children. Delayed initiation of complementary feeding is a significant risk factor for under nutrition among under-five children; hence optimum feeding practices should be promoted and protected to improve nutritional status of preschoolers.

Keywords: Feeding, Preschool, Child, Food, Nutrition

Introduction

Nutritional status of pre-school children is of paramount importance, since the foundation of lifetime health, strength and intellectual vitality is laid during that period. Malnutrition is a global health problem. In

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developing countries, particularly where the population is high, hunger and malnutrition are widespread among the pre-school age children. A child is precious to his parents, to his family, community and nation and to the world at large. In fact child is a citizen of the world and thus it becomes the responsibility of the wide population of the whole universe to look after the interests of the children all over. The young children need love for growth but also adequate nutrition and health facilities, so that he can grow up to complete at his optimum level. The most vulnerable period next to infancy is the age of 1–5 yrs. Pre-school children constitute about 14% of the Indian population. This is a huge human resource which need to be developed and nurtured for the country the progress. After the first year, there is sustained growth in childhood, which is not as rapid as in infancy yet the growth needs are high, growth occurs in spurts, nevertheless children should grow @ 6–7 cm/year in height and 1.5–3 kg/year in weight; further, the pre-school years are characterized by increased physical activity.

Physical activity influences energy needs. Due to these physiological conditions, children during this period, in fact are most susceptible to malnutrition.

The major cause of under nutrition has always been reported to be poverty along with ignorance. In the words of Margaret Khalakdina (1975), malnutrition is the most telling index of poverty. Poverty leads to inadequate food intake and under nutrition further leading to physical growth and development of children, impaired functioning, low productivity again leading to poverty.

Prashad (1981) studied a sample of rural Bihar households in 12 villages spread over the six regions of the state showed that social-class differences in calorie intake were more pronounced than either regional or seasonal differences. Malnutrition remains a major threat to the survival, growth and development of India's boys and girls, said UNICEF India Representative, Karin Hulshuf. The primary cause of malnutrition is inadequate and faulty diet. Apart from poverty and other socio-economic factors, environmental factors also play an important role in aggravating the dietary deficiency diseases. These precipitating factors are the widespread chronic infections among the poor living under conditions of poor environmental sanitation and personal hygiene.

Thus a marginal intake of nutrients which by itself may not lead to clinical deficiency may do so when infectious diseases are superimposed. Studies conducted by National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad (1984) shows that prevalence of Vitamin A and B-complex deficiency signs

increases with age. Signs of PEM were higher in younger age group of 1–3 years than in 3–5 years, while vitamin deficiency signs were more in 3–5 years age groups. The peak prevalence of Kwashiorkor was frequently seen in the age groups of 2–3 years and marasmus in 1–2 years. About 50% of children were anaemic.

According to UNICEF (1997), the incidence of under nutrition among children between the age of 6 to 36 months in different states of India, as depicted through stunted growth and underweight, in relation to percent of total rural poverty and crop production, shows that among all states, Bihar was home to the highest percentage (70%) of children who were underweight and similarly with stunted growth (61%), followed by Uttar Pradesh (66% were underweight and 60% had stunted growth). Kerala had the lowest incidence of malnutrition among all states of India. In the words of Rhode Jon E. & Ratan V. (1997), there cannot be health without proper nutrition. Regular growth in the first two years is the critical foundation of health throughout a lifetime.

UNICEF (1997) showed that the state of Bihar has the highest percentage of rural poverty and the highest incidence of under nutrition (stunting as well as underweight). Gupte Suraj (1998) emphasized that nutritional deficiency states constitute a major public health problem in India and other countries of the developing world. In India alone, gross malnutrition takes a toll of 5,00,000 infants and children every year. A large proportion of the survivors live with subnormal growth and stunting. The relationship between malnutrition and infection, enhancing morbidity and mortality, needs to be convincingly driven home to the community and the health providers. Infections are another major cause of pediatric morbidity. With considerable reduction in prevalence of preventable childhood infectious diseases, the dominance is now taken over by respiratory and gastrointestinal infections. Acute respiratory infections (ARI) are responsible for 20–60% of OPD attendance, 12–45% of admissions, and 33% of mortality in the developing world, directly or indirectly. Over 15–20% of preschool mortality is related to ARI. India accounts for about 40% of undernourished children in the world, contributing significantly to the high morbidity and mortality in the country (James Levinson, 1998).

The major problem in India can be broadly categorized as protein energy malnutrition, Vitamin A, and iron deficiency anaemia among preschool children, young girls, pregnant and nursing women. Protein energy malnutrition (PEM) prevailing among preschool children is another problem of the country. Kwashiorkor and Marasmus are the two main clinical forms of severe protein and energy deficiency

respectively. Due to this about 80% of children suffer from various grades of growth retardation (UNICEF, 1998).

Yadav RJ, Singh P (1999) studied the nutritional status and dietary intake in tribal children of Bihar and observed that the intake of protein was broadly in line with the recommended dietary allowances (RDA) in all age groups among children. However, the average intake of energy and other nutrients was lower in all age groups as compared to RDA. Calorie deficiency was 38%, whereas protein deficiency was about 19%. More than half of the children were caloric deficient in Katihar, Bokaro, Godda and Singhbhum (east and west). The overall prevalence of stunting was about 60% and underweight about 55%, and was comparable in boys and girls. However, wasting was more frequent in girls (urban – 34.5% vs. 16.3% and rural – 34.9% vs. 18%).

The level of malnutrition was not very different in rural and urban areas. The severe and moderate level of malnutrition among children was much higher among those with poor housing and sanitary conditions even with the same level of dietary intake, whereas in spite of lower dietary intake, the level of malnutrition was much lower for those living in better sanitary conditions. Thus, to reduce the problem of malnutrition among children, there should be dual focus on dietary intake as well as providing safe drinking water, better sanitation and housing conditions for improving their general standard of living.

A recent appraisal of diet and nutrition situation in rural India by National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (2001) revealed that about 45% of preschool children are undernourished (weight for age <75% of standard), while about 62% are stunted (height for age < median 2 sd of standard). About 47% of adults had chronic energy deficiency (CED, BMI <18.5). The infant and preschool children are extremely vulnerable. They succumb readily where the diet is poor in quality and quantity and infectious diseases and infestations are widespread. The rate of growth and development of preschool children depends to a large measure on the adequacy of the diet consumed by them; frequent attacks of infectious diseases further increase the requirements of various nutrients.

Materials and Methods

It was a cross-sectional study carried out in rural areas of Muzaffarpur district, Bihar. 320 preschoolers (1–5 years) were selected randomly for the study. The parents were interviewed to get the necessary information. A door-to-door visit was made in all selected households. All the families who could not be contacted or were

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uncooperative on the first visit were revisited. Information on socio-economic conditions, feeding practices and food habits was obtained with a pre-tested questionnaire. Food consumption of the subjects was assessed using a 3-day 24-hour dietary recall method. For grading undernutrition, Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP) classification was adopted.

IAP Classification

<i>Status</i>	<i>Criteria</i>
Normal	More than 80% NCHS weight for age
Mild Malnutrition	70–80% NCHS weight for age
Moderate Malnutrition	60–70% NCHS weight for age
Moderately severe Malnutrition	50–60% NCHS weight for age
Severe Malnutrition	Less than 50% NCHS weight for age

Results

In the present study 320 pre-school children were surveyed. The study revealed that the majority of the respondents (76.5%) belonged to the age group 1–3 years, and only 23.5% respondents belonged to the age group 4–6 years. It was found that the majority of the respondents (51.5%) belonged to the middle caste, 38.5% belonged to low caste, and only 10% were from high caste. The maximum number of families (53%) had medium family size, followed by 32% large and 15% small had large and small family size respectively. It is evident that the majority of the respondents (52.5%) belonged to the income group earning from ¹ 3501–5500. Improper education and dearth of awareness among mothers results in poor health of a child. The majority of the mothers (62.5%) were illiterate. Majority of 75.2% of subjects had unsatisfactory knowledge about supplementary foods. Majority of the subjects (73.4%) gave normal diet to their preschool children and only 20% gave special diet (e.g. milk, egg, pulses and legumes, etc.). Only 40% have vaccinated their children because they know the importance of vaccination.

The intake of cereals and millets was 32.3% more than their respective RDA. Roots and tubers intake was double than their respective RDA. The intake of pulses, green leafy vegetables, oils and fats, fleshy foods, milk and milk products were comparatively lower for both age groups of children than their respective RDA. There was a

mean deficit of daily energy intake of 300 Kcal. The intake of other vegetables and fruits was 35% less than the RDA. The largest proportion of energy 76% was obtained from carbohydrates, followed by fat 11% and protein 13%. Out of 320 pre-school children 40% was normal, 35% having Mild Malnutrition followed by 20% Moderate Malnutrition, 4% Moderately severe Malnutrition and 1% from severe Malnutrition.

Conclusion:

Results indicate an overall poor nutritional status of Preschool children. Delayed initiation of complementary feeding is significant risk factors for under-nutrition among under five children, hence optimum feeding practices should be promoted and protected to improve nutritional status of preschoolers. To improve nutritional status of preschoolers in rural area of Bihar there should be assessment of feeding practices, quality of food grains at large segment of population. There should be focus on Nutritional education / awareness about the dietary needs of preschoolers, importance of balanced diet and five food groups, to alleviate under nutrition of poor communities. Food fads and faulty food habits can be overcome only by education in Nutrition. State government should build capacity of service providers at all levels, from medical colleges to health workers in technical knowledge and skills in effective planning for prevention and treatment of Malnutrition.

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Gram Panchayats Development Plans Special Reference of Bihar Dharbanga

Dr. Kamlesh Kumar

Abstract

Proponents of decentralization have studied and shown that devolution of power and authority at a local level can enhance systems of local governance in several ways. India has a rich history of community governance. The Panchayat System has been evolving into institutions of local self-governance. Over the last two decades, several initiatives have been taken by the states and the central governments to realise the Constitutional mandate. Since then, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has been striving for capacity building of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) through multiple initiatives including promoting decentralised participatory planning in a convergent and effective manner.

The Part IV of the Constitution of India contains Directive Principles of the State Policy in which Article 40 is provisioned for organisation of village panchayats. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, promulgated on 24 April 1993, has been inserted as Part IX in the Constitution, that enjoins the States to establish panchayats. It lays down that “the State shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.” A separate legislation “Provisions for Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act” (PESA) was passed by the Parliament in 1996 to extend Part IX of the Constitution to the areas listed under the Fifth Schedule, subject to certain exceptions and modifications. This legislation has not only extended the development, planning, and audit functioning to the Gram Sabha (GS) but has also endowed it with the management and control of natural resources and adjudication of justice in accordance with traditions and customs. These legislations have

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institutionalised the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and provided for setting up of three tiers of panchayats (only two tiers in case of States or Union Territories (UTs) having population less than 20 lakhs), which paved the way for reform in local governance in the country. This Amendment contains provision for devolution of powers and responsibilities to panchayats for both preparation of plans for economic development and social justice, utilising resources available with them (Article 243G) and implementation of the schemes and programmes related to twenty-nine subjects listed in the 'Eleventh Schedule' of the Constitution. The 73rd Amendment is the first one in India that mandated women's reservation, and this made it a landmark piece of legislation.¹ Subsequently, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj was established on 27 May 2004, with the primary objective to oversee the implementation of Part IX of the Constitution and PESA Act 1996. 'Panchayats' being a State subject, their functioning is guided by respective State/UT Panchayati Raj Acts. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) works in partnership with States, principally to achieve the constitutional aspirations pertaining to the functioning of panchayats primarily through policy guidance, advocacy, technological support, capacity building and training (CB&T), persuasion, and financial support. Since its establishment in 2004, MoPR is constantly working for strengthening the PRIs and local self-governance through the abovementioned interventions. India is predominantly a rural nation, wherein about 65 per cent of people and 70 per cent of the workforce lives in rural areas that contribute to about 46 per cent of the economy as shown in Table 2.1 and Table 2.2. In view of the increasing rural population, the number of administrative units- PRIs have been increasing over time. Expansion of rural residential areas, creation of new districts, Tehsils, blocks, etc., are other contributing factors.

Table-2.1:RuralPopulation

<i>Units</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2020 (Estimated)</i>
Rural Population (in crore)	62.9	74.2	83.3	89.7
Proportion of Rural Population	74%	72%	69%	65%

Source:MinistryofStatisticsandProgrammeImplementation

Table-2.2:ShareofRuralAreasinIndia'sEconomyandWorkforce

<i>Units</i>	<i>1993-94</i>	<i>1999-2000</i>	<i>2004-2005</i>	<i>2011-12</i>
Economy	54.3%	48.1%	48.1%	46.9%
Workforce	77.8%	76.1%	74.6%	70.9%

Source:NITIAayog,2017

Table-2.3:NumberofPRIs

<i>Units</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2020</i>
District Panchayats	539	584	594	659
Intermediate Panchayats	6103	6312	6332	6829
Gram Panchayats	233886	238054	248154	255487
Total	240528	244950	255080	262975

The number of PRIs has increased from 2.41 lakhs in 2005 to 2.63 lakhs in 2020 as shown in Table 2.3. PRIs are represented by the ERs, including Elected Women Representatives (EWRs). Reservation for women in PRIs and subsequent increase in the quota by States has brought an unprecedented and huge number of women in the governance arena in India. The number of ERs was 27.82 lakhs and EWRs were 10.42 lakhs (37.46%) in 2005, which increased to more than 31 lakh ERs in 2020, of which more than 14 lakh (46%) are EWRs, as presented in Table 2.4.

Table-2.4: Number of Elected Representatives

<i>Year</i>	<i>ERsin Lakh</i>	<i>EWRsin Lakh</i>	<i>% EWRs</i>
2005	27.82	10.42	37.46
2010	28.51	10.48	36.75
2015	29.17	13.42	46.00
2020	31.65	14.53	45.91

MoPR has played an important role in women empowerment through enhanced women's participation in PRIs and emphasis on their capacity building. A total of 21 States, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal, have made provisions of 50% reservation for women in PRIs in their respective State Panchayati Raj Acts. The States/UTs have also made good progress in providing basic infrastructural facilities to the panchayats such as Gram Panchayat Bhawans, computers, internet, and Common Service Centres (CSCs). The progress over the year is shown in Table 2.5. These infrastructural facilities have been created from various schemes of the Government of India and the State's own resources.

E-Governance Mechanism in Panchayats

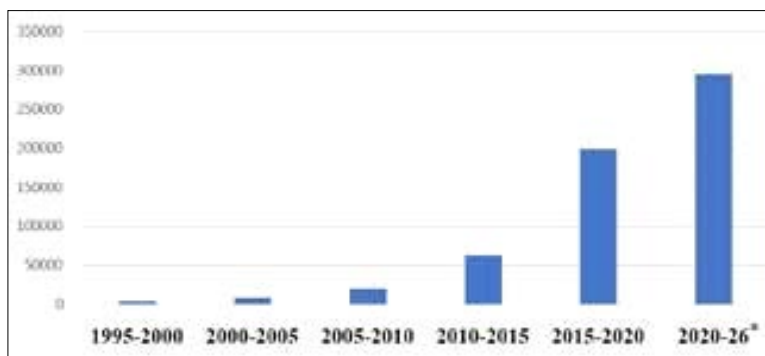
Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) serve around 65% of the country's population.

Table-2.5: Basic infrastructure in GPs In Bihar

Year	Number of GPs	GPs with Panchayat Bhawans	GPs with Computer	GPs with Internet Connectivity*	Common Service Centres (CSCs)
2005	233886	NA	NA	NA	NA
2010	238054	164483 (69.09%)	53568 (22.50%)	97392 (40.91%)	85000 (35.70%)
2015	248154	196822 (79.31%)	166827 (67.23%)	132539 (53.41%)	147798 (59.56%)
2020	255487	198637** (77.75%)	201741 (78.96%)	136693 (53.50%)	240592 (94.17%)

*GPs Service ready/Broadband enabled. There maining PRIs are availing internet services through local arrangements.

**More than 25,000 Gram Panchayat Bhawans are at different stages of construction, which will substantially reduce the gap.



*Includes Rs.60,750 crore recommended by XVFC in its interim report for 2020-21.

Figure 1: Central Finance Commission Grants to Rural Local Bodies (X to XV FC)

Improving functions of PRIs for better delivery of services is essential for the well-being of rural people. The Ministry has developed a rich suite of applications over the year, to address various aspects of panchayats’ functioning- such as decentralised planning, budgeting, accounting, implementation and monitoring of plans, fund transfer, etc., in addition to a large number of service delivery applications like the issue of certificates, licenses, etc. Now the applications have been unified in

a single and simplified portal called eGramSwaraj. The progress over the years on various applications has been shown in Table 3.1. The user-friendly interface of eGramSwaraj, improved position of ICT

infrastructure and manpower are among various reasons for enhanced adoption of eGramSwaraj portal. A total of 2,50,077 Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) for FY 2021-22 have been uploaded on the portal. Around 2,25,153 GPs have adopted eGramSwaraj for the purpose of accounting in FY 2021-22. Further, 2,22,815 PRIs have onboarded eGramSwaraj- PFMS Interface for carrying out online transactions.

Bottom-up Planning

Provision of basic infrastructures, emphasis on e-governance, capacity building of PRIs, focused information, education, and communication (IEC) campaign are some of the main activities undertaken by the Ministry and States for strengthening the PRIs; utilising Ministry's budgetary allocation and States' resources. These are prerequisites for effective planning by PRIs in consultation with local people organised by the Gram Sabhas. Backward Regions Grant Funds (BRGF) Scheme was implemented from 2006-07 to 2014-15 in 272 identified backward districts to bridge critical gaps in local infrastructure and other developmental requirements along with the capacity building of PRIs. Preparation of the district plan was an important part of BRGF. In course of nine years, Rs 27638 crores were provided to the States, which was utilised on a large number of projects.

Further, planning at the grassroots level was strengthened with the acceptance of the recommendations of the Fourteenth Finance Commission (XIV FC) to utilize grants worth Rs 200292.20 crores, that emphasised the preparation of a holistic plan at the GP level. The flow of funds over various Finance Commission Grants has been shown in Figure 1.

The Fifteenth Finance Commission (XV FC) in its interim report for 2020-21 and final report for 2021-2026 recommended an amount of Rs 60750 crore and Rs 236805 crore respectively for all three tiers of panchayats, also necessitated preparing their respective plans at all tiers for effective utilisation of grants. Accordingly, Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) is being prepared since 2015-16, and Block Panchayat Development Plan (BPDP), and District Panchayat Development Plan (DPDP) from 2020-21.

Capacity Building of PRIs

The availability of CFC grants in addition to the flow of funds from other schemes and States' Own Resources to the PRIs, necessitated adequate capacity building and training of elected representatives and other stakeholders for effective planning and implementation. Accordingly, a new scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)

Table-3.1: Adoption of e-Gov Application

Year	GPs uploading GDP	GPs onboarding PFMS	GPs with audit report generated	GPs registering for Citizen-Charter
2019-20	2,50,077	1,69,951	86,178	--
2020-21	2,48,925	2,22,815	4,043*	1,19,961 (GPs with citizen charter approved)

*Audit for 2020-21 is in progress

Table 5.1: Training Achievement of PRIs

Component	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Number of ERs and others take holders trained under RGSA	43.05 lakh	33.98 lakh	33.34 lakh

was launched for implementation on 1 April 2018, to develop and strengthen the capacities of PRIs to become more responsive towards local development needs. Training is conducted on various themes such as – constitutional and statutory provisions on the functioning of PRIs, e-Governance, financial management, commitments on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and livelihood troubles, and so on. This helps PRIs in preparing participatory plans that leverage technology, efficient and optimum utilisation of available resources, for realising solutions to local problems linked to SDGs. The training is facilitated by the National Institute of Rural

Development & Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR) and the State Institute of Rural Developments (SIRDs) in association with large number of institutions. The progress over the years is shown in Table 5.1.

Further, panchayats are also being incentivised through awards and financial incentives in recognition of their good work for improving planning and delivery of services. This motivates the awardees to do innovative tasks and creates models for others to follow. It creates an ecosystem for overall good governance at the local level and has become a medium for creating awareness and sharing of knowledge across a large number of PRIs. Further, IEC activities are also being carried out with the aim at better and more effective communication through all the available media platforms for advocacy, awareness, and publicity to build capacity within, and enhance the performance of panchayats. Achievements on these have been shown in Table 5.2

Devolution of Funds, Functions, and Functionaries (3Fs)

MoPR has been continuously working with the States to realise the aspirations of constitutional provisions on various aspects of devolution of 29 subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule to accomplish the goals

of local level governance in a true sense. The progress made by the States is quite varied in terms of the devolution of subjects. Various studies have highlighted that in some States the extent of devolution is robust; in others still, it is a work in progress. Devolution Study conducted by the Ministry in 2015-16 through TISS prepared an index of devolution in practice, which analyses the actual devolution happening in the field. The indicators chosen reflected on actual control of panchayats over transferred institutions, functions, functionaries, financial autonomy, and utilisation of development funds along with the status of infrastructure and administrative systems in place. The weightage of these parameters is shown in Table 6.1.

On the subjects mentioned above, the engagements of the Ministry with the States/UTs and PRIs will continue, as untapped potentials are yet to be realised. Additionally, in view of structural changes in rural areas and increasing aspirations of people, panchayats need to re-orient towards areas as mentioned.

Table 5.2: Data on Incentivisation and IEC

Year	Number of Panchayats Participating in Competition (approx.)	Number of awards	Number of audio-visual and print documents prepared
2019	40,000	246	15.4 lakh
2020	58,000	306	2.7 lakh
2021	74,000	326	15.6 lakh

Table 6.1: Weight age of Parameters

Indicators	Sub-Indicators	Weightage
Operational core of Decentralisation (90)	Transfer of functions	10
	Transfer of functionaries	15
	Transfer of finances	50
	Autonomy of PRIs	15
Support systems for devolution (10)	Capacity Building	2
	Operationalising Constitutional Mechanisms	5
	Systems for accountability and transparency	3

Table 7.1: Progress on SVAMITVA

Dronesurvey completed in number of villages	Property card distributed in number of Villages	Number of Property cards distributed
56,224	7332	8,27,231

Ensuring the property rights of rural inhabitants is essential for and inclusive social and economic development of the country. The Ministry has launched a scheme named ‘SVAMITVA’ to prepare property records of rural people of their houses using drone surveying technology. The goal is to cover most of the more than six lakh villages in the next five years. The present progress is shown in Table 7.1.

In view of the increasing significance of SDG goals mainly related to poverty alleviation, food security, education, health, nutrition, drinking water, and sanitation; the panchayats need to increasingly engage with these agencies working at the village level and commensurately improve their capacity. As per a paper presented by NITI Aayog², a noticeable structural change is happening in the rural economy. Employment opportunities are shifting from the agriculture sector to construction, manufacturing, and service sectors. Also, there is a huge potential for Agro-processing industries and MSMEs in rural areas. Panchayats need to appropriately include these in their planning and work with relevant agencies and stakeholders for their implementation. So, an emphasis on skilling of rural population and promotion of rural entrepreneurship is needed in these sectors. As per a report prepared by KPMG³, there is huge untapped potential for the growth of financial services such as credit, insurance, and digital payment facilities in rural areas. This is another frontier on which panchayats need to engage with various types of financial institutions, build women entrepreneurship, and promote product customisation for the rural population.

Effective implementation of various new initiatives of the Ministry under e-Panchayats needed- such as ramSwaraj, PFMS integration for online payments, citizen’s charter, online audit, social audit, etc., for enhancing efficiency, transparency, and accountability of the PRIs. Panchayats have also strengthened and are now equipped to handle disasters/ natural calamities. They have played an active role in mitigation and management of Covid-19, which is reflected in the dashboard created by the Ministry to monitor real-time activities in

this direction. Panchayats need to be empowered to levy and collect taxes, tolls, fees, user charges, etc., along with other activities to enhance their Own Source of Revenue. The Ministry has selected 34 GPs across States for holistic planning using spatial technology considering the availability of various types of resources, potential growth sectors, and requirements of people. This can be scaled up in the coming years with resource convergence of key ministries. Panchayats also need to consider climate action plan as an integral part of planning and harnessing renewable energy should be an integral part of the plan. Odanthurai GP of Coimbatore district in Tamil Nadu has shown pioneering effort by harnessing wind energy, and selling to the grid, and earning Rs 19 lakhs annually. Progressive devolution of Functions, Funds, and Functionaries (3Fs) to the PRIs requires dedicated attention of all stakeholders to accomplish the goals of responsive and empowered local self-governance as mandated in the Constitution. Flagship programmes of Central and State Governments should clearly lay out the role of panchayats in their guidelines. MoPR has travelled a long journey towards strengthening PRIs and accomplishing objectives of local self-governance. A lot of Panchayats are now equipped with the basic infrastructure but gaps still remain across the States. In order to fill the gaps, the saturation approach needs to be adopted as announced by the Prime Minister on 75th Independence Day. Representation of women in PRIs has substantially increased but effective participation requires appropriate training and exposure visits of these elected representatives. E-Governance mechanism has finally reached distant PRIs, although substantial room for improvement exists. The planning process has been streamlined with the preparation of plans at all tiers of panchayats, but these are needed to be made more holistic and inclusive through democratic functioning of GPs, with active functioning of Standing Committees and ward members, and effective functioning of Gram Sabhas and participation of key stakeholders. Further, progressive devolution of Functions, Funds, and Functionaries to PRIs through activity mapping ought to be ensured to accomplish mandated activities and to achieve the objectives of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in order to ease the life of around 65% of the country's population living in rural areas.

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Tharu Tribe and National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: A Sociological Study with Special Reference to the State of Bihar

Ambedkar Kumar Sahu

Abstract

This research article critically examined the National Education Policy (NEP-2020) through the lens of the Tharu tribe. The study argued that, in the absence of a standardized script for the Tharuhat mother tongue, the NEP-2020 recommendation regarding instruction in the mother tongue functioned more as a political agenda than a pedagogical tool. The paper highlighted the major challenges in implementing NEP-2020 within the Tharuhat region and investigated how India's educational policies have historically impacted the Tharu indigenous language. The primary objective of the research was to evaluate the contribution of the Tharu mother tongue to the knowledge-building processes of school-going Tharu children. This ethnographic study, conducted in the Don area of West Champaran, Bihar, utilized qualitative methodologies, including in-depth interviews, field observations, focal point school analysis, and case studies for data collection. The findings suggested that NEP-2020 failed to serve the specific interests of the Tharu community, as substantive efforts to revitalize their mother tongue remained invisible within the policy framework.

Keywords: Indigenous Language, Indigenous Identity, NEP-2020, Mother Tongue, School Dropout.

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January-March, 2026

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Introduction

The discourse on language in Indian education has persisted since the colonial era. Post-independence, official documents and government policies in the early 1950s advocated for primary education in the mother tongue for linguistic minorities. Subsequently, Article 350(A) of the Indian Constitution recognized this necessity, directing every state to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage.

In the 1960s, the Dhebar Commission emphasized the importance of language in tribal schooling, noting that tribal children learn more effectively when taught through their own dialects. Similarly, the Kothari Commission (1966) recommended that the medium of instruction during the first two years of school should be the tribal language (Nambissan, 1994)². Consequently, several states, including Bihar, recognized tribal languages as academic mediums. Bihar is home to 32 tribal communities (Note: Updated from 30 to 32 as per current records), comprising 1.28% of its population (Note: Based on 2011 Census). Despite this diversity, the Bihar government has officially recognized only Santhali, Ho, and Oraon for primary education. However, according to the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities, no substantive action has been taken to implement these languages in tribal-dominant areas.

India is a diverse and stratified society. The “People of India” project identified numerous tribes, castes, and sects, each with distinct languages and lifestyles (Beteille, 2006)³. The first systematic attempt to codify this diversity was made by Sir G.A. Grierson, who identified 179 languages and 544 dialects in his *Linguistic Survey of India* (1886–1927). Later, the 1951 Census listed 845 languages (Sridhar, 1996)⁴. Although India currently recognizes approximately 750 languages, only 22 are included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution (Roy, 2022)⁵. Evidence suggests that tribal children are largely receiving primary education in these 22 official languages, which are often not their native dialects. Furthermore, systematic efforts to create a foundation for schooling in indigenous tribal languages are still lacking. Amidst these challenges, the National Education Policy (NEP-2020) advocates for indigenous languages. Therefore, it is critical to examine the relevance of NEP-2020 through the perspective of the Tharu tribe in Bihar.

The present article was divided into three primary sections. The first part detailed the research methodology and theoretical perspective. The second section analyzed data from the literature review and field

observations, while the final part focused on the research findings and conclusions.

Methodology and Study Area

This study adopted a qualitative research design, utilizing both primary and secondary data sources. Using a multistage cluster sampling technique, the Don region (specifically selected villages) within the Ramnagar Block of West Champaran, Bihar, was purposively selected for investigation.

Primary data was collected through participant observation, case studies, and informal discussions. The in-depth interviews focused on two thematic pillars: the status of the indigenous language and the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP-2020). The research targeted key institutions as focal points, including Government Middle School (Gobrahia) and Rajendra Smarak High School, to understand the grassroots educational realities.

Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this research were as follows:

1. To evaluate the contribution of the Tharu mother tongue to the knowledge-building processes of school-going Tharu children.
2. To examine the functional relationship between the Tharu mother tongue and formal school education.
3. To analyze the extent to which the National Education Policy (NEP-2020) facilitates the promotion and preservation of the indigenous language and cultural traditions of the Tharu tribe.

Status of Tribal Education in Bihar

This educational disparity is starkly visible in the Don region. In Naurangia Panchayat, for instance, only seven out of sixteen villages possess primary schools. The literacy rate here is a meager 39.69%, characterized by a significant gender gap (48.33% male vs. 30.97% female). These figures are substantially lower than the state and national averages, highlighting the structural barriers and the urgent need for targeted pedagogical interventions within the Tharu community.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Education serves a dual role: as a catalyst for social mobility and a mechanism for reproducing inequality. This study employs the frameworks of Critical Pedagogy and Cultural Capital (Bourdieu) to

examine the persistent challenges of mother-tongue-based education in tribal regions (Nambissan, 1994; Mohanty & Panda, 2014).

While NEP-2020 advocates for multilingualism and “inclusive” curricula, scholars offer critical counter-narratives. Sengupta (2021)⁶ and Raina (2021)⁷ argue that the policy may naturalize social hierarchies by overlooking structural disparities. From a sociolinguistic perspective, Bernstein (1971) and Mehan (1984) suggest that academic failure often stems from the disconnect between the home language and the school’s “mainstream” code.

Furthermore, while Guneratne (2002) notes that the Tharu in Nepal have formed a singular ethnic identity, the Tharu of Bihar exhibit significant internal variations. In the Don region, indigenous culture remains vibrant, unlike in other areas. This study identifies a significant research gap regarding the Tharu indigenous language and NEP-2020, questioning why linguistic and pedagogical dimensions remain marginalized within Bihar’s tribal discourse.

Focal Point Studies: Linguistic Conflict and Pedagogical Barriers

The focal point study conducted at Gobrahia Middle School, Rajendra Smarak High School, and Naurangia Don Secondary School reveals a profound linguistic disconnect within the classroom. Observations indicate that while the official curriculum is delivered in Hindi and English, the students’ primary mode of communication remains the Tharuhat mother tongue. This mismatch results in a systemic instructional gap where teachers fail to engage with the students’ native linguistic framework.

According to Sahu and Kazim (2025)⁸, this pedagogical exclusion severely impairs the cognitive development of Tharu children, leading to a detrimental cycle of cultural reproduction. Furthermore, the inability of students to decode the “mainstream” codes of Hindi and English often results in academic failure. This phenomenon resonates with Bernstein’s (1971) theory of linguistic codes, where the disconnect between the home and school environment ultimately triggers high dropout rates.

The exclusion is not limited to the Tharu community; Oraon students in these schools also find their recognized language absent from both the classroom and the campus. This reflects an indifferent approach toward Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), despite multiple policy mandates ranging from the Kothari Commission

(1966) to the RTE Act (2009). Moreover, economic deprivation has fostered a “culture of poverty” that accelerates this marginalization. The empirical evidence of this crisis is stark: in a basic literacy task, only 30% of Grade 6 students were able to correctly name and spell the states of India, highlighting a severe deficit in Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN).

Case Studies: Teacher Perspectives and Structural Imbalances

The field investigation documented multiple case studies of educators at Rajendra Smarak High School and Govardhan Middle School, highlighting a profound disconnect between institutional expectations and ground realities.

Case Study: 1.

The Linguistic Barrier Faiz Alam (age 29), a PhD graduate from the University of Delhi, represents a new cohort of highly qualified teachers who face significant pedagogical challenges. Due to a lack of proficiency in the Tharuhat mother tongue, effective teacher-student interaction is severely compromised. This linguistic barrier is shared by other faculty members, including the music teacher Mona Kumari, which further hinders the delivery of meaningful instruction.

Case Study: 2.

Structural and Resource Deprivation Interviews with Mohan Kumar (age 34) and Principal Brajkishore Prasad (age 53) underscore a critical infrastructure deficit. The persistent lack of electricity often forces classes to be conducted in darkness, while modern pedagogical tools—such as smart classrooms and libraries—remain non-existent. Notably, a defunct solar panel exemplifies the neglect of renewable energy initiatives in the region. Furthermore, the logistical isolation of the Don region prevents the delivery of LPG cylinders, forcing staff to use firewood for mid-day meals. This systemic marginalization is compounded by the total absence of a Government Degree College across the Tharu-populated belts of West Champaran, creating a significant barrier to higher education for the community.

NEP-2020 and the Politics of Language in Tribal Education

The National Education Policy (NEP-2020), formulated based on the Kasturirangan Committee (2019) report, introduces a structural shift to the 5+3+3+4 curriculum. While the policy acknowledges that

linguistic and socio-cultural barriers contribute to high dropout rates among Scheduled Tribes (Sections 3.4 & 6.2.2), its implementation remains contentious. Scholars argue that Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)—successfully piloted in states like Odisha (Mohanty, 2017)—is essential for indigenous student retention.

However, a critical contradiction emerges within the policy’s linguistic hierarchy. While advocating for local languages in the early years of schooling, NEP-2020 disproportionately prioritizes Sanskrit as a mainstream option across all levels (Section 4.11). Critics, such as Agnihotri (2020), view this “Sanskrit-centric” approach as a rhetorical imposition that overlooks India’s vast linguistic diversity, encompassing the Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic, and Tibeto-Burman language families. For communities like the Tharu, the historical and pedagogical relevance of Sanskrit remains negligible compared to their indigenous dialects.

Furthermore, the policy’s emphasis on Sanskrit, while simultaneously limiting early access to English—a form of global linguistic capital—risks further marginalizing disadvantaged groups from the global labor market. In the Tharuhat region, where even basic infrastructure like Government Degree Colleges and *Ashramshalas* (Ashram schools) is absent, the ambitious goals of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) by 2030 appear pedagogically impractical. Without a clear implementation strategy for resource-deprived regions, NEP-2020 remains a visionary document that lacks necessary structural grounding.

NEP-2020: A Critical Five-Year Appraisal (2020–2025)

Five years post-implementation, NEP-2020 reveals a significant disconnect between policy aspirations and structural realities. National data from UDISE (2023-24) shows a staggering decline of 3.7 million in school enrollment compared to the previous year, with Bihar being among the most affected states. Crucial initiatives, such as Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) and the DIKSHA digital platform, remain largely inaccessible in rural tribal belts due to chronic infrastructure deficits.

Field evidence from the Tharuhat region confirms that the recruitment and training of indigenous-language teachers have stalled. A primary cause is the policy’s non-binding nature: Mother Tongue-Based Education is treated as a suggestive recommendation rather than a mandatory requirement. Consequently, state official languages continue to overshadow non-dominant tribal dialects. For the Tharu

community, NEP-2020 has failed to catalyze substantive pedagogical shifts, leaving indigenous students trapped in a persistent cycle of linguistic and academic marginalization.

Conclusion: Synthesis and Critical Reflections

The study concludes that the absence of Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) significantly hinders knowledge construction among Tharu children, a crisis further exacerbated by dilapidated school infrastructure. While NEP-2020 offers generalized recommendations, it fails to align with the unique socio-cultural fabric and specific historical trajectory of the Tharu community.

A 'one-size-fits-all' policy framework remains inadequate for a community whose educational challenges are fundamentally distinct from those of mainstream society. Furthermore, the lack of a localized implementation strategy, coupled with the absence of concrete measures to revitalize the endangered Tharu language, renders the policy's ambitious goals rhetorically powerful but practically invisible within the Tharuhat region. Ultimately, without structural grounding and community-specific interventions, the promise of inclusive education remains an unrealized aspiration for the Tharu people.

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Bridging the Code and the Community: Lok Adalat as a Hybrid Justice Delivery System in Manipur

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Abstract

The Lok Adalat comes to Manipur as an indispensable hybrid justice institution, where a complex interplay of formal law, diverse customary laws, and deep-seated social norms governs dispute resolution. Through case studies from Bishnupur district, it analyses how Lok Adalat's successfully navigate this legal pluralism by offering a culturally-attuned, conciliatory alternative to the adversarial court system. The paper argues that Lok Adalat's effectively bridge the gap between state law and community realities, particularly in sensitive areas such as matrimonial conflicts, interpersonal disputes, and debt recovery.

Keywords: Lok Adalat, Hybrid, System, Justice & Bridging

Introduction

Manipur is an Indian state shaped by a monarchy and numerous hill tribes, forming a layered cultural mosaic in which each community maintains well-defined customary laws, local governance structures, and strong social norms transmitted mainly through oral tradition. The Meitei language (Manipuri) functions as a regional lingua franca connecting some 35 ethnic groups and facilitating cultural exchange, while rituals, clan identities, and festival practices reflect both

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indigenous organizations and later Hinduism influences, those were institutionalised from the eighteenth century onward¹.

Customary law among the Meitei of the Manipur valley is a coherent, community based legal order that governs landholding, kinship, marriage, and local dispute resolution. It is transmitted through oral tradition, ritual practice, and village institutions, and it shapes everyday social relations and property regimes in valley communities². Meitei customary law is rooted in lineage groups, village councils, and ritual authorities. Lineages (sagei) and clans provide the primary framework for rights and obligations; elders and customary assemblies interpret norms and oversee rites that confirm social status and property claims. Customary norms are therefore both normative and performative: they are enacted in ceremonies, recorded in community memory, and reinforced by social sanctions³.

Gangte, P. M. in her article Customary Laws of Meitei and Mizo Societies of Manipur says customary dispute resolution emphasises reconciliation, restitution, and the maintenance of communal harmony. Village councils and elder assemblies' mediate conflicts, prioritise negotiated settlements, and impose customary sanctions such as fines, ritual expiation, or temporary exclusion. The emphasis on restorative remedies reflects the priority placed on social continuity and the reintegration of disputants into community life.

Although largely unwritten, Meitei customary law interacts with statutory law through courts and administrative processes, creating challenges of proof and interpretation. The oral and performative nature of custom complicates judicial recognition; codification efforts risk ossifying flexible practices. Respectful legal pluralism necessitates mechanisms that enable customary institutions to present evidence and that allow state actors to understand customary categories without displacing local authority. This is exactly where Lok Adalat, or "People's Court," comes in with a convenient method for dispute resolution.

It has been noted that the formal court system, with its procedural rigidity, is often perceived as alienating, slow, and ill-suited for resolving disputes that are deeply embedded in the intricate web of social relationships. The result is a state of legal pluralism where statutory law coexists with a multitude of can be called non-state normative orders (Twining, 2010, p. 500). Manipur presents a profound challenge to the uniform application of formal Indian laws. It is within this contested socio-legal landscape that the Lok Adalat, or "People's Court,"

emerges not merely as an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanism, but as a vital hybrid institution. Grounded in the Gandhian principle of participatory justice and statutorily recognised under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, the Lok Adalat offers a unique forum that is flexible, conciliatory, and culturally resonant⁴.

This paper, drawing on empirical case files from the Bishnupur District Legal Services Authority, Manipur and theoretical analysis, argues that the Lok Adalat in the state functions as a crucial intermediary. It successfully mixes formal legal principles with local social and cultural sensibilities to deliver justice that is not only legally sound but also socially legitimate and restorative. By prioritising reconciliation over retribution and pragmatic closure over procedural victory, the Lok Adalat democratizes access to justice and serves as a vital social institution for maintaining peace in a diverse and conflict-ridden society.

Socio-Legal Mosaic of Manipur and Limits of Formal Adjudication

Manipur's uniqueness lies in its ethnic diversity, with distinct communities like the Meiteis, Nagas, and Kukis governing significant aspects of their personal, social, and community life through their own customary laws. These laws, often unwritten and dynamic, cover domains such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and land rights. They are administered by traditional bodies like village bodies and clan elders, whose authority derives from community consent and historical tradition rather than state sanction. A historical analysis shows that for the Meitei community in the valley, the traditional legal system was formalised under a traditional judicial framework where "the nature of the law was predominantly customary" and administered according to practices known as *Chatlam Lutin*⁵. These laws covered various domains of life. Traditional bodies administered them, and notably, their authority was so deeply rooted in community consent that even powerful rulers were subordinate to them, unable to enforce their will against established social customs. This illustrates a system where authority is derived from historical tradition rather than state sanction.

The formal Indian legal system, while supreme in theory, often struggles to gain complete legitimacy in this milieu. For many citizens, high courts and district courts are physically distant, financially

prohibitive, and culturally disconnected. The adversarial nature of litigation, which aims to produce a clear winner and loser, can be destructive in a small, tightly-knit society where ongoing relationships are inevitable. As Twining⁶ notes in his global perspective on legal pluralism, the dominance of this state-centric, win-lose model is a historical exception rather than the rule. This is because many community-based normative systems in general and Manipur in particular prioritise harmony and the maintenance of social relationships over binary judgments that offers only two mutually exclusive outcomes.

As the case files from Bishnupur suggest, the formal system is often ill-equipped to “restore social equilibrium” in the way local communities understand it, as evidenced from documents procured from Bishnupur District Legal Service Authority. The legitimacy deficit of the formal courts creates an urgent need for a justice forum that can operate within, rather than against, the grain of Manipur’s social fabric.

Lok Adalat: Conceptual Framework and Hybrid Mechanism

The Lok Adalat system was conceived as a nationwide effort to decongest courts and provide accessible justice, inspired by the traditional Panchayat model⁷. Its core philosophy is mediation and compromise, not adjudication. As the judiciary has clarified, Lok Adalats “do not possess adjudicatory powers but function exclusively as conciliatory forums” (Union of India v. Ananto,⁸. This foundational principle makes it uniquely suited to contexts like Manipur.

The Lok Adalat’s hybridity is manifest in several dimensions:

1. Procedural Hybridity: It refers to the blending of traditional, in-person legal procedures with modern, digital methods to facilitate dispute resolution. This hybrid model leverages technology to enhance accessibility and efficiency while maintaining the core objectives of the legal process.

The use of a “Hybrid Mode” in Lok Adalats, particularly for matrimonial matters, has become common now. This involves using “both physical and virtual (online) proceedings for Lok Adalat hearings,” which was widely introduced post-COVID-19. The procedure requires verifying the identity of parties,

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recording proceedings, and capturing e-signatures or digital consent to ensure the validity and enforceability of awards passed via this method⁹.

2. Normative Hybridity: While guided by the principles of justice, equity, and substantive law, the presiding officers-often a mix of lawyers and social workers-are empowered to incorporate considerations of community harmony, customary practices, and practical realities into the settlement process. The award, while a decree of a civil court, is ultimately a product of mutual consent (*State of Punjab & Anr. v. Jalour Singh & Ors*¹⁰).
3. Structural Hybridity: It refers to the composition of a legal institution from members of different professional or societal backgrounds, combining state judicial authority with community and professional representation. This structure is designed to bridge the gap between the formal legal system and the society it serves. The composition of a Lok Adalat bench is a clear example of structural hybridity. Each bench is comprised of:
 - A sitting or retired judicial officer (representing the formal state judiciary).
 - One or two members from a list that includes:
 - A member from the legal profession (e.g., an advocate).
 - A social worker engaged in the upliftment of weaker sections.
 - A person engaged in para-legal activities.

This structure intentionally combines the authority and legal expertise of a judge with the grassroots perspective and social awareness of non-judicial members.

Through an exploratory observation by this researcher, the Lok Adalat's hybridity is a state-sponsored institution that mimics the community-based, accessible nature of traditional dispute resolution. Its mobility allows it to be set up at the block or village level, literally bringing the state's justice apparatus to the people's doorstep, a critical feature in Manipur's difficult terrain.

Case Studies from Bishnupur: Hybrid Justice in Action

The case files from the Bishnupur District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) provide compelling evidence of this hybrid model effectively resolving disputes across key domains.

Few Cases of Interpersonal and Matrimonial Disputes: Securing Social Closure

In a society that highly values community harmony, a protracted criminal case can create lasting enmity. *Maisnam Opendro Singh Vs Sanasam Birchandra Singh*¹¹, a compoundable criminal case settled for Rs. 85,000, exemplifies the Lok Adalat's approach. Instead of a punitive conviction that might have deepened the rift, the forum facilitated a structured payment plan. This allowed the accused to make amends and restored relational balance in a way a court order might not, demonstrating a hybrid solution where a formal legal offence is resolved through a socially recognised method of reparation (Bishnupur DLSA).

The *Soraisam Julia Devi vs. Soraisam Suraj Singh* domestic violence case is a quintessential example of holistic, hybrid justice. The settlement brokered was a "legal package deal":

- Immediate compensation of Rs. 1,00,000 for the wife.
- Closure of the criminal domestic violence case.
- An agreement to file a mutually agreed divorce petition.
- Waiver of future alimony claims.

This package reflects a pragmatic understanding of the parties' desire for a clean break and finality—something the traditional court system, with its separate proceedings for criminal and matrimonial issues, struggles to provide efficiently. It respects the woman's agency in negotiating her path forward while using the formal legal framework (divorce petition, case closure) to achieve a definitive social outcome: the end of a marital dispute. It hybridises the need for redressal (compensation) with the social reality of an irreparable marriage, offering a culturally attuned exit.

Economic Justice: Pragmatism Over Principle

The Lok Adalat also plays a critical role in economic justice, adapting formal financial contracts to local economic realities. In cases like *State Bank of India vs. Amujao Heismam* (dispute of Rs. 30,380 settled for Rs. 12,000) and *UCO Bank vs. Longjam Marjit Singh* (settled via instalments), the Lok Adalat demonstrated pragmatic flexibility. It acknowledged the borrowers' likely inability to pay the full amount, prioritising the recovery of a significant portion for the bank and saving individuals from a debilitating spiral of debt and legal penalties. This

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approach hybridises the strict contractual obligations of formal banking law with a compassionate understanding of precarious livelihoods in the region.

National LokAdalat 10.05.2025										
DLSA/Bishnupur			NO. OF BENCHES CONSTITUTED : 1							
	Pre Litigation				Pending			Total		
	Taken up	Disposed of	Settlement Amount	Taken up	Disposed of	Settlement Amount	Taken up	Disposed of	Settlement Amount	
1	Bank Recovery Cases	34	24	3309903	0	0	0	34	24	3309903
2	Criminal Compoundable Offence Cases	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Electricity Bills (excluding non-compoundable)	1	1	200000	0	0	0	1	1	200000
4	Labour Dispute Cases	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	Land Acquisition	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	MACT Cases	0	0	0	3			3		
7	Matrimonial Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	NI Act Cases u/s 138	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	Other Civil Cases	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	Others	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	Revenue cases	0	0	0	1			1		
12	Service matters relating to pay and allowances and retiral benefits	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13	Water Bills(excluding non-compoundable)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TOTAL	35	25	3509903	4			39	25	3509903

Figure-1: Shows number of Benches Constituted

DISTRICT LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY, BISHNUPUR					
BENCH NO.1					
Case No	Bank Name	Total Outstanding Dues	Settled	Upfront payment	Remaining
1	SBI, Nambol Branch	6,25,769	3,76,000	40,000	3,36,000
2	SBI, Ningthoukhong Branch	54,446	35,029	0	35,029
3	SBI, Ningthoukhong Branch	2,34,661	80,089	10,000	70,089
4	SBI, Loktak HEPA Branch	52,780	25,000	25,000	0
5	UCO, Bishenpur Branch	99,357	36,000	10,000	26,000
6	SBI, Loktak HEPA Branch	9,58,514	4,50,000	50,000	4,00,000
7	SBI, Loktak HEPA Branch	34,812	20,000	5,000	15,000
	Grand Total	₹ 20,60,339	₹ 10,22,118	₹ 1,40,000	₹ 8,82,118

Figure-2: shows seven cases with total dues of over Rs. 20.6 lakhs settled for Rs. 10.22 lakhs through structured payment plans

The data from Bishnupur DLSA underscores this impact, showing seven cases with total dues of over Rs. 20.6 lakhs settled for Rs. 10.22 lakhs through structured payment plans. Furthermore, the summary of the National Lok Adalat on 10.05.2025 reveals staggering efficiency: 24 of 35 pre-litigation cases were disposed of in a single day, settling over Rs. 35 lakhs and significantly relieving the burden on formal courts.

Challenges and the Path Forward

Despite its remarkable successes, the Lok Adalat model in Manipur faces significant challenges, many stemming from the very complexity it seeks to navigate. Through a closure field observation, the author found out:

1. **Jurisdictional Limits:** Its inability to handle non-compoundable criminal cases restricts its scope in a region with a history of conflict.
2. **Power Imbalances and Coercion:** The informal setting, while accessible, raises concerns about potential power imbalances. Parties, particularly women or economically weaker individuals, may feel pressured to settle for less than what is just to avoid a protracted court battle. Ensuring genuine, informed consent is paramount.

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3. Awareness and Infrastructure: A significant portion of the rural population remains unaware of Lok Adalats. Furthermore, insufficient resources and funding can hinder the frequency and reach of its sessions, particularly in remote hill areas.
4. Navigating Patriarchal Norms: While providing a platform for women, the Lok Adalat must constantly guard against simply replicating and legitimising patriarchal outcomes often embedded in certain customary practices. The presence of trained female panellists and social activists is crucial to counter this.

To overcome these challenges, concerted efforts are needed. The Manipur State Legal Services Authority (MSLSA) must launch extensive awareness campaigns in local dialects. Training for conciliators must be intensified, focusing on both legal knowledge and a deep sensitivity to the diverse customary laws and gender dynamics of the state. Most importantly, the system must be strengthened with greater resources to ensure its sustainability and reach.

Conclusion

In the intricate socio-legal ecosystem of Manipur, the Lok Adalat has proven to be more than a mere adjunct to the formal judiciary. It is a dynamic hybrid institution that successfully negotiates the space between the Indian Penal Code and the community's moral code, between the Civil Procedure Code and the imperative of social harmony. By leveraging its statutory authority while embracing a conciliatory and culturally sensitive methodology, it produces outcomes that possess a dual legitimacy: that of the state and that of the community.

The case studies from Bishnupur demonstrate that for many citizens, justice is not an abstract legal principle but a tangible state of social equilibrium. The Lok Adalat, by crafting "legal package deals" and pragmatic settlements, delivers this form of justice. It resolves the case in the court records while also working to resolve the dispute in the village and in the family. In doing so, it fulfils India's constitutional mandate of equal access to justice not by making everyone come to the court, but by taking a hybrid form of justice to the people. For Manipur, investing in and refining this hybrid model is not just a legal strategy, but a vital investment in social cohesion and sustainable peace.

Suggestions:

Present study drawn these suggestions have been made to make the law more active.

The system of Lok Adalats based on compromise between two parties. Lok Adalats should give power to decide the cases on priority basis in case parties fail to arrive at any settlement, these issues can be tacked in to a great range.

Rewards should be practice for successful working of Lok Adalats in every state for Judges Lawyers, law teachers, Social workers, law students their excellent performance.

More and more Lok Adalats camps should organise in in rural areas with the objective of promoting legal aid and settlement of disputes which are taken to courts.

The most important duties of a welfare state to provide legal aid mechanisms to which all citizens have equal access to resolve of their legal disputes to enforce of their fundamental and legal rights.

Footnotes

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Critical Analysis of Tea Export in India”

Dr. Ashish Ojha

Introduction

India stands fourth in terms of tea export after Kenya (including neighboring African countries). India is the second largest producer of tea in the world after China and largest consumer of the tea in the world. Over the years it has continued to be an important foreign exchange earner of the country. This is the only industry where India has retained its leadership over the last 150 years. The percentage share of tea in India’s total agriculture export during 1981-90 is 20.16% during 2001-04 it has come down to 5.78% and in 2015 it was 18%. The decade of nineties and beginning of twenty first century has been quite depressing for the tea industry in India

Other major producing countries include China, Srilanka, Kenya and Indonesia. During 1951-60 India produced around 40% of world production declined to 26% during 2004 and it was 23% in 2018. In recent year China emerged as major tea producer in the world. Indian Tea industry is playing very important role in tea producing countries because it give major income for the country. Tea is one of the oldest industries in India and today it enjoys the status of one of the best organized industries in the country. Although tea has been known since 2737 B.C. and consumed as a beverage for 1250 years.

Now question arises what are the factors responsible for the decline in share of India’s tea exports in the world tea exports and increase in share of other major tea exporting countries in world tea exports. Given this backdrop, the present study attempts to evaluate India tea export performance and examines the underlying factors, and discuss the prospects of India’s tea exports. Comparison is made with the other major tea exporting countries. The study also looked at Tea exports and production response in major tea exporting countries under WTO regime.

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Tea Industry in India

Tea isn't simply tea in India but it is like a staple beverage here and a day without it is impossible and incomplete. Indians prefer their steaming cup of tea because for them it acts as an energy booster and is simply indispensable. This popular beverage has a lot of health benefits too as its antioxidants help to eliminate toxins and free radicals from the blood.

Originally tea is indigenous to the Eastern and Northern parts of India, but the tea industry has expanded and grown tremendously over the years, making India the largest grower and producer of tea in the world. The tea production in India was 1,325.05 million kg in 2017-18. In terms of consumption, export and production of tea, India is the world leader. It accounts for 31% of the global production of tea. India has retained its leadership over the tea industry for the last 150 years. Since 1947, the tea production in India has increased by 250% and the land area used for production has increased by 40%.

Even the export sector of India has experienced an increase in the export of this commodity. The total net foreign exchange in India is Rs.5064 crore during 2017-18. The tea industry in India is labour-intensive, meaning it depends heavily on human labour instead of machines. This industry provides employment to more than 1.1 million Indian workers and almost half the workforce constitutes of women.

There is a wide variety of tea offered by India; from Green Tea to CTC tea to the aromatic Darjeeling tea and the strong Assamese tea, the range of tea available in India is unparalleled. Indians take a lot of pride in their tea industry because of the pre-eminence of the industry as a significant earner of foreign exchange and a significant contributor to India's GNP.

The three prominent tea-growing regions in India are Darjeeling, Assam and Nilgiri. While Darjeeling and Assam are located in the Northeast regions, Nilgiri is a part of the southern region of the country. A visit to these regions is made truly memorable by the endless rolling carpets of green which are the tea gardens and one cannot but help feeling enthralled and captivated at the sight of the huge tea estates. Majority of the tea factories are located within the premises of the tea estates and this is what accounts for the freshness of the tea. The process of tea production has a series of procedures and processes. The process starts with the plucking of tea leaves in the tea estates by women employees carrying a basket over the head and ends with the production of the ultimate tea.

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There are mainly two ways of producing tea in India namely the CTC production and Orthodox production. CTC is an acronym for crush, tear and curl. The tea produced by this method is mostly used in tea bags. The orthodox production method consists of five stages, namely withering, rolling, fermentation, drying and finally storing. It is not possible to compare the two varieties because their quality depends on factors such as rainfall, soil, wind and the method of plucking of tea leaves and both possess a unique charm of their own.

Export of Tea

Export (in volume terms) World Tea export recorded a compound growth rate of 2.31% during 1991-2000 where export increased from 1078.17 m kg to 1324.65 m kg. Almost similar compound growth rate was observed in the first decade of 21st Century where export increased from 1400.55 m kg in 2001 to 1738.41 m kg in 2010. On an average during the last two decade, in the export front, both Kenya and Sri Lanka lead the world each with 20% of their contribution followed by China (17%), India (14%) and others (25%). During the last five years, it has been observed that total world exports averages 41% of total world production and 84% of exports accounted for by six countries (India, Sri Lanka, China, Kenya, Indonesia and Vietnam). The largest tea producers India and China drink away most of their own production and share only a small fraction of exportable tea. Sri Lanka and Kenya, on the other hand, share only 7% and 5% tea growing area, but are world leaders in exports, meeting 20 % each of world export needs.

Present status of Indian tea in Global position India is the largest producer of black tea as well as the largest consumer of tea in the world. Currently, India produces 23% of total world production and consumes about 19% of total world consumption of tea – nearly 76% of the tea produced is consumed within India. Over the last 20 years, India's world ranking as an exporter has come down from number one to number four, in the face of stiff competition from Sri Lanka, Kenya, and China. Statics of India's tea export in world from some previous years.

Financial Year	Export (mn kg)
2013-14	225.76
2014-15	199.08
2015-16	232.92
2016-17	227.63
2017-18	256.57

Factor Influencing Tea Export

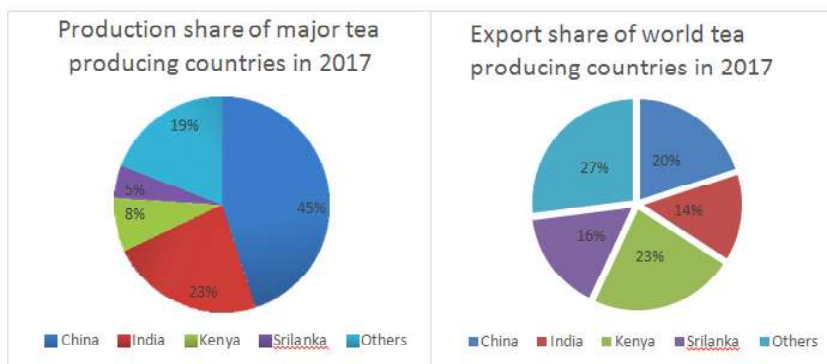
- Decline in demand for Indian tea in the global market
- Defects in auction system
- Poor price realization
- Increase in cost of production
- Supply side factors
- Demand side factors

Overview of Market of Tea

More than 36 countries spread overall the continents except North America with wide range of agro-climatic between Georgia and Argentina grow tea. The global tea production and consumption during 2017 was 5812 million kg and around 5571 million kg respectively. Total export from the producing countries during 2017 added up to 1796 million kg. Major tea producing and exporting countries are China, India, Kenya, and Srilanka and they account for 76% and 73% of world production and export respectively.

Production and Export share of major producing and exporting countries during 2017-18:-

Country	Production		Export	
	Million Kg	Global share	Million Kg	Global share
China	2609	45	355	20
India	1322	23	252	14
Kenya	440	08	416	23
Srilanka	308	05		16
Others	1133	19		27
World total	5812	100	1796	100



Observations on Global Situation

The situation in the world markets for tea can be characterized by over supplies, a slow growth in demand, and a fierce competition. It is

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necessary to reduce global supplies by increasing domestic consumption, curtailing production or at least limiting further extension of area, and developing new markets.

Consumption in Producing Countries

How much of total global production is consumed in producing countries? Except for India and China, most other producers consume only a small proportion of their production. To address market balance problems, domestic consumption in producing countries should be stimulated.

Kenya produced 324,000 MT tea and reported to have surprisingly exported 333,000 MT tea. The home consumption in Kenya is small and the Tea Board there is currently working on a strategy to boost domestic consumption⁸. The GDP growth in Kenya is around 3% per annum. It is not clear why per capita consumption of tea in Kenya fluctuates from year to year. May be the world prices affect per capita consumption in Kenya. Or, could it be smuggling through borders of Pakistan and Iran? Some surmise that every time illegal tea imports enter Kenya, per capita consumption goes down. Kenya is also embarking on value addition. It is also exploring new markets such as USSR and Poland.

If Indians could drink half a cup more per day, the problem of surpluses will disappear and that could make buffers history. Such is the power of even a small increase in consumption for a large population base.

In view of surpluses, growth in production should be checked. Producing countries have to control production on a voluntary basis in the long term interest of the tea industry. The increase

in production through productivity increases, as recently witnessed in Turkey, does strengthen their competitive positions and serve their national interest. Would Turkey add to the world supplies significantly and compound the woes of the other supplier countries?

Among the global suppliers, China is another concern. Like India, China is a producer, consumer and exporter country. Although presently China has a small share in black tea, this appears to be increasing. It has the capability to produce more black tea and could exploit that adding to world supplies? It has already removed export quota on tea from January 1, 2006. Black tea is becoming popular in China and they are served in tea houses in Beijing and Shanghai.

5. Swot Analysis of Tea Industry:

Strengths

- 1) The diverse agro climatic conditions prevailing in the tea growing areas of India lend themselves to the production of a wide range of teas – black, (CTC, orthodox) , green teas and organic teas.
- 2) A one stop shop for high quality specially teas e.g. Darjeeling, Assam,orthodox,high range nilgiris etc.
- 3) Strong production base with 75% of the production being accounted for by organized sector covering 1600 gardens owned by nearly 1100 entities
- 4) Competent managerial manpower.
- 5) Strong research backing from well-established research institution.
- 6) Availability of modernized and upgraded manufacturing facilities.
- 7) Labourwelfare laws protecting workmen.
- 8) Emerging small grower sector with young plantation profiles.
- 9) Availability of training facilities plantation managers, supervisory staff and worker for continuous up gradation of their skills.

Weaknesses

- 1) Old age of the bushes nearly 38% have crossed the economic threshold age limit of 50 years and another 10% on the verge of crossing this limit shortly.
- 2) High cost of production mainly due to low productivity, high energy cost and high social cost burden.
- 3) Diminishing availability of workforce particularly in south India.
- 4) Remote location of the plantations and transportation of teas over long distances from tea gardens to sale points.
- 5) Poor infrastructure approach roads to gardens, inadequate warehousing at ports, constrained availability of containers, placement of vessels and high ocean freight charges.
- 6) Difficulties in introduction of mechanization of field operations due to topographical and quality limitations.
- 7) Unorganized nature of small growers with fragmented small and scattered holding leading to production of poor quality teas

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mainly due to non-availability of technical know-how at the doorstep weak extension service.

- 8) Lack of quality monitoring mechanism for teas particularly sold through private sales.

Opportunities

- 1) Good awareness level world over as to the health attributes of tea leading to growing demand for good quality teas and specially teas such as organic teas, green tea.
- 2) Narrowing down of the gap between supply and demand due to increased growth rate of consumption in the major producing countries.
- 3) Producing countries reaching an agreement for forming an exclusive forum for resolving their difference over common issue.
- 4) Positive response by the tea industry responding to the government towards renovation of fields and processing factories.

Threat

- 1) Round the year production in countries such as Srilanka, Vietnam.
- 2) Low cost of production of teas from Kenya, Vietnam and Indonesia etc.
- 3) Younger age of bushes of other producing countries.
- 4) Consistency in quality commitment and high quality perception of tea.

Recommendation

A fact that I have observed very clearly during the course of my dissertation is that the problem faced by Indian tea in CIS countries and the UK and the resultant losing out on export competitiveness of Indian tea to those markets are common to all other tea consuming markets where Indian tea is exported. This has brought me to the conclusion that the Indian Tea Association and the UPSAI, along with the assistance of GOI would have to take step in order to boost the competitiveness and quality of Indian tea worldwide as a whole, instead of formulating specific strategies for the above mentioned market. By upgrading the quality and competitiveness of Indian tea and bringing it at par with that of our competitors such as Kenya and Sri Lanka, we would find it relatively easier to recapture the CIS market and the UK.

1. There is a great deal of dissension among corporate leaders in the Indian tea industry. All kinds of prescriptions are being advanced and most of them depend on the Government action and support. On the other hand, this is the time for the Government to play only a supporting role and withdraw from all other activities as they affect the tea industry except in as much as they relate to small farmers.
2. Investments in plantations and manufacturing machines must come from the industry without any subsidy from the Government. Since the industry has to compete globally, it is necessary that they have access to capital at globally competitive interest rates. The subsidies have always been a stumbling block in developing competitive industries.
3. The reforms in lending policies of the banks are as urgent as reforms elsewhere in the economy. The tea plantation sector needs huge infusion of capital. The banks can not shy away from their responsibility to bear the risk involved. The cost of capital has to be globally compatible.
4. The Government will have to hold the hands of the small scale tea producers until they can be organized on efficient lines. A beginning is yet to be made in that direction. On the whole, the small scale tea producer has been benignly neglected thus far.
5. The global competitiveness is rooted in quality at an affordable cost. This is an issue which involves and directly affects the industry. The industry will have to tackle this at their level as well as at the level of the individual firms. It is easier to say make good quality but there have to be buyers to pay for that. These are commercial decisions which only the individual firms can make. The government has no role in that.
6. Every firm will have to build and control its supply chain that is cost effective and manageable.
7. PFA standards are basic and need to be revisited given the present concerns for food safety and quality.
8. The market for value added teas is already crowded and it is a bit late for India to hope to make big impact on that. Nevertheless, efforts should be made in that direction in the hope that some dent can be made.
9. The bilateral agreements are mostly ending, the markets for tea in commodity forms are shrinking, countries are exercising their option to purchase tea from wherever it suits them best in terms of quality and pricing, and the other global producers

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are keenly eyeing the Indian market. The writing on the wall is very clear.

10. As and when the Indian market opens for unrestricted tea imports, the Indian producers would further suffer. Perhaps traders would shift from export business to import business leaving producers in lurch and the Government fire fighting routinely.

Conclusion

Tea export sector finally has a reason to cheer about in 2021 with export volume and prices showing a rising trend from the April-October 2018 period which is likely to increase further in the upcoming year. While India recorded the highest ever tea production of 1325.05 million kg.

during 2017-18 (an increase of 74.56 million kg i.e. 5.96%) in comparison to 2016-17. Domestic consumption was estimated to be 998m kg. during this year.

On the other hand, Indian tea export is 256.57 million kg valued at Rs. 5064.88 crores during 2017-18 as compared to 227.63 million kg. valued at Rs. 4632.50 crores during 2016-17 (an overall increase of 28.94m kg. or 12.71% in volume and Rs. 432.38 crores or 9.33% growth in value realization).

Export of Tea from India is significantly an increasing trend. It is due to the effort of government of India through the tea board. It also explained about the different varieties of tea produced and marketed in India and foreign countries. India and China are major tea producing countries of the world. India and China are also major tea exporting countries in the world. Tea industry is playing very important role in tea producing countries because it gives major income for the country. Tea is one of the oldest industries in world and today it enjoy the status of one of the best organized industries in the country.

However, there are still time and space for India to re-emerge on the global footprint. As we have seen in the individual country analysis of Russia, Kazakhstan and the U.K, India is not far behind its competitors, Protective measure are taken by our government and industries body to upgrade the methods and practices followed in the industry, export promotion schemes for tea, including the commodity of tea in tea agreements with importing nation and innovation in the whole process can still bring India back to the top spot.

Smart Urbanization and Ethical Responsibility: A Case Study of Lucknow City

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Abstract

Rapid global urbanization necessitates sustainable smart urban development, integrating ICT to enhance urban services and livability while posing ethical challenges like inequalities, exclusion, and data privacy issues. Analyzing smart city initiatives in Lucknow, India, the relationship between smart urbanization and ethical responsibility is explored. Ethical dilemmas arise in technology deployment, requiring equitable benefits for all citizens. Lucknow's strategy balances technological progress with social justice, aiming to improve efficiency and quality of life while mitigating social inequalities. Ethical responsibilities include inclusivity, data privacy, transparency, and equitable benefit distribution. A comprehensive governance approach with participatory planning and digital literacy is vital. Lucknow aims to set a benchmark in urban development, emphasizing commitments to privacy, equity, transparency, and democratic governance to ensure a just and livable environment for all citizens.

Key word- Smart urbanization, Management, Transparency, Communication, Modernization, Technological advancements, Distribution.

Introduction

Rapid global urbanization presents opportunities and challenges, necessitating sustainable smart urban development. This involves integrating information and communication technologies (ICT) to improve urban services and livability, yet raises ethical concerns, such as increasing inequalities, exclusion, and data privacy issues. The essay explores the relationship between smart urbanization and ethical

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January-March, 2026

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responsibility in Lucknow, India, analyzing its smart city initiatives. It highlights ethical dilemmas in technology deployment and the need for equitable benefits for all citizens. Balancing technological progress with social justice and ethical responsibility is crucial for fostering inclusivity and addressing the social impacts of urban technological advancements.

The Concept of Smart Urbanization

Smart urbanization encompasses a holistic approach to urban planning that integrates data and digital solutions for improving residents' quality of life. This approach involves interconnecting urban systems, including transportation, energy, waste management, and public safety, to foster efficiency, sustainability, and responsiveness. Key components include the use of sensors, data analytics, and intelligent systems to optimize resources, enhance service delivery, and support informed decision-making. Examples include smart traffic management systems that adjust signals based on real-time traffic data to alleviate congestion and smart grids that improve energy efficiency and reduce costs. Additionally, smart waste management systems optimize collection routes by monitoring bin fill levels, while smart water management ensures resource conservation and equitable distribution.

The strategic application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) plays a significant role in managing urban assets effectively. Technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), big data analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), and cloud computing empower cities to gather and analyze extensive data, facilitating proactive problem-solving and informed decisions. Ultimately, the aim is to create livable, sustainable, resilient, and competitive urban environments that can adapt to population growth and resource limitations while enhancing the overall living and working experience for citizens.

Applying Ethical Frameworks to Lucknow's Context

Examining Lucknow's smart city development through an ethical lens reveals key considerations. Intelligent traffic management systems should alleviate congestion but must not displace informal transportation providers without offering alternatives. Smart streetlights with surveillance capabilities require clear policies on data management to protect citizen privacy. Addressing biases in AI systems for public services is essential to prevent discrimination. Equitable access to smart city benefits necessitates investment in digital

infrastructure in underserved areas, digital literacy programs for various age groups, and development of user-friendly digital services. E-governance portals must also be accessible to those with disabilities or limited digital skills. Respecting Lucknow's heritage is another challenge; technology should enhance heritage tourism and preserve historical sites instead of diminishing the city's cultural character. Transparency and accountability are crucial; guidelines for data collection and usage should be established, with avenues for citizens to opt out or seek recourse. Engaging diverse stakeholders through public consultations ensures alignment of the smart city agenda with community needs. Ultimately, the goal is a governance model where technology serves humanity, prioritizing ethical responsibility in the implementation of smart city initiatives.

Ethical Imperatives in Smart City Development

The pursuit of smart urbanization brings ethical responsibilities, particularly concerning social inequality and data privacy. Smart solutions may deepen the digital divide, marginalizing populations without digital literacy, devices, or affordable internet. This can lead to unequal access to services, resulting in a two-tiered society. Extensive data collection raises privacy concerns, as personal information collected without robust protections can be misused, compromising individual freedoms and trust. Smart initiatives must prioritize inclusivity, privacy, and equity to enhance access rather than obstruct it. The concept of "surveillance capitalism" complicates matters, as it exploits personal data for profit, potentially exacerbating inequalities. Additionally, the concentration of power among tech providers challenges democratic governance and citizen participation. Data-driven algorithms influence urban decisions, highlighting the importance of involving citizens in technology implementation. Ethical responsibility also encompasses accountability for stakeholders in smart city projects and the establishment of redress mechanisms for negative outcomes.

Lucknow's Urban Transformation and Smart Initiatives

Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, is experiencing significant urban transformation due to population growth and modernization efforts. As part of India's Smart Cities Mission, the city is implementing various initiatives aimed at enhancing efficiency and livability. Key projects include developing intelligent transport systems to minimize

congestion, improving water and sanitation networks, and smart street lighting solutions. Lucknow is also adopting digital platforms for citizen engagement and service delivery to streamline administrative processes and improve public access to information. Notable projects like the Lucknow Metro Rail Corporation leverage advanced technologies for operational efficiency and passenger convenience. Additionally, integrated command and control centers are being established to monitor and manage urban services in real-time, employing data analytics for proactive issue identification and resolution.

The Smart City Mission framework provides a foundation for these initiatives, emphasizing data-driven decision-making and citizen-centric approaches, while navigating the complexities of a diverse urban population. Despite its historical and cultural significance, Lucknow faces challenges due to rapid growth and economic development, affecting its existing infrastructure. The vision for a smart city includes projects aimed at enhancing public transportation, expanding metro connectivity, and upgrading utility infrastructure with energy-efficient solutions. E-governance platforms are also being developed to enhance accessibility and transparency in government services. Overall, the aspiration is to transform Lucknow into a modern metropolis, effectively blending its historical legacy with contemporary urban needs.

Challenges and Opportunities for Ethical Smart Urbanization in Lucknow

Lucknow's smart urbanization journey grapples with balancing technological advancements and cultural heritage while fostering social cohesion. Rapid technological change might outstrip the development of strong ethical frameworks, resulting in unforeseen consequences. Municipal bodies face significant challenges in effective data governance and privacy protection, requiring substantial investments. These hurdles, however, also present opportunities for ethical urban planning, positioning Lucknow as a potential model for ethically mindful smart urbanization in India. By emphasizing citizen well-being and equity from the outset, Lucknow can cultivate public-private partnerships that embed ethical considerations early.

The city's cultural identity can support heritage preservation, local craftsmanship, and community involvement in culturally sensitive manners. A human-centric approach necessitates citizen engagement in decision-making to align technology with their actual needs, focusing less on private vehicle management and more on enhancing smart public transport and non-motorized mobility. Digital literacy and

awareness regarding data rights are crucial for empowering citizens' informed participation. Nonetheless, challenges like the digital divide persist, risking exclusion for technologically disadvantaged groups. Additionally, data privacy and security issues loom large, stressing the necessity for transparency and equitable smart project benefits to prevent exacerbating existing disparities.

Ensuring Ethical Responsibility in Practice

To address ethical challenges in smart city initiatives, a proactive approach emphasizing inclusivity is essential. This involves designing projects that meet the needs of all citizens, especially vulnerable groups, through investment in digital literacy, affordable technology access, and user-friendly interfaces. Additionally, maintaining offline alternatives for essential services is necessary. Strong data governance and privacy frameworks are vital, requiring clear regulations on data handling with a focus on anonymization and consent, alongside transparency in data practices. Citizens should have the ability to access, correct, or delete their data, supported by independent oversight bodies. Furthermore, ethical considerations must be integrated into project planning, including ethical impact assessments and community engagement for feedback. Ongoing monitoring is crucial to mitigate unintended negative effects. Promoting public awareness and citizen participation fosters a sense of ownership in smart city initiatives, ensuring they serve the community's interests and emphasize human well-being and ethical principles rather than being imposed top-down.

The Role of Governance and Policy

Effective governance and well-crafted policies are crucial for ethical smart urbanization in Lucknow. Local and state governments need clear frameworks that prioritize citizen rights and well-being alongside technological progress. This includes comprehensive data privacy laws adhering to global standards, robust cybersecurity for citizen data protection, and transparent accountability mechanisms. Policies should confront the digital divide by including marginalized groups in smart city initiatives through subsidized internet, public access points, and digital literacy programs.

A participatory governance model is vital, involving citizens, civil society, and the private sector in planning and evaluation of smart city projects. Public consultations and feedback mechanisms can detect ethical pitfalls early, ensuring alignment with community needs. Establishing independent ethics review boards can provide impartial

oversight. Ultimately, successful smart urbanization depends on governance structures that empower rather than exclude, with dynamic policies adapting to new technologies and societal requirements, ensuring Lucknow's smart city journey is ethically responsible.

Conclusion

Lucknow's strategy for smart urbanization addresses the global challenge of technology use in urban development while upholding ethical standards. Promising improved efficiency and quality of life, it also risks increasing social inequalities, violating privacy, and fostering exclusion without careful management. Ethical responsibilities involve ensuring inclusivity, data privacy, transparency, and equitable distribution of benefits. A comprehensive approach extending beyond mere technology implementation is essential, emphasizing strong governance, participatory planning, and digital literacy. Lucknow aspires to balance technological advancement with social justice and sustainability, setting a benchmark for urban development in India. Challenges persist in embedding ethical responsibility in smart city initiatives, highlighting the need for commitments to privacy, equity, transparency, and democratic governance. Ultimately, success hinges on creating a just and livable environment for all citizens.

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Online Purchase vs. Traditional Purchase: A Comparative Analysis of Consumer Behavior and Market Dynamics

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Keywords: *e-commerce, traditional retail, consumer behavior, omni-channel, digital shopping, brick-and-mortar*

1. Introduction

The emergence of electronic commerce in the mid-1990s introduced a paradigm shift in how consumers access goods and services. By 2025, global e-commerce sales surpassed \$6.3 trillion, representing over 22% of total retail sales worldwide (Statista, 2025). Yet despite this remarkable growth, traditional retail stores continue to account for the majority of consumer spending, underscoring the enduring relevance of physical shopping environments.

Understanding the differences between online and traditional purchasing is critical for businesses, policymakers, and consumers alike. These two modalities are not merely technological variations of the same activity — they reflect fundamentally different consumer journeys, psychological motivations, and market infrastructures. This paper provides a structured comparative analysis to illuminate these distinctions and their implications for the modern retail landscape.

The objectives of this research are: (1) to identify key parameters along which online and traditional purchasing differ, (2) to analyze

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consumer preferences and behavioral patterns in each context, and (3) to assess the strategic relevance of each model for contemporary retailers.

2. Literature Review

Early research by Pavlou (2003) established that consumer trust and perceived risk are pivotal determinants of online purchasing intention. In contrast, Tauber (1972) identified social motives — such as peer interaction and recreational browsing — as powerful drivers of in-store shopping behavior. These foundational insights continue to frame scholarly discussions around consumer channel preference.

More recent work by Verhoef et al. (2015) introduced the concept of the ‘omni-channel’ retail environment, where consumers fluidly move between digital and physical touchpoints. Their research noted that neither channel can be viewed in isolation; rather, consumer decisions are shaped by an interplay of convenience, product category, price sensitivity, and experiential expectations.

A 2023 McKinsey report found that 60% of global consumers used both online and in-store channels within the same purchase journey — a phenomenon termed ‘webrooming’ (researching online, buying in-store) and ‘showrooming’ (testing in-store, buying online). This cross-channel behavior confirms that both modes of purchasing are deeply intertwined, making their comparative study all the more essential.

3. Key Dimensions of Comparison

3.1 Convenience and Accessibility

Online purchasing eliminates geographical and temporal barriers. Consumers can browse, compare, and purchase products at any hour from virtually any location with internet access. This 24/7 availability is particularly advantageous for working professionals, individuals with mobility challenges, and those in rural or underserved areas.

Traditional stores, by contrast, are constrained by fixed operating hours, physical location, and the need for personal travel. However, for consumers who value immediacy — particularly for urgent or impulse purchases — in-store shopping provides instant product possession without waiting for shipping. The ‘instant gratification’ factor remains a significant competitive advantage for brick-and-mortar retailers.

3.2 Product Experience and Evaluation

One of the most cited limitations of online purchasing is the inability to physically interact with a product before buying. Consumers cannot

touch the fabric of a garment, test the comfort of furniture, or evaluate the true color and scale of home decor items. While high-resolution photography, 360-degree views, augmented reality (AR) features, and customer reviews partially compensate for this gap, they do not fully replicate the in-person sensory experience.

Traditional stores provide a rich multisensory environment. Customers can try on clothing, sample fragrances, taste food products, and receive personalized guidance from trained sales staff. This is particularly valued in categories such as luxury goods, groceries, electronics, and furniture. The role of the sales associate as a trusted advisor adds significant perceived value that online chatbots and automated recommendation engines have yet to fully replicate.

3.3 Pricing and Value Perception

Online platforms excel at price transparency. Consumers can compare prices across dozens of retailers in seconds, leveraging comparison engines such as Google Shopping or PriceGrabber. This competitive pricing environment typically results in lower prices for consumers and thinner margins for sellers. Additionally, online-exclusive deals, discount codes, and flash sales create a perception of superior value.

Traditional retailers often operate at higher price points due to overhead costs including rent, utilities, and staffing. However, they may offer value-added services such as in-store demonstrations, complimentary gift wrapping, immediate returns, and loyalty programs with experiential rewards that online platforms struggle to replicate at scale. For many consumers, these services justify a price premium.

3.4 Security and Privacy

Online purchasing introduces cybersecurity risks that are absent in traditional retail. Data breaches, phishing attacks, fraudulent sellers, and insecure payment gateways remain ongoing concerns for digital shoppers. According to the Identity Theft Resource Center (2024), over 3,200 data breaches were reported in the United States alone in 2023, with retail being among the most targeted sectors.

Despite these risks, advances in SSL encryption, two-factor authentication, and tokenized payment systems have significantly reduced online fraud. Traditional shopping, while exempt from digital threats, carries its own risks — physical theft, counterfeit goods from unverified vendors, and lack of transaction records in cash-based purchases. Consumer confidence ultimately rests on platform reputation, regulatory compliance, and transparent return policies in both environments.

3.5 Customer Service and Support

Customer service in traditional retail is characterized by real-time, face-to-face interaction. Staff can immediately resolve issues, demonstrate products, and personalize recommendations based on visual cues and conversation. This human element fosters trust and can convert hesitant shoppers into loyal customers.

Online customer service has evolved considerably with the introduction of AI-powered chatbots, live chat, video consultations, and responsive social media support. Yet consumer satisfaction surveys consistently rate in-person assistance higher for complex or high-involvement purchases. Conversely, for straightforward or repeat purchases, online self-service tools offer efficiency and speed that many consumers prefer.

3.6 Environmental and Social Impact

The environmental footprint of each purchasing method is complex. Online shopping, while eliminating individual consumer travel, generates significant carbon emissions through last-mile delivery logistics and packaging waste. Conversely, traditional retail, through consolidated supply chains and reduced packaging, may offer ecological advantages — though this depends heavily on consumer travel patterns and store energy consumption.

Socially, traditional retail supports local economies by employing community members and anchoring commercial districts. Online retail, while creating logistics and warehousing jobs, tends to concentrate economic benefits in large technology and fulfillment corporations. The sociocultural dimension of shopping — community building, local business patronage, and shared public space — is a dimension where traditional retail retains meaningful advantages.

4. Comparative Overview Table

The table below summarizes the major differences across the key dimensions analyzed in this study:

Dimension	Online Purchase	Traditional Purchase
Convenience	24/7 access from any location	Limited to store hours and location
Product Experience	Images, videos, reviews only	Physical touch, try, and feel
Price Comparison	Instant and easy across platforms	Manual, time-consuming effort
Delivery	Shipped to doorstep (1–7 days)	Immediate product possession
Returns	Involves shipping logistics	In-store exchange is simpler
Personalization	AI-driven recommendations	Sales associate assistance
Security	Risk of cyber fraud	Risk of physical theft
Social Experience	Isolated, individual activity	Social and community-driven

5. Consumer Behavioral Trends

Consumer purchasing behavior is increasingly influenced by a blend of digital and physical touchpoints. The rise of ‘BOPIS’ (Buy Online,

Pick Up In-Store) models demonstrates that consumers seek the efficiency of online ordering combined with the immediacy and tactile reassurance of in-store collection. Retailers such as Target, Walmart, and IKEA have invested heavily in these hybrid fulfilment models.

Generational differences also play a defining role. Gen Z and Millennial consumers demonstrate higher comfort with digital transactions, social commerce, and influencer-driven purchasing. Baby Boomers and Gen X consumers, while increasingly adopting online shopping, show stronger preferences for in-store interaction, particularly for high-involvement categories. Effective retail strategy must account for this demographic heterogeneity.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic permanently accelerated digital adoption across all age groups. Many consumers who were compelled to shop online for the first time during lockdowns retained those behaviors post-pandemic, reshaping baseline expectations around delivery speed, digital payment options, and seamless online interfaces.

6. Strategic Implications for Retailers

The evidence presented in this paper suggests that the future of retail does not belong exclusively to either online or traditional purchasing — but to those organizations capable of integrating both. The following strategic recommendations emerge from this analysis:

- Invest in omni-channel infrastructure that connects online and in-store inventory, enabling seamless consumer journeys across touchpoints.
- Leverage data analytics from online platforms to personalize the in-store experience and anticipate demand patterns.
- Enhance the digital product experience through augmented reality, virtual try-ons, and detailed user-generated content to reduce the sensory gap of online shopping.
- Prioritize cybersecurity investments and transparent data policies to build consumer trust in online channels.
- Develop hybrid fulfilment models (BOPIS, curbside pickup, same-day delivery) to capture the benefits of both channels.
- Train in-store staff as brand ambassadors who provide experiential value that no algorithm can replicate.

Retailers who view online and traditional purchasing as competing modalities risk missing the broader strategic imperative: consumers increasingly expect both, simultaneously. The competitive advantage belongs to those who deliver coherence, not choice, across their channels.

7. Conclusion

This paper has examined the major differences between online and traditional purchasing across seven critical dimensions: convenience, product experience, pricing, security, customer service, environmental impact, and consumer behavior. Each modality presents distinct strengths that appeal to different consumer segments, product categories, and purchasing contexts.

Online purchasing offers unmatched convenience, price transparency, and scalability, making it particularly suited to standardized, repurchase, and price-sensitive product categories. Traditional purchasing retains irreplaceable advantages in sensory engagement, immediate possession, personalized service, and community participation — attributes that are especially valued in high-involvement and luxury categories.

As retail continues to evolve, the distinction between ‘online’ and ‘offline’ purchasing is likely to blur further. The retailers, brands, and policymakers who succeed in the next decade will be those who recognize that the consumer’s journey does not respect channel boundaries — and who design their strategies accordingly. A nuanced understanding of these differences, as articulated in this research, is a prerequisite for informed decision-making in the contemporary marketplace.

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Forensic Accounting: Implementation and Roles in Financial Frauds

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Abstract

Forensic accounting merges accounting, auditing, and investigative skills to examine financial statements and transactions. This paper explores the implementation of forensic accounting in detecting, investigating, and preventing financial frauds. It highlights the techniques used, the roles played by forensic accountants, and case studies that emphasize its effectiveness. The paper also discusses the challenges faced in its implementation and offers suggestions for enhancing forensic practices.

Key Words: Forensic accounting, financial fraud, fraud detection, fraud investigation, litigation support, corporate governance, forensic audit, Benford's Law, cyber fraud, accounting irregularities, risk management.

Introduction

In today's dynamic financial environment, the complexity and volume of financial transactions have increased significantly, leading to a corresponding rise in financial irregularities and fraud. As organizations strive to maintain transparency, integrity, and trust, financial fraud remains a persistent challenge that threatens the stability of businesses and economies globally. Financial fraud not only results in substantial economic losses but also undermines investor confidence, distorts market integrity, and damages corporate

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reputations. In this context, forensic accounting has emerged as a critical discipline, bridging the gap between accounting and law to combat fraud effectively.

Forensic accounting is a specialized field that involves the application of accounting principles, auditing techniques, and investigative skills to uncover financial fraud and support legal proceedings. Unlike traditional accounting, which primarily focuses on recording and reporting financial information, forensic accounting delves deeper into the analysis and interpretation of complex financial data to detect anomalies, reconstruct financial events, and provide evidence in legal disputes. This interdisciplinary practice plays a crucial role in identifying fraudulent activities, quantifying losses, and presenting findings in courts of law.

The evolution of forensic accounting has been driven by a series of high-profile financial scandals, such as the Enron and WorldCom collapses, the Satyam scam in India, and more recently, the Wirecard fraud in Germany. These events exposed significant loopholes in internal control systems and auditing practices, emphasizing the need for more robust mechanisms to detect and prevent financial misconduct. As a result, regulators, corporate governance bodies, and professional accounting organizations have increasingly acknowledged the importance of forensic accounting as a tool for financial oversight and fraud mitigation.

The implementation of forensic accounting within organizations is multifaceted. It involves the integration of specialized audit tools, advanced data analytics, and legal expertise to scrutinize financial records. Forensic accountants play diverse roles—from internal consultants advising on fraud risk management to external investigators collaborating with law enforcement agencies. Their responsibilities extend to evaluating internal controls, conducting interviews, tracing asset misappropriation, and providing expert testimony in litigation. The growing reliance on digital technology and the rise of cyber-enabled financial crimes have further expanded the scope of forensic accounting, making it indispensable in modern-day financial crime investigations.

Despite its growing relevance, the field faces several challenges, including a shortage of skilled professionals, the high cost of forensic investigations, and varying levels of regulatory enforcement across

jurisdictions. Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated effort involving professional education, technological advancement, and legislative support.

This research paper aims to explore the implementation of forensic accounting in the context of financial frauds, analyse the methodologies employed, examine real-world case studies, and highlight the strategic roles played by forensic accountants in enhancing financial accountability. By understanding its potential and limitations, stakeholders can better leverage forensic accounting to deter fraud and promote ethical financial practices.

Definition and Evolution of Forensic Accounting

Forensic accounting is the application of accounting methods to legal problems and proceedings. It includes the investigation of financial discrepancies, valuation of losses, and support in legal matters. The field gained prominence following major financial scandals such as Enron, WorldCom, and more recently, Wire card.

Objectives of Forensic Accounting

- Detect and investigate financial frauds.
- Collect and analyse financial evidence.
- Support litigation through expert testimony.
- Assist in risk management and internal control.

Types of Financial Frauds Uncovered by Forensic Accounting

- Embezzlement
- Financial Statement Fraud
- Bribery and Corruption
- Tax Evasion
- Money Laundering
- Cyber Fraud

Tools and Techniques Used in Forensic Accounting

- Benford's Law: Statistical analysis of number patterns.
- Data Mining and Analytics: Identifying anomalies in large datasets.
- Ratio Analysis: Detecting inconsistencies in financial ratios.

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- Forensic Audit Software: e.g., IDEA, ACL, and Case Ware.
- Interview and Interrogation: Gaining insights through behavioural cues.

Roles and Responsibilities of Forensic Accountants

- Investigators: Analysing books and records to identify discrepancies.
- Consultants: Advising organizations on fraud prevention and detection.
- Expert Witnesses: Presenting findings in court.
- Internal Control Evaluators: Assessing the robustness of financial systems.
- Litigation Support: Preparing financial evidence and reports.

Implementation in Organizations

- **Integration into Corporate Governance:** Organizations incorporate forensic accounting through internal audits and fraud detection units.
- **Regulatory Support:** Regulatory bodies like the SEC, FCA, and Financial Action Task Force (FATF) promote forensic practices as part of compliance and transparency.

Case Studies

Enron Scandal (2001): Forensic accountants traced complex off-balance-sheet transactions.

Satyam Scam (India, 2009): Uncovered inflated revenue figures and ghost employees.

Wirecard AG (Germany, 2020): Tracked fictitious assets worth €1.9 billion.

Challenges in Implementation

- Lack of trained professionals.
- Inadequate legal and regulatory frameworks in some countries.
- High costs associated with forensic investigations.
- Resistance from within the organization.

Recommendations

1. Invest in training and certification (e.g., CFE – Certified Fraud Examiner).
2. Integrate forensic techniques into regular audits.

3. Foster cooperation between forensic experts and legal teams.
4. Update regulations to include forensic accounting as a mandatory compliance requirement.

Conclusion

Forensic accounting has become a critical tool in combating financial fraud. As fraud schemes grow more complex, the role of forensic accountants becomes more essential. Proactive adoption and strategic implementation can help organizations safeguard their assets, comply with laws, and maintain investor confidence.

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The Role of Khap Panchayat in the Rural Society of Haryana

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Abstract:

There is not denying the fact that Khap Panchayats are traditional, clan-based community councils prevalent in rural Haryana. They consist of male village elders and function as informal courts that regulate local social conduct, enforce cultural traditions, and resolve local disputes. They wield considerable influence over village life, although their practices are often controversial. There is not denying the fact that Khap Panchayats in Haryana are traditional, clan-based community councils that function as influential, informal judicial bodies. The Khap Panchayats upholding patriarchal norms, they wield significant, though controversial, authority over social, marital, and local issues in rural society. The number of such cases has increased manifold in which completely unconstitutional caste panchayats have openly disregarded the law of the country by issuing illegal decrees. Despite often facing criticism for “kangaroo court” tactics such as opposing inter-caste marriages, they manage community disputes, promote education and have evolved to support local sports. In Indian society, the role of Khap Panchayat has been viewed negatively due to their traditional dictates regarding marriage and girl child freedom. This research paper analyses the multi-faceted role of Khap Panchayat in Haryana, including their impact on rural life, gender roles, political mobilisation and their conflict with the constitutional, democratic Panchayati Raj system. In this research paper, the author attempts to explore the role of Khap Panchayat in the rural society of Haryana.

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Key Words: Khap, Panchayat, Rural, Society, Haryana, Traditional.

Introduction-

The Khap Panchayat, a traditional, community-based council primarily active in rural areas of Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, remains a powerful institution even in 2026. Khap- Panchayat composed of elders from a group of villages (usually from the Jat community), these assemblies function as extra-constitutional bodies and wield significant social and political power. It can be said that Khap-Panchayat functioning parallel to formal legal institutions, these assemblies acts as guardians of customs, community welfare, and dispute resolution, and balance these roles by taking controversial stances on social norms and individual freedoms. Khap Panchayats, traditional clan-based councils prevalent in Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, function as extra-constitutional bodies regulating social conduct, marriage rules, and dispute resolution in rural areas. There is not denying the fact that despite historically serving as guardians of community harmony, their modern functioning is marked by patriarchy, caste-based stratification, and controversial “honour-based” punishments.

It can be said that Khap Panchayat is a traditional social institution in rural areas of northern India, often consisting of a group of villages belonging to the same caste, primarily the Jat community. They have functioned as informal governing bodies for centuries, and some records trace their origins to the medieval period. Unlike elected village panchayats (constitutional bodies), khaps Panchayat are voluntary, entirely male-dominated assemblies led by elders. Their social influence is particularly strong in districts such as Rohtak, Sonipat, Jhajjar, and Bhiwani, where they set strict social rules regarding social and personal behaviour, often overriding formal legal laws.¹

Historically, Khap Panchayats emerged when central authority was weak or absent, and provided a mechanism for security and dispute resolution. In medieval times, they served as guardians of culture, protecting the community from internal and external threats and their decisions were considered binding. There is not denying the fact that after the establishment of democratic Panchayati Raj institutions, it was anticipated that the importance of Khap Panchayats would decline. However, it can be said that they have maintained their social relevance by focusing on cultural preservation, especially in the areas of marriage and caste unity.² The Khap Panchayat system in India has long been a subject of mystery, scrutiny, and controversy.

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There is not denying the fact that Haryana's Khap Panchayats are paradoxical institutions, simultaneously serving as both social organizations and regressive tribunals. They represent the survival of ancient, informal governance structures within a modern democratic system. Their role in dispute resolution and farmer mobilization provides a degree of social cohesion, but their strict adherence to patriarchal marriage norms and involvement in honour-based violence pose a direct threat to individual freedom and legal systems. The way forward rests on a mix of strengthening formal legal mechanisms, empowering rural women, and promoting education, so that the younger generation can challenge regressive norms and encourage Khap Panchayats to evolve as positive catalysts for social change rather than enforcers of oppressive traditions.³

Key Aspects of the Role of Khap Panchayat in Haryana:

India is known for its rich cultural diversity, values, culture and vibrant traditions. One such traditional institution that has been an integral part of Indian society for centuries is the Khap Panchayat. Khap Panchayats are community-based councils found primarily in rural areas of northern India, particularly in the states of Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. These councils play a vital role in governing social norms and resolving disputes within their respective communities.⁴ There has been a lot of controversy regarding the structure of Khap Panchayats. All the members of Khap Panchayats are men, although they often make decisions affecting young women. In Haryana, the women are not allowed to attend the Khap Panchayat and are represented by their male relatives.

It can be said that Khap Panchayats appear in the news for a variety of reasons, some of whose leaders advocate progressive reforms to address key social and economic issues, including unemployment, education, and rural development. There is not denying the fact that Khap Panchayats are traditional community-based councils, primarily in northern India, particularly in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, that function as informal judicial bodies. The Khap Panchayat system played a key role in maintaining social order in rural societies, served as a forum for conflict resolution within the caste hierarchy, and operated parallel to formal legal systems, giving priority to customary norms. Today, in Haryana, rapid capitalist transformation is being accompanied by the growth of a regressive feudal consciousness. It can be said that alongside the spread of education and political

awareness among Dalits, women, and backward classes, Khap Panchayats are being extensively strengthened to maintain the status quo. The number of cases of completely unconstitutional Khap Panchayats issuing illegal decrees and blatantly violating the laws of the land has increased significantly. Attacks on young couples, Dalits, and progressive individuals have become commonplace.⁵

- **Social Regulation:** Khaps function as traditional governance structures and regulate marriages within the same clan (sagotra) and the same village, considering them taboo. They act as guardians of traditional values.
- **Dispute Resolution:** They provide a decentralized and local way of resolving disputes, including property issues, and are often activated when formal legal systems are slow or inaccessible.
- **Impact on Gender Dynamics:** Their (Khap Panchayat) role is heavily criticized for promoting patriarchy, restricting women's autonomy (such as banning jeans or mobile phones for girls), and enforcing social ostracism. In contrast, some Khap Panchayats have recently promoted girls' education, opposed female foeticide, and supported female athletes.
- **Political and Social Influence:** Although their electoral influence is declining in some rural areas due to generational changes, they remain influential in local politics and farmers' movements, as exemplified by their participation in farmers' protests.
- **Legality:** The Supreme Court of India has ruled that Khap Panchayats act as "completely illegal" arbitrary courts in some cases, particularly when they interfere with adult marriage choices.

Controversy Surrounding the Role of Khap Panchayat and the Serious Challenges Associated with it:

The merits or demerits of Khap Panchayats are a subjective question and are widely debated. Khap Panchayat supporters argue that these (Khap Panchayat) social councils play a vital role in preserving cultural heritage, promoting social cohesion, and maintaining law and order in rural areas, where formal legal systems may be either inaccessible or ineffective. They argue that Khap Panchayats provide a social platform for community members to express their concerns, resolve disputes and ensure adherence to social norms.⁶ However, critics argue that Khap Panchayats often promote regressive and discriminatory practices, particularly against young women. They claim that these Khap Panchayats are responsible for enforcing strict rules on marriage, honour killings, and caste-based discrimination. Critics argue that

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decisions made by Khap Panchayats often violate individual fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the Constitution of India. Despite being influential, Khap Panchayats role and functions are highly controversial and are often criticized by human rights organizations and the judiciary for their regressive and autocratic decisions.⁷

- **Honour Killings:** Khap Panchayats are notorious for opposing gay and inter-caste marriages, and sometimes issue social decrees that result in honour killings—the murder of couples who marry against traditional customs.
- **Gender Discrimination:** Khap Panchayats are overwhelmingly male-dominated and have been accused of being anti-women, restricting women's autonomy, setting dress codes (such as opposing jeans) and banning the use of mobile phones by young girls.
- **Illegal Nature:** In 2011, the Supreme Court of India declared Khap Panchayats illegal, calling their social actions barbaric and a violation of the Indian Constitution's principles. However, due to their deep influence in the rural community, they continue to operate.

Role of Khap Panchayats in Rural Haryana:

It can be said that Khap Panchayats are traditional, caste-based social councils in rural Haryana. Despite lacking formal legal status, they serve as powerful, non-judicial arbiters of community norms. They enforce strict rules of social conduct, exert influence in local politics, and intervene to resolve disputes when formal legal courts are unavailable or slow. Although Khaps Panchayats are highly respected by many rural communities as symbols of cultural identity, they are widely criticised by human rights organizations, legal authorities, and constitutional courts for operating outside the law, promoting gender discrimination, and issuing decrees that violate individual liberties. The role of Khap Panchayats is multifaceted, spanning social, economic, and political spheres.⁸

- **Dispute Resolution:** Khap communities often resolve local conflicts, property disputes and family differences at the village level.
- **Social Reformers:** Surprisingly, many Khap community members have taken progressive steps against social evils, such as banning excessive wedding expenditure, stopping the dowry system, promoting women's education, and campaigning against alcohol and drug abuse.

- **Political Power:** Members of the Khap community are powerful pressure groups. Their support is crucial for politicians, often influencing voting patterns, especially in Jat-dominated areas. They have also historically played a role in farmers' movements, such as the 2020-2021 protests.
- **Preservation of Traditions:** They act as guardians of village traditions, maintaining strict rules on inter-caste marriages and marriages within the same clan.

The Dark Side: Patriarchy and Violation of Rights:

Khap Panchayats enforce their orders through social sanctions and punishments, imposing heavy fines, or even killing or forcing victims to commit suicide. Many young couples are being murdered for violating Khap Panchayat Rules. As a result, they do not allow inter-caste marriages. However, if a person marries into another caste, the couple is often killed by their own family members, as ordered by Khap Panchayats, in a practice known as "honour killing." The functioning of Khap Panchayats has come under severe criticism for its regressive nature and violation of fundamental rights, especially targeting young women.⁹

- **Honour Killings:** Khap Panchayats are often linked to the brutal murders of young couples who marry in violation of Khap Panchayat rules, and such acts are often justified as protecting family reputation.
- **Patriarchal Control over Women:** Khap Panchayats are run entirely by men, with little or no participation by women in decision-making, yet the rules primarily target women's behaviour. They have issued decrees against girls using mobile phones, wearing Western clothing, or studying in co-educational institutions.
- **Gender Discrimination:** While taking a tough stance towards girls who violate the social rules, Khap Panchayats often take a lenient stance towards boys from influential families.

While historically significant, these institutions (Khap Panchayat) are increasingly challenged by modern legal and social norms, making their role complex and changing in modern Haryana.

Conclusion:

There is not denying the fact that Khap Panchayats help preserve traditional culture and traditions from one generation to the next. They play an important role in social activities such as widow remarriage,

marriage of poor girls, providing assistance to poor families by providing agricultural land, and resolving disputes within families. The Khap Panchayats of Haryana are at the crossroads of tension between traditional community bonds and modern constitutional rights. While they provide a quick and accessible mechanism for dispute resolution and social mobilisation, their autocratic, gender-biased, and often violent methods pose a serious challenge to the rule of law. The future of Khap Panchayat depends on their ability to reform and adapt their traditional practices to the values of equality and individual liberty.

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