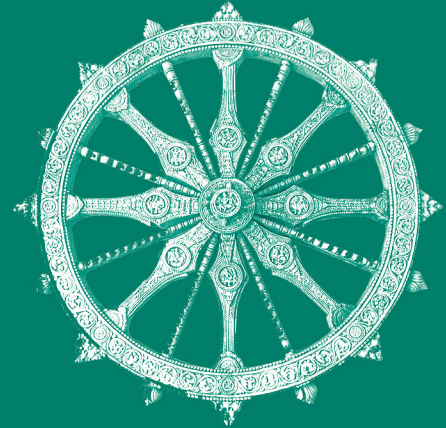


Vol. No.-7 ■ Issue No.-2 ■ December 2025

ISSN-2583-1852 (P)
ISSN-2584-0878 (O)



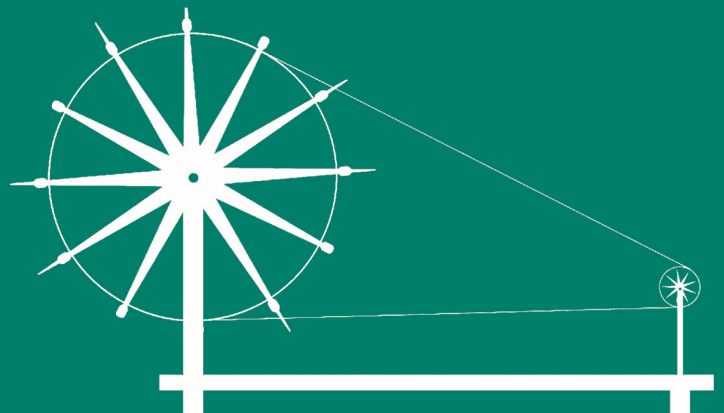
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The Third Voice Reality and Vision

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The Third Voice Reality and Vision



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THE THIRD VOICE: REALITY AND VISION

ISSN-2583-1852 (P)
ISSN-2584-0878 (O)

VOL. NO.-7

ISSUE NO.-2

DECEMBER 2025

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THE THIRD VOICE: REALITY AND VISION

ISSN-2583-1852 (P)
ISSN-2584-0878 (O)

VOL. NO.-7

ISSUE NO.-2

DECEMBER 2025

Published By :

Voice for Voiceless ®

Registration No:23717/65

At: Niladri Vihar

P.O: Nayabazar

Dist: Cuttack

Pin:753004

Odisha, India

Website : www.thirdvoice.voiceforvoiceless.in

E-mail : thirdvoice.ac@gmail.com

Mobile:+91-9437744194,+91-8895707011

Administration Management

Mr Deepak Kumar Dalai

Center for Third Voice Studies

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Printed By:

Ray Printers, At-G-3, Raja Bagicha Labour Colony,
P.O.-Telenga Bazar, Cuttack-753009, Odisha, India.



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4 Save Earth

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6 Stop Untouchability

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8 Help Mentally Disable Person

9 Help Senior Citizens

10 Help Sick Person

11 Help Poor Children

12 Help Poor Women

13 Planting Tree

14 Protecting Animals and Birds

15 Spreading Basic Education

16 Women Empowerment

17 Cleanliness Campaign

18 Satya and Ahimsa

19 Health and Hygienic

20 Communal Harmony

21 Vocational Education

22 Cottage Industries

23 Village Economy

24 Self Help Groups

25 Feed the Need

26 Farming and Agriculture

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GOALS
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HEALTH SECURITY IN VIKSIT BHARAT

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INTRODUCTION

Health security is recognized as a foundational determinant of national development, economic productivity, and social resilience. In the context of India's aspiration to become a developed nation by 2047—*Viksit Bharat*—health security assumes strategic importance. It extends beyond the prevention of infectious disease outbreaks to encompass the capacity of a nation to prevent, detect, and respond to health threats while ensuring equitable access to quality healthcare services across the life course. It integrates financial protection, primary healthcare strengthening, digital transformation, workforce expansion, environmental resilience, and multisectoral governance.

India's demographic transition, epidemiological shift toward non-communicable diseases (NCDs), rapid urbanization, climate vulnerability, and technological expansion collectively demand a systems-based health security architecture [1]. This editorial critically examines India's health financing patterns, system preparedness, emerging health threats, digital transformation, climate-health linkages, and progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3), situating them within the broader framework of *Viksit Bharat 2047*.

HEALTH FINANCING

Adequate public financing forms the backbone of health security. According to National Health Accounts (FY22), India's total health expenditure was approximately ¹ 9.04 lakh crore, representing 3.8% of GDP and ¹ 6,602 per capita at current prices [2]. The government's share in total health expenditure increased from 29% in FY15 to nearly 48% in FY22, reflecting a strengthened fiscal commitment [2]. Correspondingly, out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE) declined from 62.6% to about 39.4%, indicating progress toward financial risk protection [2].

Estimates for FY 2024–25 suggest that total health expenditure (public and private combined) remains around 3.8% of GDP, while combined government (central and state) health spending stands at approximately 1.9% of GDP [3]. However, this remains below the National Health Policy (2017) target of 2.5% of GDP [4]. While allocations have increased in nominal terms, persistent underinvestment constrains infrastructure expansion, workforce recruitment, procurement of essential medicines, and technological upgrading of public facilities. Reducing OOPE below 20%—aligned with global universal health coverage (UHC) benchmarks—will be essential for *Viksit Bharat* [1,2]. Healthcare must therefore be viewed as a long-term investment in human capital and economic productivity.

PRIMARY HEALTHCARE AND SYSTEM PREPAREDNESS

A resilient health system requires strong primary healthcare. The National Health Mission (NHM) has significantly improved maternal and child health indicators and strengthened rural and urban health infrastructure [5]. Under *Ayushman Bharat*, Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs)—now operationalized as *Ayushman Arogya Mandirs*—aim to provide comprehensive primary healthcare including NCD screening and preventive services [6]. The insurance component, *Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana* (PM-JAY), provides financial coverage of up to ¹ 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary hospitalization [6]. These initiatives have enhanced service coverage and financial protection; however, sustainability depends on quality assurance, fraud prevention, and integration with primary care systems. Preventive initiatives such as *Mission Indradhanush* and *POSHAN Abhiyaan* contribute significantly to immunization and nutrition security, which are core components of long-term health resilience [5].



CONVERGENCE WITH SDG 3

India has made measurable progress toward SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), as reflected in the SDG India Index 2023–24 [7]. Health worker density has surpassed the SDG threshold of 44.5 per 10,000 population, reaching 49.45 [7]. Institutional deliveries have improved to 97.18%, and immunization coverage among children aged 9–11 months has reached 93.23% [7]. However, maternal mortality remains at 97 per 100,000 live births (target: 70), and under-five mortality stands at 32 per 1,000 live births (target: 25) [7]. Life expectancy remains 70 years compared to the SDG-aligned target of 73.63 years [7]. Suicide and road traffic mortality rates significantly exceed SDG benchmarks [7]. These findings indicate that while access has improved, quality of care, mental health integration, and injury prevention require strengthened interventions.

EMERGING EPIDEMIOLOGICAL THREATS

Obesity and Non-Communicable Diseases : India faces a growing burden of obesity and diet-related NCDs. NFHS-5 reports that 24% of women and 23% of men are overweight or obese, while childhood overweight prevalence has increased [2]. Regulatory measures by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and initiatives such as Eat Right India aim to address dietary risk factors [8]. However, stronger multisectoral strategies—including fiscal policies, front-of-pack labeling, and urban planning—are necessary.

Mental Health and Digital Addiction : Mental health represents an emerging dimension of health security. Tele-MANAS has expanded access to psychological support services [1]. Yet, community-based mental health systems and school-based digital wellness interventions must be strengthened to ensure long-term resilience.

Digital Health and Technological Integration : Digital transformation is central to modern health security. The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) aims to create interoperable digital health infrastructure through ABHA IDs and electronic health records [9]. Telemedicine services such as e-Sanjeevani have expanded healthcare access, particularly in remote areas. Artificial intelligence (AI) can facilitate predictive surveillance, disease hotspot detection, and resource optimization. However, digital expansion must prioritize data privacy, cybersecurity safeguards, and equitable digital inclusion [9].

Climate Change and Environmental Health Security : Climate change is a significant long-term threat to India's health security. Air pollution was associated with approximately 1.67 million deaths in 2019 [1]. Heatwaves and extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and intensity, placing additional stress on healthcare infrastructure. The Swachh Bharat Mission has improved sanitation and hygiene coverage, contributing to improved public health outcomes [10]. However, integrating climate resilience into health infrastructure planning—through flood-resistant construction, cooling systems, and emergency preparedness—is essential for sustainable development.

STRATEGIC INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND BIOPHARMACEUTICAL SELF-RELIANCE

Strengthening domestic biopharmaceutical manufacturing aligns public health priorities with economic strategy. Investments in vaccines, biologics, and biosimilars enhance national preparedness for future pandemics and reduce import dependency [1]. Such industrial-health convergence strengthens long-term health security.

CONCLUSION

Health security is both a prerequisite and a driver of Viksit Bharat 2047. India has made significant progress in expanding service coverage, improving workforce density, strengthening financial protection, and advancing digital infrastructure. Nevertheless, financing gaps, rising NCD burdens, mental health challenges, and climate vulnerabilities require sustained and strategic investment. Embedding health security within national development planning will ensure that illness does not lead to poverty, preventable diseases are minimized, and emerging risks are proactively managed. A truly developed India by 2047 must therefore be a health-secure, equitable, and resilient Bharat.



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How to cite this Editorial: Swain, Sumant. *Health Security in Viksit Bharat. Editorial. The Third Voice: Reality and Vision.* 2025. Vol. 7. Issue No. 2. December. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19449865>. Email: sumant@iihmrdelhi.edu.in, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2513-1739>



PESA and Women's Participation in Tribal Governance of Chhattisgarh: Opportunities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Political participation of women is also a primary element of inclusive democracy in a society that has traditionally marginalized women on a gender basis and some or all socio-cultural hierarchies. The tribal women in India occupy a unique place in this discussion as they are sidelined not only due to their gender but also by the virtue of their socioeconomic factors and ethnicities. With the introduction of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) (PESA) Act of 1996, as an instrument of correction to provide the governance requirements of the tribal communities, is a critical framework, a combination of the indigenous practice of self-rule and the constitutional vision of a democratic decentralized government. PESA Act plays a central role in determining the role of tribal women participation in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the state of Chhattisgarh, which has a high population of tribal women. The opportunities and challenges confronting tribal women in this set up are questioned in this paper, which also attempts to explore the transformative possibilities and the inherent constraints of their involvement.

The study highlights that PESA has created formal spaces for women's representation in governance particularly through reservations that guarantee their presence in Panchayats. These measures have enabled tribal women to emerge as elected representatives, decision-makers, and custodians of their cultural heritage. Women leaders have increasingly articulated concerns related to health, education, water, livelihoods, and forest rights issues closely tied to their lived realities. Their participation has also contributed to the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems and the assertion of community autonomy, thereby enriching the democratic process with alternative perspectives rooted in sustainability and equity. Thus, the Act provides chances for both the strengthening of tribal identity within governing systems and gender inclusion.

Keywords: PESA, Tribal Women Participation, Gender Equality, Women Empowerment, Tribal Governance.

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For reprints contact: voiceforvoiceless2013@gmail.com

Received	Reviewed	Accepted	Published
02-June-2025	27-Sept.-2025	22-Oct.-2025	01-Dec.-2025

Volume	Issue	December	ISSN
No. 7	No. 2	2025	2583-1852(P), 2584-0878(O)

How to Cite this Article: Pradhan, Ramkrushna, Pal, S., & Mallick, M. IPESA and Women's Participation in Tribal Governance of Chhattisgarh: Opportunities and Challenges. THE THIRD VOICE REALITY AND VISION. 2024. Vol No-7. Issue No-2. December. Pp: 7-18. DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19411692>

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DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19411692>
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INTRODUCTION :

India is a country that is well known in terms of diversity not just in terms of language, religion and culture but also in terms of the social-structures that define Indian communities. The tribal communities are special among the rest of the social groups due to their peculiar customs, traditional practices and their indigenous systems of governance. Tribal communities have historically been called the "Adivasis" and have resided in the forests and hills of India as well as in rural areas that are remote. They were mostly independent in their lifestyles, cultural ways and conflict management, as they may be beyond the scope of the state apparatus. Although this relative isolation saved their social customs, it resulted in economic, political and social marginalization. The tribal societies were systematically excluded of mainstream economic developments, political decision making processes and social welfare thus leading to high levels of poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition and poor health (Xaxa, 2014).

Colonial period fixed the systemic injustices and British rulers often viewed tribal societies as objects of anthropological curiosity or objects in need of strict control in a bid to maintain civilization and law and order. The existing administrative paradigm was based on resource extraction and supervisory control as opposed to empowerment or socio-economic progress. After the independence, the infant Indian polity realized the natural weakness of tribal community and felt the need of integrating them into the paradigm of democracy and development but without sacrificing their cultural uniqueness. The constitutional protections, policy interventions and welfare programs were therefore established to protect the tribal rights, promote the socio-economic development and also meaningful engagement in the government (Government of India, 2010).

Since the writing of the Constitution, those who designed India realized the unique situations facing tribes. In the Scheduled and Tribal Areas covered by Part X of the Constitution, certain administrative and governance

arrangements were brought about by Article 244 especially in areas that are termed Scheduled Areas whereby the majority of the population is made up of the tribal people. These articles attempted to reconcile the global rules of equality and social justice alongside the respectful recognition of tribal practices, land tenure and native structures of government. The general aim was, therefore, not just to assimilate the tribal communities into the larger Indian governance, but also to give them a sense of self-management over the resources and affairs, which would guarantee their significant influence in the process of democracy.

The center of this vision is the idea of decentralized governance where local self-governing units have been given the authority to make decisions that immediately touch on the local communities. A three-layered system of governance was designed through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment (CA) Act of 1992, the Panchayati Raj system, which is composed of Gram Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis, and Zila Parishads, and the system was designed to strengthen participatory democracy at the grassroots level (Sisodia, 2002a). Decentralization process was planned as a means of transfer of power, responsibility and resources to the local communities so that they can take care of their developmental priorities. However, the inclusion of tribal people into this system posed some unique problems. The formal bureaucracy of the state does not always fit into tribal social structures that are usually guided by communal consensus and customary law. Without proper legal validation of these traditional practices, the tribal rule stood a chance of being sidelined by the Panchayati Raj system. The Prevention of Illegal Eviction from and Resettlement of People (PESA) Act offers the benefits of the Panchayati Raj system to the scheduled areas and recognizes and protects tribal traditions, resource management systems, and community decision-making systems. It highlights the importance of Gram Sabhas as the most important to the self-government, which allows them the power to control land, forest cover, and local developmental priorities. In such a way, PESA aims

to sense of balance the constitutional obligation to democratic decentralisation with tribal governmental actualities, thus establishing forums of participative decision-making which respect tribal identity and sovereignty (Xaxa, 2014).

An essential dimension of this process is the empowerment of tribal women. Globally, women's political participation is recognized as a cornerstone of inclusive governance, democracy, and sustainable development. Yet in many contexts, including tribal societies, women face compounded marginalization due to patriarchal norms, socio-economic disadvantages, and cultural restrictions. In India, tribal women historically participated in community life through informal decision-making forums but were often excluded from formal political spaces (Sharma, 2018). The introduction of reservations for women in PRIs under the 73rd Amendment, and their extension to 50% in states like Chhattisgarh has significantly enhanced opportunities for tribal women to assume leadership positions including roles as Sarpanchs and Panchayat members. These measures aim to transform gender representation from symbolic presence to meaningful participation, enabling women to influence policy, development priorities, and resource allocation.

Chhattisgarh carved out of Madhya Pradesh in 2000 offers a compelling case study in this context. With tribals constituting approximately 30.6% of its population (Census of India, 2011) the state represents a region where PESA can have a profound impact on grassroots democracy and gender inclusion. Tribal women in Chhattisgarh navigate a complex terrain of opportunity and constraint: while legal frameworks and institutional reforms provide platforms for leadership, socio-economic barriers, illiteracy, and entrenched patriarchal norms continue to limit their agency (Mehta, 2002). Nonetheless, this study indicate that when empowered tribal women prioritize critical community concerns such as health, education, drinking water, livelihoods, and forest rights issues closely aligned with the everyday realities of their communities (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004).

The significance of tribal women's participation extends beyond policy and development. Women serve as custodians of cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and ecological practices bridging the gap between modern governance and indigenous values. Their active engagement ensures that development initiatives are culturally sensitive, sustainable, and reflective of local needs. Moreover, the upliftment of tribal women is in line with international agreements like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-5), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which are all consistent in their demand for gender equality and women's participation in politics (United Nations, 1948; 1979; World Bank, 2012).

Despite the opportunities brought about by the policy there are still longstanding challenges. The continuity of proxy representation where male family members have control over the decision-making ability of women leaders as well as the socio-economic weaknesses, lack of knowledge in legal rights, and the incompetence of the institution have remained obstacles to the transformational capability of Panchayati Raj System Act (PESA). To cope with such challenges requires not just formidable legal protection, but also effective capacity building exercises, community sensitization and strict institutional accountability measures that will help to make certain that tribal women are indeed empowered to act as agents of agency within Panchayati Raj bodies (Buch, 2000; Kabeer, 1999).

Essentially, the involvement of tribal women in Panchayati Raj through the provisions of the PESA represents an embodiment of a legal empowerment, cultural conservation and socio-political change. This effort is a larger attempt by India to assimilate the marginalized groups into the democratic system without undermining their unique identity and heritage. The analysis of this dynamic provides useful answers to the general questions of gender equality, social justice, and the effectiveness of decentralized government in society of diverse cultures. This paper examines the

opportunities and challenges faced by tribal women in Chhattisgarh, exploring the intersection of law, policy, culture, and empowerment in the context of tribal governance under PESA.

Social governance of the local community gives access to the community's citizens to power and choice through which they become empowered (Blakely & Leigh, 2010). The term also means the most extensive delegation of competencies to the elected officials to perform so as to be a self-regulating unit with enough rights and jurisdiction.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CHHATTISGARH TRIBAL WOMEN IN PANCHAYATI RAJ:

In historical context the scheduled areas of Chhattisgarh especially women have played a vital role in community decision-making through traditional village councils though their participation was largely informal and guided by customary practices. Chhattisgarh tribal women started to be formally part of the local governance after the implementation of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (1992), which was the inception of a three-tier Panchayati Raj system and had mandated the reservations for Scheduled Tribes (STs) and tribal women. The amendment reserved one-third of seats for women (including tribal women) in Gram Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis, and Zila Parishads. Later, Chhattisgarh enhanced this quota to 50% significantly increasing women's representation in grassroots democracy (Government of Chhattisgarh, 2010).

In Tribal domain of Chhattisgarh, the implementation of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) (PESA) Act, 1996 further strengthened tribal women's roles by recognizing Gram Sabhas as central to self-governance. PESA empowered tribal communities including women to manage resources, resolve disputes, and preserve cultural traditions (Xaxa, 2014). There was a movement then from mere participation to substantive involvement in decision-making. Despite challenges of illiteracy, patriarchal

structures, and limited awareness, many tribal women leaders have risen. The findings of this research have shown how Women Sarpanch of Tribal Areas, through their delivery political areas of improvement such as the supply of drinking water, basic Health needs, Education and Livelihoods demonstrate the potential of their Leadership Position (Mehta, 2002; Sharma, 2018).

The representation of Tribal Women has been connected to both the Continuation of pre-existence participatory practices established through the tradition and the Transformation of Tribal Women through the implementation of Constitutional Reforms in Chhattisgarh. The increased representation of women in Tribal Governance has resulted in the advancement of Gender Equity and has also contributed to promoting Grassroots Democracy across the Tribal areas of Chhattisgarh.

THE PESA FRAMEWORK: PROVISIONS FOR WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION:

The structure of PESA expects the participatory democracy in which the Gram Sabha is at the centre of the tribal governance. Part 4 gives Gram Sabhas the right to protect communal resources, adjudicate in a manner that follows customary law, and confer land acquisition functions to have direct implications to women whose means of livelihoods rely on such resources (Government of India, 1996). Most importantly, PESA already has implemented the gender reservations which are enshrined in the 73rd Amendment: that at least one-third of Panchayat seats should be reserved by women, and of that one-third by Scheduled Tribe women in particular, to guarantee proportional representation (Section/ 4(a)). This is also the case with leadership, including that of the Sarpanch, the chief of the village, which will thus create female agency in the spheres of resource management and social welfare.

In Chhattisgarh, the Chhattisgarh Panchayat Raj Adhiniyam, 1993, was amended post-PESA to incorporate these mandates, establishing State PESA Rules in 2016 to operationalize Gram Sabha powers

(Nusrat, 2023). Empirical data indicate modest gains: as of 2023, women constitute approximately 46% of elected PRI representatives nationwide, with Chhattisgarh reporting over 40,000 female Panchayat members, many from tribal backgrounds (Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2024). These women influence policies on minor forest produce (MFP) collection vital for 76.5% of tribal households and maternal health, aligning with Sustainable Development Goals on gender equality (SDG 5) and reduced inequalities (SDG 10).

THE 73RD CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ACT AND PESA: THE SCENARIO IN CHHATTISGARH:

The implementation of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, and the panchayat raj acts enacted in various states of India, has brought to the forefront the importance of local level democratic processes. With this new experience, it is learned that the triumph of the new panchayat raj system is majorly dependent upon the agreement and commitment of the people, their leaders and officials regarding the role to be played by them in the new system. From the point of view of the context and theory, the new panchayat raj system is a design for self-governance (Sisodia, 2002a).

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 marked a watershed in Indian democracy by institutionalising Panchayati Raj as the third tier of governance. It mandated regular elections, reservation for marginalized groups, and devolution of powers to locally elected bodies. However, the amendment excluded Fifth Schedule areas regions predominantly inhabited by Scheduled Tribes to respect tribal customs and autonomy. The omission, in the context of understanding the dynamics of policy adjustment, was seemingly handled through the enactment of Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act of 1996 an act of legislation that sought to integrate indigenous self-governance structures into the general arrangement of democracy.

The 73rd Amendment Act: Structure and Implementation in Chhattisgarh

On the basis of the 73rd amendment to the Constitution, a three-level Panchayati Raj institution was instituted in the state system, including Gram Panchayats at village level, Janpad Panchayats at block level, and Zila Panchayats at the district level. Article 243D ensured Articles 243D explicitly required reserves of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women. The formation of the State Finance Commission and the State Election Commission was also aimed at making the state devolve fiscal and also to make the frequency holding of elections. In Chhattisgarh, the operations of the Panchayati Raj Institutions are active since 2000. The state has exhibited a strong dedication to increase the role of women such that by 50 percent reservation of women has been instated at all levels which exceeds the constitutional requirement of 33 percent in 2009 as per Government of Chhattisgarh. The electoral cycles have also strengthened the women representation and the upward trend has remained constant within the elected Panchayats. However, tribal areas governed under the Fifth Schedule required a distinct legal framework aligned with their socio-cultural norms hence the relevance of PESA.

The 73rd Amendment and PESA represent two complementary but distinct paradigms of local governance. In Chhattisgarh, while the 73rd Amendment has institutionalised democratic decentralisation across general areas, PESA offers a context-sensitive and tribal-centric governance model in Scheduled Areas. However, the full realisation of PESA's potential remains limited due to administrative reluctance, lack of awareness, and structural inequalities. A synergistic implementation of both the 73rd Amendment and PESA could make Chhattisgarh a model state for inclusive, tribal-centric, and gender-just grassroots governance in India.

TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:

Tribal development aims to improve the socioeconomic and cultural well-being of communities

at various stages of development. Tribal people's social and economic development should be phased and time-bound with integrated programs tailored to their socio-economic situation. The objective is to get rid of the exploitation and support social justice and equality. Health, education, employment, transportation, and technical manpower are some of the programs that can help the tribal people to uplift their standard of living and enable them to come into the mainstream society.

In the social groups (tribal people) and the Tribal Sub-pan (TSP) is considered a lifeline for socioeconomic growth. With the goal of accelerating the socioeconomic development of Tribal people was initially presented in the Fifth Five Year Plan (Louis, 2008, p. 322).

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:

Women's empowerment refers to the process of granting women who constitute nearly the world's population for equal rights and opportunities in social, political, and economic spheres. It ensures that women are treated with dignity, recognized as equal citizens, and included in decision-making processes that shape the welfare of both society and the nation. The role of empowerment does not limit to the frame of individual rights, but it is the domain of collective involvement in ruling; in a country where women have a direct voice, it can direct to the architecture of development programmes and influence the policy-making process.

At the international level, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) upholds the principle of equal participation, stating in Article 21 that "everyone has the right to take part in the government of their country, either directly or through freely elected representatives" (United Nations, 1948). This declaration emphasizes that true democratic governance is not possible without the active involvement of women. Likewise, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979, urges countries to remove obstacles that hinder women's participation in political and public spheres (United Nations, 1979).

At the global scale, the principle of equal participation is sturdy in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that was ratified by the United Nations in 1948. Article 21 states that "all people reserve the right to participate in the government of their respective countries either personally or via the freely elected representatives". This assertion highlights the fact that true democratic governments cannot be practiced without women actively participating in the process thus putting gender representation at the centre of political legitimacy. In the same vein, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which was adopted in 1979 requires the signatory countries to remove every obstacle that hampers women participation in political life and public affairs. The Convention thus commits governments to establish a conducive environment whereby women would be able to play a significant role in developing the public policy and decision making in the country.

The implications of the involvement of women in politics are much far-reaching as far as democratic governance is concerned. I argue that when women sit in legislative houses, the policy agenda therein becomes more accommodative and sensitive to the masses like healthcare, education and social welfare (Phillips, 1995; Krook, 2009). The inclusion of women plays a key role in bringing to light gender specific issues that are otherwise difficult to detect during male dominated discussions. When considering the practice of developing countries, the empirical evidence indicates that women leaders in the local community always focus on the needs of the community particularly in areas such as drinking water, sanitation and education (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004).

Moreover, female empowerment is not only a human-rights issue, but also an economic one. The World Bank (2012) explains that gender equality increases productivity, better development results and stronger institution, thus Makes the case that political empowerment is an essential part of sustainable development. In this respect, political empowerment is

in perfect harmony with the Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG-5) that promotes gender equality and active involvement of women in leadership and decision-making in all tiers. Taking these principles into policy frameworks, we will be a step further towards achieving the larger goals of equitable and inclusive development.

POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF TRIBAL WOMEN:

Political empowerment is also a major aspect of women empowerment as far as it provides women with the ability to influence the process of decision making. However, an amalgamation of socioeconomic disadvantages still pushes women to the margins of the political arena despite the high levels of demographic representation. The percentage of women left without political sense and literacy is quite high hence limiting their willingness to participate actively in civic affairs. Consequently, the continuous renewal of the political process, which is based on democratic principles, will always be essential to promote the idea of gender equity in the government.

Tribal women in India face unique challenges in socio-economic and political participation. Panchayat play a crucial role in grassroots governance. Empowering in Panchayat has increased representation ensuring tribal women get elected or participate in capacity building programme and training. Tribal women are to lead effectively in Panchayat level addressing local needs focusing on issues like health, education, and livelihoods in tribal areas. Empowering tribal women in Panchayat can lead to more inclusive governance and development in tribal regions.

Tribal Women play a very important role in the Panchayat through participating the leadership of the empowering tribal development. The Indian Constitution provides several safeguards for Scheduled Tribes, including special measures in education and employment under Article 15(4), reservations in public services under Article 16(4), promotion of their economic and social development under Article 46, and provisions for self-

governance through legislative councils and the Panchayati Raj system in scheduled areas.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SPHERE:

Women empowerment in social, economic, and political fields can be fomented by awareness raising, fair access to resources, and provision of equal opportunities. This is hence, a good leverage for equality, security, and development on an inclusive basis. Women as agents of economic development when empowered with education, skills, and decision power can transform markets through innovation, productivity growth, and overall uplift of society (Kabeer, 1999; World Bank, 2012). If their potentials are strengthened in all domains upliftment of society will be the upliftment of the person. In essence, empowerment denotes that persons and groups identify and make choices which they realize into actions of some consequence. The creation of both personal and collective resources, which accompanies the advancement of the equity in systems and institutions, will be the focus of the feminist theory (Sen, 1997).

Therefore, women empowerment is not an issue of participation but rather the development of an atmosphere where women express their voices in governance, formulation of policies and transformation of the society. The situation in the Indian context means that the process of women empowerment should be realized in a dual manner, with the inter and intra-gender support networks and the intervention of men, as well as the legal and constitutional changes. Article 14 of the Constitution of India provides the equality before the law, Article 15 forbids the discrimination based on sex, and Article 39 imposes the duty on the State to provide equal pay to equal work and equal opportunities in the work of the State. Also, policy tools like female reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act have helped hundreds of thousands of women to be involved in the decentralized decision-making (Buch, 2000). True empowerment is when women change their passive roles into active planners of the society (Sen, 1997). The

development process, therefore, ought to view itself as an extension of the freedom, the empowerment of women being an essential part of it (Sen, 1997). With this in mind, socio-economic and political inclusion of women as a promotion is thus an ethical obligation and a developmental requirement in India and the rest of the world.

GENDER EQUALITY AND TRIBAL WOMEN IN PANCHAYT RAJ SYSTEM:

It is not just the constitutional demand that gender equality in the governance process is a crucial social requirement, which supports inclusive development. The Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 (73rd Constitutional Amendment) was a watershed reform in India which institutionalised the Panchayati Raj Institutions, and required that one-third of the seats should be filled by women. This quota has been increased to fifty percent in several states such as Chhattisgarh thus giving tribal women a wider scope within which they can be actively involved in the grassroots decision-making process (Government of Chhattisgarh, 2010).

Inclusion of tribal women in Panchayats and Rural Institutions (PRIs) poses some challenges and opportunities. In the past, the patriarchy, poverty, and social exclusion have marginalized these women hence restricting their access to political processes (Xaxa, 2014). However, the constitutional rights and Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) 1996 has enabled them to express the grievances of the people and at the same time maintain the traditional and heritage of the tribes. According to empirical evidence, when tribal women are put in such positions as sarpanchs or members of a panchayat, they are more likely to concentrate on social welfare related issues, which depend on healthcare, education, drinking water and livelihood security, both denoting their lived reality and the interests of their communities (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Mehta, 2002).

The roles of tribal women in PRIs bolster gender equality as well as allow for cultural preservation. As

keepers of Indigenous cultures and traditions these women connect governance and heritage through the incorporation of traditional knowledge systems into planning and programming for developments. However, there continues to be the challenges of limited literacy; economic reliance; and continued practice of male relatives acting as “stand-ins” for women to fulfil their roles as leaders (Sharma, 2018). Despite these obstacles, the inclusion of tribal women within panchayati raj creates an opportunity for transforming gender justice and advancing democracy in India. Creating an environment that supports participation and provides the necessary capacity-building experiences to improve engagement will create an atmosphere in which India will be more closely aligned with substantive equality in governance.

OPPORTUNITIES:

The PESA was introduced in order to ensure tribal self-governance and align traditional systems of governance with the Panchayati Raj structure and constitution. Chhattisgarh is one state that has a total population comprised of over 30 percent Scheduled Tribes (Census of India, 2011), for which PESA is a major hope for women tribal participation in governing the state.

1. **Increased Political Representation:** With the 73rd Constitutional Amendment and state provisions to reserve 50% of PRI seats for women, PESA provides a space for women of tribal communities in Gram Sabhas/Panchayats (Government of Chhattisgarh, 2010).
2. **Strengthening Grassroots Democracy:** PESA acts to strengthen grassroots democracy by empowering Gram Sabhas in the management of resources, dispute settlement, and preservation of cultural traditions. In this way, it helps tribal women to influence decisions that affect their livelihoods and communities.
3. **Cultural and Heritage Preservation:** Tribal women, as custodians of rituals, crafts, and ecological knowledge use PESA's provisions to integrate

indigenous practices into local governance (Sharma, 2018).

4. Development Priorities Reflecting Women's Needs: Development Priorities Reflecting Women's Needs: Evidence suggests that women representatives in tribal panchayats have often given priority to drinking water, healthcare, and education, crucial elements for social development, as a number of authors, Chattopadhyay & Duflo (2004) point out.
5. Agency and Leadership: For many tribal women, PRI participation under PESA is the first opportunity to engage in formal decision-making, building confidence and leadership skills (Mehta, 2002).

The scope of opportunities generated by PESA goes far beyond representation in numbers. Tribal women in Chhattisgarh have, to some extent, used their offices in PRIs to take up issues directly related to their lives, such as health, potable water, sanitation, education, or means of livelihood. These developmental issues, it might be overlooked in male-chauvinistic governance systems, tend to see the light of day when women take an active role in governance. In addition, these tribal women carry in their wake their own traditional knowledge, culture, or values, which tend to enrich governance systems in terms of sustainability or community-oriented factors. In this way, PESA not only fosters inclusiveness in governance in terms of numbers, culture, or identity, it also helps to serve as custodians in democratic institutions.

CHALLENGES:

Yet, given these opportunities, tribal women in Chhattisgarh face numerous challenges that impede effective participation under PESA.

1. Proxy Representation: Most women sarpanchas are controlled by male relatives or elders in the community, which reduces their autonomy in decision-making (Buch, 2000).
2. Low Awareness of PESA Provisions: It is reported from studies that generally, the tribal women are not

aware of their constitutional rights and the strength that Gram Sabhas have bestowed upon them (Xaxa, 2014).

3. Socio-Economic Barriers: The incidence of poverty, illiteracy, and lack of training imposes an important constraint on the capability of women to participate fully in governance (Kabeer, 1999).
4. Patriarchal and Cultural Constraints: In many of the tribal communities, the patriarchal norms restrict women's public visibility and discourage them from actively participating in the discussions of Gram Sabha (Sharma, 2018).
5. Institutional Weaknesses: Poor implementation of PESA, bureaucratic interference, and a lack of administrative support have often eroded the autonomy of elected women leaders among the tribal's (Mehta, 2002).

CONCLUSION:

The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act is landmark legislation in India's attempt to reconcile modern democratic institutions with traditional governance systems for tribal communities. In a state like Chhattisgarh, where nearly one-third of the population consists of tribals, PESA has transformative potential for tribal women, whose voices have long been relegated to the periphery of both customary structures and state-led governance systems. An exploration of women's participation under PESA in Chhattisgarh not only opens a window to the evolving dynamics of grassroots democracy but also reflects the broader challenges of securing gender justice in deeply stratified social contexts.

One of the core accomplishments of PESA is that it has provided a formal setup for the involvement of tribal women in the governance of the locality through the formation of panchayati raj institutions (PRIs). The reservation of 50 percent seats for females within the Panchayati Raj framework of Chhattisgarh has provided unprecedented opportunities for the involvement of the tribals in the leadership position of the 'sarpanch, member,

and representative' of the local body, including the upper levels of the same, as the 'sarpanch, member, and representative'.

As it gave women exactly the same resources that could enable them to overcome the limitations of home-based jobs to take part in decision-making public activities, it is also a legal framework. It is because the law gives women their legitimate place in political spheres, which were dominated by men in the past. But simply because there are women representatives in Panchayats in tribal areas, these women are not empowered. This is very important to understand in making a distinction between symbolic representation and actual participation in order to judge its actual impact on women's empowerment through PESA.

In this milieu, this research endeavours to illustrate the presence of structural hurdles impacting the role of women in PESA. The issue of representation by proxy, where elected female leaders are influenced by their male relatives or elderly members of society, still persists. In such situations, women hold governing roles but lack actual autonomy diminishing their capacities to less than leadership positions becoming mere extensions of patriarchal power. Conversely, illiteracy rates, lack of awareness of the provisions of the constitution, and inadequate training are factors inhibiting the capacities of women to assert themselves during Panchayat sessions. With a lack of skills and knowledge, it becomes difficult for the female participants to completely comprehend their role in implementing the powers conferred on Gram Sabhas by PESA.

Socio economic factors also add to these difficulties. Poverty, lack of resources, and marginalization might restrain women from properly managing family and official responsibilities. For many tribal women, governance becomes an additional load rather than an opportune moment especially when there are no effective support structures to facilitate them. At the same time, deep-rooted patriarchal traditions in tribal cultures continue to curtail women's movement,

presence, and voice in public domains. These social obstacles accompanied by unsatisfactory implementation of PESA legislation tend to weaken Gram Sabhas and women's impact on decision-taking procedures.

Thus, the experience of PESA in Chhattisgarh is suggestive of a certain paradox. On the one hand, it has created opportunities for the empowerment of women and increased their presence and recognition in the domain of governance and its values. However, its impact and effect have been thwarted by certain structural and societal handicaps that have hindered the progress towards its aim of socio-political empowerment and have thus proved to be counterproductive to its objective.

However, the way ahead calls for a multi-dimensional strategy. First of all, capacity-building activities designed for tribal women must be strengthened in order to develop their literary knowledge, legal consciousness, and leadership capabilities. The capacity-building activities can educate tribal women about their rights under PESA so that they can exercise their authority in the Gram Sabha meetings. Second, the institutional framework of accountability must be strengthened in order to ensure the effective implementation of the provisions of the PESA Act, as the independence of the Gram Sabhas must not be jeopardized by outside interventions. Lastly, the community sensitization programs must be launched to resist the patriarchal tradition hindering the entry of tribal women in tribal administrations and inculcate an enabling environment for the acceptance of tribal women leaders in the society.

This conclusion shows that the road to empowerment is not an incident but a process continuously negotiated through legal frameworks, socio-cultural dynamics, and institutional practices for the tribal women under PESA in Chhattisgarh. The reservation of seats in Panchayats does not imply equality; for the politicians and bureaucrats, the yardstick for measuring empowerment will be the quantum of decentralization of decision-making powers, shaping development

priorities, and preserving the interest of their people in protecting cultural heritage. It fully endorses the capability approach propounded by Amartya Sen, which upholds expanding freedoms and real opportunities of individuals to lead lives they have reason to value. Empowerment of tribal women in Chhattisgarh under PESA should be understood in terms not only of political representation but also of expansion of capabilities to exercise agency, preserve identity, and pursue development.

Ultimately, it also enables the framework to achieve tribal women's participation towards improvement of governance and its efficacy lies in removing or not addressing systemic issues. Experience from Chhattisgarh reveals that although still miles away from achieving a transformation that converts participation into empowerment and presence into influence. The reality of gender equality and tribal governance shall be achieved when tribal women not only participate but also take forward decision-making channels with their voice determining the pulse of grassroots democracy. This shall not only deliver promises of equality and justice as guaranteed by its constitution but also help enhance its democratic culture by being inclusive and representative of its realities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research study is product of Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi funded Special Tribal call project on "Decentralised Governance, PESA Act and Tribal Development in Scheduled Areas of Chhattisgarh: A Comparative study of Bastar and Surguja Districts". Authors are highly indebted to the ICSSR for providing financial support to conduct this research project.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interests.

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Contracting Space for Civil Society: Implications for Inclusive Development in India

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ABSTRACT

Civil society organizations (CSOs) engage in the political process and shape the well-being of others, thereby preserving democratic principles and ensuring inclusive development for all, but there is a worrying trend: there is increasingly less and less space for civil society to express its concerns and opinions. It has been observed that when civil society performs its role in significant socio-economic, political, environmental and other challenges, it often faces resistance, coercion, harassment and criminal investigations. Due to this, the social fabric of the Indian nation and the future of Indian democracy are adversely affected. Hence, it is absolutely indispensable to study civil society in light of recent events. India's aspirations for a future global role and its commitment to ensure freedom for all are possibly being neglected due to the shrinking space of civil society. Therefore, the only way out of the conundrum is to assess and reinstate the lost freedom that was once enjoyed by civil society.

Key words: civil society, Indian democracy, freedom

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, civil society organizations have garnered significant attention and interest due to their global recognition as a significant and efficacious player in development. In addition, the growing importance of civil society organizations is also due to the inefficiency of government institutions in delivering service to the common man. Earlier, the developmental model of a nation largely gave priority to the state as an important institution to guide the nation towards development. Subsequently, the market also had a greater influence in strategizing the development model of a state. However, in the last two decades or more, civil society has largely been acknowledged for its contribution and valued as the third vehicle of development along with the state and market.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are understood by the common man as organizations that

work independently of the government but perform the task of meeting the developmental needs of individual citizens by adopting a flexible, participatory, and responsive approach. It is this direct involvement role of civil society to reduce the potential crisis faced by the individual citizens, who are the most marginalized section

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Received	Reviewed	Accepted	Published
03-June-2025	27-Sept.-2025	22-Oct.-2025	01-Dec.-2025
Volume	Issue	December	ISSN
No. 7	No. 2	2025	2583-1852(P), 2584-0878(O)
How to Cite this Article: Sahoo, Rudra Prasad. Contracting Space for Civil Society: Implications for Inclusive Development in India. THE THIRD VOICE REALITY AND VISION. 2025. Vol No-7. Issue No-2. December. Pp: 19-26. DOI : https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19411725			

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DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19411725>
Article No - TVRV00093

of society at the grass root level, that led to changing the development discourse, which stressed human-centric to more on the individual at the bottom, to be the main agenda of development, leading to the popularization of the term inclusive development. Hence, development discourse now has a long trajectory from economic development to social development, including sustainable development and human development, and now inclusive development is at the center of development discourse because it gives importance to excluded groups as a part and parcel of the development process in society.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the role and function that civil society organizations play in India, specifically with regards to advancing the inclusive development agenda. It will more accurately evaluate what obstacles or challenges CSOs have in accomplishing their mission of inclusive development in India.

To know more about this, the paper is organized as follows: Section one explains the conceptual aspect of civil society. It also reviews and lays out different philosophical reflections relating to civil society. Section two is devoted to explaining the concept of inclusive development. Here is a sub-section also devoted to explaining the relationship between civil society organizations (CSOs) and inclusive development. Section three analyzes civil society organizations in the context of India: an overview, focusing on their role and the interests they represent and organize. In the fourth section, the shrinking space for civil society's implications for inclusive development in India is examined, and this is followed by a conclusion

CIVIL SOCIETY: THE CONCEPT

In common parlance, it is generally referred to as a voluntary organization since it allows individuals and groups to directly handle their affairs through this association.

Regarding the concept of civil society as a good society, it found strong emphasis in European thinking, most notable in ancient Greece. However, the 19th-century German political philosopher Hegel, in his monumental work *Philosophy of Rights* (1820), simply stated that civil society is a type of social association that stands in between the state and the family. Hegel defines civil society as an ethical way of living that embodies a system of relations built upon mutual recognition of the rights of individuals with those of others to realize freedom (Mahajan, 1999). For Hegel, civil

society is an arena where citizens form associations based on their shared interests, desires, and wishes.

Drawing inspiration from Hegel, Marx also views civil society as a separate sphere from that of a state and an essential step in the state's formation. But Marx contends that civil society is the source of state power. Here, Marx criticizes Hegel and says that civil society represents private interests and not collective freedom, so it represents the voice of the ruling class (Chandhoke, 2007).

However, Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci, in his *Prisoner Notebook* (1971), argues that civil society is the arena in which the state collaborates with the ruling class to build its hegemony. To put it another way, Gramsci defined civil society as a place where hegemony is maintained by the manufacturing of consent, and in this way, dominance is justified. He said institutions of civil society are the church, school, other organizations, etc. It is the responsibility of civil society to establish legitimacy through these institutions. Thus, in the sphere of civil society, the battle between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces shapes where the struggle for the legitimacy of the exercise of state authority takes place. Gramsci's use of culture as the tool of critical analysis, as opposed to a simple grasp of economics as the base around which all Marxist ideas revolve, is an intellectual addition to Marxism (Susen, 2021).

Despite differences in depicting civil society in the intellectual domain, the most excellent exploration and explanation in relation to democracy is found in the work of American political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville, who advocated that civil society helps individual citizens realize their social freedom and equality. Tocqueville, in his study of *Democracy in America*, provided two solid reasons for "free association" that are found in America: 1) Free association helps free and equal individual citizens solve their collective problems; 2) it helps individual citizens come out of their narrow individual selves and form opinions through reciprocal influence as members of a collectivity or group to promote the common good (Basile, 2017). This means an individual citizen is concerned with their fellow citizens by sharing a public life in common. In this way, it checks the arbitrary power of the government or any kind of despotism by the state. At the same time, it also accepts and gives legitimacy to state authority, which is based on the rule of law. This association helps individual citizens generate trust among fellow citizens, and in this way, through reciprocity, they

develop civic skills (Stid, 2018). This free association of civil society comprises churches, literary and scientific societies, professional recreational groups, etc (Ghosal, 2014).

From this above-mentioned philosophical exploration, each philosopher draws on their own context-specific social reality, but despite differences in conceiving civil society, they all agree that civil society stands for some common features. These are: 1) It is voluntary in nature; 2) this voluntariness facilitates citizens to form various associations depending upon indubitable interests, needs, and desires; 3) they are also engaged in shaping how an autonomous society comprised of free and equal people can be structured.

In recent times, many scholars have described and defined the concept of civil society, looking at liberal (Hegel, Tocqueville) as well as revolutionary traditions (Marx and Gramsci). However, Victor Perez-Diaz gave a broader definition of civil society. He prescribes civil society as “the ideal type of society characterized by a set of sociopolitical institutions such as the rule of law, limited and accountable public authority, the economic market, social pluralism, and a public sphere” (McLavery, 2002). This means civil society is imagined as a sphere where individuals and their fellow citizens form various associations to achieve their social needs by encasing freedom, which is distinct from the power of the state. In order to make it easier to understand the functional role of civil society associations, Basile has identified them at three levels. These include: a) at the economic level, when the state and market are weak, civil society serves as a support system to the state by offering services to individuals and groups; b) at the societal level, it promotes cultural and social interaction; and c) at the political level, it assists the government and acts as a watchdog on human rights violations. (Basile, 2017; 217)

The resurgence of civil society institutions emerged in the 1990s as a reaction against oppressive regimes across the globe, most particularly in the context of Central and Eastern Europe. So civil society, as a kind of institution, bears a resemblance to the associative life of a citizen flourishes and takes on a vibrant function under the rubric of democracy. The process of democratization in Central and Eastern Europe witness to such event. It plays a range of roles, such as: a) form opinion to check the absolute power of the state; b) lobby for good governance by adhering to principles such as sharing information, communication, responsibility, and accountability; c) promote political participation; d) help

to promote democratic values such as tolerance and respect for others among citizens; e) play a significant role in providing democratic civic education; and f) it is the arena of expression of diverse interests (Jama, 2021).

Here it is to be noted that civil society flourishes in a democratic environment, and, by calibrating to the demands of weaker sections of society and pressuring the state, further paves the way for inclusive development.

ABOUT INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

The term “inclusive development” first appeared in academic writing in 1998 and became a crucial component of academic literature from 2008 onwards (Pattberg & Zelli (Eds.) 2015). However, at the policy level, Rauniyar and Kanbur’s (2010) study stressed that inclusive development first appeared in the publication of the Asian Development Bank (ADB, 2007). It comes out with a strategy that focuses on “equity and empowerment based on reducing poverty, developing human capital (education and health), developing social capital (community-led participatory decision-making), developing ideas relating to gender (welfare and social development for women), and providing social protections for vulnerable groups” (Gupta et al., 2015).

But in a chapter on inclusive development, scholars such as Joyeeta Gupta, Vincent Cornelissen, and Mirjam A.F. Ros-Tonen offered five reasons for promoting inclusive development. These are the following:

1. Normative ground—justifies the empowerment of the poor on moral ground, 2) legal: making social norms institutionalized, 3) Economic: enhancing people’s material, relational, and subjective well-being by enlarging and increasing their participation in production, consumption, 4) security: focusing on minimizing social conflicts; 5) politics: taking into account the needs of the poorest. (Pattberg & Zelli (Eds.) 2015)

It means the very foundation of inclusive development strategy focuses on the principles of social justice and human rights perspectives, which prioritize the social needs of the most marginalized individuals and groups. Furthermore, some research studies argue that inclusive development is essentially about creating conditions for equitable opportunity, ensuring redistributive justice, and empowering the poor to assert their rights. It also requires addressing the political

process that led to the concentration of power (Pouw and Gupta, 2017).

According to Michael Chibba, the concept of inclusive development means it is seen as necessary by all societies, as it is the moral responsibility of all governments, organizations, and citizens to promote and engage in inclusive development. He emphasized that one of the fundamental policy thrusts associated with the failure of the neoliberal approach is that the market is not self-correcting and doesn't serve the public interest well, hence the need to achieve inclusive development, which requires a strong role for the state to address the fundamental matter at the intersection of society, economics, culture, and development. It is emphasizing pro-poor growth, or, essentially, growth that focuses on the poor in terms of equity (Chibba, 2008.)

Stressing the evolution of the concept of inclusive development in development discourse, scholars such as Gupta, Pouw, and Ros-Tonen argue that this is the latest coinage within development discourse because the idea of promoting sustainable development discourse floated with the publication of the Brundtland report in 1987, stressing fiscal discipline and macroeconomic stability. But in the 1990s, sustainable development was equated with human development and increasing entitlement. In the 2000s, with the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the idea of sustainable development was linked to global sustainability, and from the 2010s onward, growing inequality and rising unemployment in different parts of the globe led to global initiatives by different nation states to promote an inclusive development agenda within the UN declaration of sustainable development goals (Gupta et al., 2015).

Now it is essential to see that the impact of civil society on democracy and development largely depends on the nature of the associations and the interests they represent and organize. One of the ways in which civil society and democracy inspire and promote inclusive development agendas is by creating a condition for opportunity for all, thereby making people part of a democratic process in which people from the bottom up, marginalized communities, and the excluded are at the forefront of achieving development outcomes (Raharja, Ed., 2020).

2.a Linking Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) with Inclusive Development

Civil society organizations play a representative role in achieving development objectives. Some scholars construct this representative role as legitimate, and in this way, CSOs play an important role in a democracy (Kamstra & Knippenberg, 2014).

Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a key role in facilitating inclusive development in a state. The non-electoral representation of CSOs challenges exclusion and advances inclusive development by providing a range of resources, perspectives, and voices to excluded sections of society. The role of representation is very important when looking into context and form (Katyaini et al., 2021). CSO plays some time as a grass-roots technical, knowledge partner, advisor, facilitator, sensitizer, etc.

In recent times, a joint research initiative by NOW (Dutch Research Council), WOTRO (Science for Global Development), and INCLUDE (a platform of African and Dutch professionals working on disseminating knowledge on inclusive development) came out with new evidence-based knowledge about CSOs that used dialogue and dissent frameworks to generate new knowledge in the context of the Netherlands and low- and middle-income countries. This has made an important contribution, especially in relation to CSOs and a range of issues such as power asymmetry, the aid chain, the legitimacy of CSOs, shrinking civic space, etc.

This aforementioned evidence-based study identified three crucial spheres of operation of civil society organizations (CSOs) (Goris et al., 2020). These are as follows:

1, CSOs, and civic engagement

In the sphere of civic engagement, CSOs are to perform as many as five duties. These are as follows:

- a) transforming the power dynamic.
- b) perform four distinct political roles: education, communication, representation, and cooperation.
- c) Different roles call for different capacities and forms of legitimacy.
- d) States and different social groups are to adjust their policies and norms to be more inclusive and sustainable in response to pressure from CSOs.
- e) For this purpose, the CSOs must be locally rooted to perform the political role.

2. CSOs AND THE AID CHAIN

CSOs are voluntary organizations. They need funding from outside for their survival and to carry forward their operational work. External funding can help CSOs in low- and middle-income countries (LLMICs) by helping to enhance their capabilities and advocacy roles. CSOs are activists in their own rights. Promoting the political functions of CSOs in civil society calls for a long-term, situation-specific strategy.

3. CSOs IN AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

External funding can support CSOs in LLMICs in their political obligations by supporting protection in harsh circumstances and campaigning for increased political space.

It has been found that most of the countries in the world are now under the grip of globalization. The neoliberal model's laissez-faire approach is fundamentally flawed in such a situation. As a matter of principle and practice, the state must play a central role in matters of government, shaping economic policy, management, and the provision of public goods and services. In such a situation, the state's role in forging public-private partnerships is very important. It also addresses the issues of microfinance and financial literacy as important tools for inclusive development. It has been found that experimentation with microfinance by NGOs plays a critical role in the allocation of resources. In this context, the role of CSOs is much more indispensable, particularly in Asian contexts, because it provides a generic approach that explains how civil society helps the poor be a part of financial inclusion and how states invent financial institutions by addressing issues of exclusion on the one hand and poverty reduction and economic growth on the other (Chibba, 2008).

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSOs) IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

In India, the term "civil society organizations (CSOs) refer to a broad category that includes the "voluntary sector, "voluntary organizations "community-based organizations (CBOs)", "non-governmental organizations (NGOs)", "non-profit organizations (NPOs), as well as social movements.

In the pre-independent era, several social and religious reform movements flourished to fight against social injustice. These organizations were Brahma Samaj

(1828), Theosophical Society (1879), Rama Krishna Mission (1887), etc. All these organizations were engaged in changing social norms by countering age-old blind beliefs and prejudice. Later, different organizations played a significant role in bringing about equitable social order by challenging caste rigidity. In the meantime, there were organizations like Rastriya Swayamsevaka Sangh (RSS) and Hindu Mahasabha that were formed to pursue a distinct vision for India to form a Hindu nation.

In the post-independence period, civil society organizations (CSOs) in India have consistently grown, but the mushrooming of these organizations began after the economic reform period, and their focus has shifted from a welfare approach to one of development. In this period, NGOs are becoming more and more significant because they play a bigger role (combining the traditional role of providing basic services such as health care and education to the poor with new services such as water, sanitation, and housing) in the delivery of public goods. They strive for the advancement of marginalized sections of Indian society and are increasingly focused on reducing inequality based on caste, class, and gender. However, in the late 20th century, the function of CSOs evolved and is now deeply entwined with social movements. The emphasis is moving from a development strategy to one that focuses on rights and empowerment. The Chipko Movement and Narmada Bacho Andolan are the best examples of these movements (Goswami and Tandon, 2013).

In a nutshell, one of the vital functions of CSOs is to perform a representation role in non-electoral space. A study suggests that there are two ways the CSOs discursively constructed their representation function: one is "invented space," which is claimed or self-organized space, and the other is "invited space" (facilitated by the state). In the first space, the formally organized professional CSOs having long-term ties with local communities address the issues of different forms of marginalization in connection with different groups such as dalit, tribe, gender, ethnicity, child, etc. In relation to the second CSO, they perform the intermediary role between constituencies and the state by raising people's awareness about entitlement, articulating issues and needs, etc. (Wessel et al., 2019).

4. SHRINKING SPACE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY: IMPLICATION FOR INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

Upholding Indian democracy in its vibrant form lies in the active, diverse, and critical engagement of

people in the civil sphere. This civic engagement fosters participation in the realm of politics and significantly contributes to participation as well as representation within the political and societal decision-making process. The participation of civil society organizations in the political process, indispensable to achieving inclusive development, is a matter in consonance with democratic principles.

However, a worrying trend has emerged: the space for CSOs to express their opinions is rapidly diminishing as a result of the fact that these groups frequently counter coercion, humiliation, harassment, and criminalization when they try to address the issues that are affecting citizens' lives. For example, organizations like Oxfam India, the Independent and Public-Spiritual Media Foundation (IPSMF), the Center for Policy Research, and Amnesty International are alleged to have been harassed by government investigating agencies. These reasons, which Chinmay Bendre and Neelam Pandit very powerfully and forcefully articulated in an article in "The Leaflet," are tied to the emergence of this sectarian politics, the diminishing importance of media ethics, the restriction of academic freedom, etc.

Similarly, an article, Civil society under siege in India, published in "The Hindu" on January 12, 2024, by Rahul Mukharjee and Aditya Srivastava, argues that the government has taken stringent action against civil society in India. The BJP government amended the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) in 2020. At the same time, the act also empowers the Crime Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to look into NGOs, and the people working with this type of organization are under the government scanner. In such a situation, pursuing an inclusive development agenda is a little bit difficult. The possible outcomes of shrinking the space of CSOs are as follows:

1. It is a general belief that the democratically elected government, which ought to grant CSOs unrestricted access to free civil space, is currently employing an arbitrary technique that prevents them from even entering the political sphere. A few examples of such techniques are not only amendments to the FCRA but regulation and restriction in the domain of information technology laws, society registrations, CSOs role in engaging with societal relations, etc. Here, the very "invited space" of CSOs is under threat, as is how it brings the agenda of inclusive perspective into practice. In this sense, the relationship between the state and society has acquired a new

form of contestation. Soumi Banerjee and Rishi Jha describe it as the growing tide of illiberalism in Indian states in a blog post in "The Loop,"

2. The diminishing of the CSO's own control over civil space, as we call it "invented space," led to a threat to their own capacity to engage in the development and empowerment of marginalized communities. CSOs identify vulnerability and social inequality located at the identity level, which is reflected in the form of caste, tribe, gender, sex, region, religion, etc. In order to support their development agenda through community engagement, resources must be mobilized, local concerns must be monitored, and social relations must be analysed with competence. Due to restrictions and shrinking space, it has seriously hampered the CSO's ability to work in diverse fields and their capacity to create the favourable conditions that are necessary for inclusive development, the restoration of human dignity, and realizing the goal of a sustainable future.
3. CSOs largely operate by receiving donations from outside, which Jayant Kumar referred to as "dependency syndrome." in an article published in "Down to Earth" on April 22, 2022. Hence, it is axiomatic that once restrictions are imposed, the CSOs will disappear from the scene. Now, NGOs no longer have access to foreign funding because of the FCRA 2020 Act. Data shows that between 2015 and 2022, 18,000 NGOs had their rights to foreign funding revoked. Restructuring access to resources (including Foreign Contribution Regulation Act clearance, revoking the 12A/80-G license, imposing retrospective tax, and pressuring private companies and philanthropists to redirect funding) has a negative impact on both citizens and societies.

Then the question arises: how to deal with creating space for civil society organizations (CSOs) so that they will regain their lost glory and reinstall the people's hope when the state institution fails to meet the people's aspirations, realizing or achieving the common good? In this regard, the sixth principle discussed by Amitab Behar, CEO of Oxfom India, is relevant here. In his article "Shrinking Civic Space: A New Imagination for Reframing CSO Accountability, he provided a framework that expresses: 1) must align with core values such as justice, non-discrimination, equality, and freedom; 2) strengthen democracy; 3) courage; 4) stand for solidarity; 5) leave no one behind, putting the last first; and 6) meddle. Hence, issues like autonomy, participation,

representation, decentralization in decision-making, devolution of power, communication, and information are the core values associated with CSOs, without which they will not deliver the results for which they have been imagined or practiced.

In addition, CSOs capacity to influence public policy and public discourse required renewed energy, and this is an uncharted territory rather than an easy one. It is important and imperative for CSOs to adopt the Gramscian concept of the “war of position,” as opposed to the “war of maneuver” or “frontal war” (Shah, 2014). In the Gramscian sense, “war of maneuver” refers to the actual physical subversion of state machinery. In the current circumstances, it is extremely challenging to utilize this “war of maneuver”; rather, it is favourable to use his “war of positions,” which entails persistent opposition and resistance in the cultural sphere. In fact, there are many areas that need introspection in relation to foreign funding, and if possible, they should be shorted by taking pragmatic steps. Therefore, pursuing a transformative agenda of CSOs means it should apply all these aforementioned ideals so that it will be an implementable action or practicable one in bringing pro-poor policy change.

All these above principles and strategies will further help CSOs to restore the accountability issue and might offer CSOs a means of revitalizing their functioning and responsibility in realizing the goal of inclusive development in India.

CONCLUSION

One of the most important functions of civil society in contemporary time is to enhance the quality of democratic government by making government accountable and responsive to citizen. In the era of Globalisation civil society supposed to channel peoples voice when a market fails to deliver peoples aspiration. In such situation CSOs act as a lobby group to pressure government by delivering citizen due justice, equality and ensuring inclusion of excluded be it in receiving public good or services or participation in economic sphere when market ignore these peoples. India no such exception where discrimination is still perpetuated on the ground of caste, religion, sex and based on other ethnic consideration.

But the way majoritarian states use a sectarian approach is humiliating and self-defeating in the context of achieving inclusive development in India. The way the state is behaving has been negated by people the

world over. For example, India’s position on the World Press Freedom Index is very deterrent. In the 2022 report, out of 180 countries, India’s position was 142. Take not one of the dismissal records of India’s electoral democracy index 2023, where India’s place is 108. Therefore, it is high time to generate more social capital networks and draw out a critical strategy to counter the challenge coming from the arbitrary law imposed by the state and possibly adhere to democratic principles and values. These are the right weapons to meet the changes faced by the CSO at the juncture to realize the vision of inclusive development in India.

One must take notice that despite repression and coercion from the Indian state, Alok Shukla, a Chhattisgarh-based environmental and forest activist, has been awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize this year for his effort to successfully advocate the right of *adhivasi* for the preservation of 445,000 acres of biodiversity-rich forest in Hasedo, located in Chhattisgarh. This story is illuminating and provides a ray of hope to all CSOs in this period of darkness.

FUNDING :

The authors received no financial support for this “research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

COMPETING INTEREST :

The author declare no competing interests.

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Indo-Russian Economic Cooperation: Prospects and Pathways for Multisectoral Engagement

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ABSTRACT

India and Russia share one of the most enduring strategic partnerships in contemporary international relations. Bilateral relations have evolved through distinct historical phases, from the Soviet era characterized by state-led industrial cooperation and rupee–ruble trade mechanisms to the post-Soviet period marked by market-oriented economic engagement and diversified sectoral collaboration. This article critically examines the evolution, structure, and prospects of India–Russia economic cooperation with particular emphasis on trade dynamics, industrial collaboration, energy security, technology partnerships, and emerging areas such as artificial intelligence and rare earth minerals. The paper highlights how Soviet technical assistance significantly contributed to India’s industrialization during the early decades after independence through major projects in steel, petroleum refining, heavy engineering, and energy production. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 disrupted established trade mechanisms, resulting in a sharp contraction in bilateral trade and a gradual transition toward market-based economic relations. In the contemporary period, energy trade—particularly crude oil imports—has become the dominant component of bilateral commerce, creating a significant trade imbalance. Despite strong political relations and a “Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership,” economic cooperation remains below potential. The article identifies key bottlenecks including limited diversification of exports, logistical constraints, financial settlement issues, visa restrictions, and insufficient private sector participation. It further explores emerging opportunities in sectors such as nuclear energy, pharmaceuticals, digital technology, rare earth minerals, railways, artificial intelligence, and defence industrial cooperation. The paper concludes that enhanced institutional frameworks, improved financial connectivity, and deeper integration through mechanisms such as a Free Trade Agreement between India and the Eurasian Economic Union could significantly strengthen the economic dimension of this strategic partnership.

Key word: India–Russia relations, economic cooperation, energy security, trade relations, strategic partnership, and technology collaboration

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Received	Reviewed	Accepted	Published
05-June-2025	27-Sept.-2025	22-Oct.-2025	01-Dec.-2025

Volume	Issue	December	ISSN
No. 7	No. 2	2025	2583-1852(P), 2584-0878(O)

How to Cite this Article: Swain, Sumant. Indo-Russian Economic Cooperation: Prospects and Pathways for Multisectoral Engagement. THE THIRD VOICE: REALITY AND VISION. 2025. Vol No-7. Issue No-2. December. Pp: 27-38, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19411838>.

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DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19411838>
Article No - TVRV00094

INTRODUCTION

India has emerged as one of the most dynamic economies in the contemporary global system, becoming the world's fourth-largest economy by nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the fastest-growing major economy. Anchored in the long-term developmental vision of *Viksit Bharat 2047*, India aims to transform into a developed nation by the centenary of its independence. According to the *Economic Survey of India 2025–26*, real GDP growth for FY2025–26 is estimated at 7.4 percent, with projections for FY2026–27 ranging between 6.8 and 7.2 percent and a medium-term potential growth rate of around 7 percent annually, reflecting sustained macroeconomic stability despite global economic volatility. The survey further notes that India contributes more than 16 percent to incremental global growth and is expected to become the world's third-largest economy by 2030 with a projected GDP of approximately US\$7.3 trillion. Complementing these assessments, projections by the International Monetary Fund (2026) estimate India's nominal GDP at about US\$4.51 trillion, with a growth rate of 6.2 percent and a per capita income of roughly US\$3,051. With a population of nearly 1.4 billion—around 17.79 percent of the global population—India's demographic scale, expanding domestic market, and strong economic momentum position it as a structurally significant driver of global economic expansion. In contrast, Russia, with a population of approximately 143 million, remains one of the largest emerging economies in terms of aggregate output and strategic resource endowments. According to IMF projections for 2026, Russia's nominal GDP is estimated at around US\$2.51 trillion, with a projected real growth rate of about 1.0 percent and a per capita income of approximately US\$17,287 despite special military intervention of Ukraine and western sanctions. The Russian economy is characterized by abundant natural resources—particularly hydrocarbons—along with advanced capabilities in energy, defence production, metallurgy, and heavy industry.

Against this economic backdrop, India and Russia share a longstanding and resilient partnership encompassing political, defence, economic, scientific, cultural, and people-to-people cooperation. The bilateral

relationship, which traces its origins to the Tsarist period and strengthened during the Soviet era, has evolved into a contemporary “Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership.” Since the signing of the India–Russia Strategic Partnership Declaration in 2000 and its elevation in 2010, bilateral engagement has been supported by institutional mechanisms such as the India–Russia Intergovernmental Commission (IRIGC) and the 2+2 ministerial dialogue, ensuring regular strategic coordination. The Annual Summit between the Prime Minister of India and the President of Russia, with more than twenty-three summits held to date, represents the highest level of bilateral dialogue. Relations between the two countries have traditionally been characterized by equality, mutual respect, trust, multi-faceted, multi-dimensional, and convergence on major international issues. The Programme for the Development of Strategic Areas of Russian–Indian Economic Cooperation until 2030, adopted at the bilateral summit, outlines a comprehensive roadmap for expanding trade, investment, and sectoral collaboration. Bilateral trade has grown rapidly in recent years, approaching US\$70 billion, although India's share in Russia's imports remains below 2 percent, indicating significant untapped potential. Both countries have therefore set an ambitious target of increasing bilateral trade to over US\$100 billion by 2030, with particular emphasis on expanding Indian exports and creating a more balanced economic partnership. Historically, Russia and India have consistently supported each other during both favourable and challenging periods, reinforcing the depth of trust and solidarity that continues to underpin this enduring partnership.

SOVIET PERIOD

Following independence, India sought to dismantle the colonial economic structure and overcome structural backwardness through rapid industrialization anchored in state-led planning. This strategy, formalized in the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 and operationalized through successive Five-Year Plans, emphasized the development of heavy industry in the public sector. Given limited domestic capital and technology, and the reluctance of Western capitalist countries to support such state-directed industrialization, India turned to the Soviet Union for cooperation.

The first major milestone was the 1955 agreement to establish the Bhilai Steel Plant, marking the beginning of large-scale Soviet technical and financial cooperation. Soviet assistance extended beyond individual projects to the creation of integrated industrial complexes linking raw material extraction, machine building, and skilled manpower training. Over 120 industrial enterprises were built with Soviet technical cooperation, including major steel plants at Bokaro Steel Plant and heavy machinery facilities at Ranchi and Durgapur.

In the petroleum sector, Soviet experts played a pivotal role in exploration and refinery construction, including facilities at Barauni, Koyali, Mathura, and Guwahati, and contributed significantly to strengthening Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC). Cooperation also spanned power generation, coal mining, and pharmaceuticals, substantially expanding India's industrial and energy capacities.

By the early 1980s, enterprises built with Soviet assistance accounted for a large share of India's steel, heavy machinery, power equipment, oil production, and coal output. These state-sector enterprises formed the backbone of India's industrial economy, reinforcing economic self-reliance and reducing dependence on foreign capital. Soviet assistance thus played a transformative role in shaping India's public-sector-led development trajectory.

INDO-SOVIET TRADE

India's foreign economic relations underwent a significant transformation following independence in 1947, reflecting the consolidation of its political sovereignty and the strategic pursuit of economic self-reliance. Within this evolving framework, economic engagement with the Soviet Union (USSR) emerged as a cornerstone of India's external trade policy during the Cold War period. The share of the USSR in India's total exports increased substantially from approximately 1 percent in 1951 to 19.3 percent in 1982. Similarly, the Soviet share in India's total imports rose from 0.2 percent to 8.5 percent over the same period. Indo-Soviet trade turnover expanded markedly, from 0.5 billion Rubles

during 1956–1960 to 5.1 billion Rubles in 1976–1980, and further to 10 billion Rubles during 1981–1984. By the 1980s, India had become the Soviet Union's largest trading partner among developing countries, while the USSR ranked among India's principal trading partners, accounting for nearly 18 percent of India's exports and more than 10 percent of its imports.

Indo-Soviet trade and economic relations were institutionalized through long-term bilateral agreements, which insulated trade flows from volatility in global markets. This structured framework provided predictability in prices and volumes, thereby ensuring mutual protection from international market fluctuations. Such arrangements were consistent with India's planned development strategy and the Soviet model of state-led economic coordination.

An examination of the commodity composition of bilateral trade reveals a complementary structure. Capital goods dominated India's imports from the Soviet Union, particularly during the rapid industrialization phase from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s. During this period, machinery and equipment accounted for approximately 54–68 percent of India's total imports from the USSR, facilitating the development of heavy industry and infrastructure. In subsequent decades, the share of machinery declined, while imports of petroleum products and fertilizers increased, reflecting shifts in India's developmental priorities and energy requirements.

Conversely, the Soviet Union emerged as a major market for India's traditional exports, including agricultural products and consumer goods. In the context of intense competition in global markets, the USSR provided a stable and assured outlet for Indian goods. At the same time, India functioned as a reliable market for Soviet capital goods, reinforcing the reciprocal nature of the trade relationship.

A distinctive feature of Indo-Soviet economic cooperation was the rupee trade and clearing arrangement. In conditions characterized by acute shortages of hard currency, the bilateral clearing system enabled trade settlement in non-convertible currencies. This mechanism allowed India to import essential capital

goods from the Soviet Union without expending scarce foreign exchange reserves. The rupee trade system played a pivotal role in expanding bilateral commerce, contributing to trade turnover reaching approximately 5.5 billion USD by 1990. Overall, Indo-Soviet economic relations represented a strategically structured partnership that supported India’s industrialization and reduced its vulnerability to external market shocks.

POST SOVIET PERIOD

The post-disintegration phase of the Soviet Union marked a period of sharp contraction and structural instability in Indo-Russian economic relations. Bilateral trade declined precipitously from approximately USD 5.5 billion in 1990 to USD 0.5 billion in 1992. This dramatic fall was largely attributable to Russia’s transition toward a market economy under radical reforms initiated during the presidency of Boris Yeltsin. The abolition of the state monopoly over foreign trade and the discontinuation of intergovernmental trade protocols exposed bilateral commerce to market forces, undermining the previously insulated rupee-based clearing system.

Simultaneously, the transformation of the Russian market from a seller’s to a buyer’s market intensified competition. Indian exporters, who had previously enjoyed preferential access, faced competition from countries such as China, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. Although the 1993 debt-repayment arrangement provided temporary support—allowing India to repay Soviet-era debts through goods exports—nearly 80 percent of exports were routed through this channel, raising concerns about quality control, corruption, and reputational decline.

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, trade volumes fluctuated and remained below pre-1991 levels. A persistent structural weakness has been the narrow commodity base: Indian exports largely comprise agricultural goods, textiles, and pharmaceuticals, while Russian exports are dominated by energy, metals, fertilizers, chemicals, and defense-related supplies, including equipment for the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant. This limited diversification continues to constrain the depth and resilience of bilateral trade.

Table: Export and Import between India and Russia in FY 2024-2025

Exports from India to Russia -FY 2024-25 (billion USD)	Imports from Russia to India-FY 2024-25 (billion USD)
Engineering Goods (1.26)	Crude Petroleum (56.8)
Electronic Goods (0.86)	Animal/Vegetable Oils (2.39)
Drug Formulations (0.58)	Fertilizers (1.84)
Chemicals (0.55)	Pearls & Precious Stones (0.43)
Other Exports (0.25)	Other Commodities (0.24)

(Sources: Ministry of Commerce, Government of India)

Russia has historically been an important market for Indian tea and textiles; however, exports of these traditional commodities have experienced a sustained decline in recent years, with India increasingly losing market share to competitors such as Sri Lanka, particularly in the tea segment. Although pharmaceutical exports have shown a recent upward trend after years of stagnation, India’s overall export basket to Russia remains narrow and limited in value. In FY 2024–25, India’s total imports from Russia reached approximately USD 63.84 billion, heavily dominated by crude petroleum, which accounted for nearly 89 percent of total imports. By contrast, India’s exports to Russia stood at only about USD 4.88 billion, led primarily by engineering goods and electronic products. This structural asymmetry highlights a pronounced trade imbalance between the two countries.

PROSPECTS AND PATHWAYS FOR ENGAGEMENT

India and Russia possess large and complementary economies, which create significant potential for expanding bilateral trade and economic cooperation. Despite this inherent complementarity and the existence of a strong strategic partnership, the current level of economic engagement between the two countries remains below its potential. India and Russia maintain a “Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership” and enjoy a long-standing and robust political relationship characterized by mutual trust and regular high-level engagement. However, bilateral trade has not adequately reflected the depth of this strategic partnership nor the economic opportunities available to both sides.

Recognizing this gap, the governments of India and Russia have repeatedly expressed concern regarding the relatively modest scale of bilateral trade. To address this issue, both countries established a Joint Study Group to explore mechanisms for strengthening economic ties and identifying avenues for expanding trade and investment cooperation. As part of their long-term economic engagement strategy, the two countries have set an ambitious target of achieving bilateral trade turnover of USD 100 billion by 2030. Furthermore, during the 23rd Annual India–Russia Summit, both sides signed the Programme for the Development of Strategic Areas of Russian–Indian Economic Cooperation until 2030, which provides a comprehensive framework for enhancing collaboration in key sectors such as trade, investment, energy, technology, and infrastructure. This programme aims to unlock the untapped potential of the bilateral relationship and align economic cooperation more closely with the broader strategic partnership between the two nations.

BANKING SECTOR

Cooperation in the banking and financial sector has played an important role in facilitating economic relations and trade between India and Russia, particularly in the post-Soviet period. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, both countries undertook efforts to modernize their financial systems and establish institutional banking channels to support bilateral trade. However, challenges emerged after the financial crisis in Russia in 1998, when Indian banks lost confidence in the Russian banking system and stopped honoring Letters of Credit (LCs) and guarantees issued by Russian banks, which created difficulties in trade facilitation. The exhaustion of rupee funds generated from the earlier debt repayment arrangements further underscored the urgent need for stronger banking infrastructure to support bilateral trade. In response, several initiatives were undertaken to improve financial connectivity between the two countries. State Bank of India and Canara Bank, which had maintained representative offices in Moscow since the Soviet era, established a joint venture bank with a 60:40 equity structure to strengthen banking cooperation. ICICI Bank also

entered the Russian market by acquiring a Russian bank, thereby expanding financial services for businesses engaged in bilateral trade. At the same time, Russian banks have increased their presence in India, with institutions such as Vnesheconombank, Sberbank, and VTB Bank opening offices in New Delhi to support trade financing, infrastructure projects, and investment cooperation. In recent years, banking cooperation has gained renewed significance as both countries have explored alternative financial mechanisms such as rupee–ruble settlement systems and the use of national currencies in trade in order to reduce dependence on Western financial networks. Coordination between the Reserve Bank of India and the Central Bank of Russia has focused on improving payment settlement mechanisms, expanding banking connectivity, and facilitating trade in sectors such as energy, defence, fertilizers, and industrial goods. These developments demonstrate the growing strategic importance of financial cooperation in sustaining and expanding economic engagement between India and Russia in the evolving global financial environment.

LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT

Shipping arrangements have become an increasingly important component of the expanding economic partnership between India and Russia, particularly as bilateral trade has grown in sectors such as energy, fertilizers, and industrial machinery. Maritime transport plays a crucial role in facilitating the movement of goods between the two geographically distant countries. Historically, much of the cargo movement between India and Russia has relied on shipping companies from third countries, highlighting the need for stronger bilateral shipping arrangements and improved port infrastructure to support expanding trade volumes. Strengthening maritime logistics and transport connectivity is therefore essential for reducing costs, improving supply chain efficiency, and promoting greater trade integration between the two economies. In recent years, both countries have prioritized the development of alternative and more efficient transport routes. A major initiative in this regard is the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a multimodal network connecting India with Russia through Iran, the Caspian

Sea, and Central Asia. Once fully operational, the INSTC is expected to significantly reduce transit time—potentially by nearly half—for goods transported between India and Russia. Additionally, new connectivity initiatives such as the Chennai–Vladivostok Maritime Corridor and Russia’s promotion of the Northern Sea Route across the Arctic region are gaining attention as potential alternatives for faster trade flows. The simultaneous development of these transport corridors reflects the growing importance of maritime connectivity in strengthening India–Russia trade and enhancing economic cooperation across the broader Eurasian region.

INSURANCE COVERAGE

Insurance services play a crucial role in supporting cross-border trade by covering risks related to transportation, investments, industrial projects, and financial transactions. Institutions such as the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India (ECGC) provide protection to Indian exporters against commercial and political risks associated with international trade. However, Russia has often been categorized by ECGC under a lower risk classification (B grade), which effectively limits insurance coverage to about 60–80 percent for exports to Russia. This classification has been viewed by many exporters as a constraint on expanding trade and may discourage Indian companies from entering the Russian market. As bilateral trade, particularly in energy shipments and maritime transport, has increased, there is a growing need for stronger insurance cooperation and improved risk-coverage mechanisms to ensure secure and sustainable trade flows between the two countries.

VISA PROCEDURES

Visa procedures have occasionally posed challenges in the development of economic and people-to-people relations between India and Russia. In the past, Indian business representatives and professionals reported administrative delays, complex documentation requirements, and difficulties during entry procedures, which discouraged some entrepreneurs from exploring business opportunities in Russia. These constraints were

partly linked to concerns about illegal migration through Russian territory toward Europe, which led Russia to emphasize stricter visa controls and discussions on a re-admission agreement with India. However, both governments have gradually taken steps to address these issues and facilitate smoother mobility. Russia has introduced electronic visa facilities and expanded long-term business visas to ease travel for trade, tourism, and academic exchanges. India has also proposed measures such as 30-day free e-tourist visas for Russian citizens, along with agreements on manpower mobility, skilling, education, and youth exchanges. With more than 70,000 Indians currently working in Russia, improved visa facilitation is expected to strengthen labor mobility, tourism, and business cooperation between the two countries.

ENERGY SECTOR

Energy cooperation has emerged as a central pillar of the economic partnership between India and Russia in the post-Soviet period. As India’s energy demand has increased rapidly due to industrialization, urbanization, and rising consumption, Russia—one of the world’s largest producers of hydrocarbons—has become a key partner in ensuring India’s long-term energy security. Indian public sector companies have invested in Russia’s upstream energy sector, most notably through ONGC Videsh Limited’s participation in the Sakhalin-1 project, where India invested about USD 1.7 billion and secured long-term oil supplies. India has also explored investment opportunities in other Russian projects, including the Sakhalin-3 project, the Kovytko gas field, and oil and gas reserves in East Siberia. Cooperation between major energy companies has further strengthened this partnership, with Russian energy giant Gazprom signing agreements with GAIL and ONGC Videsh for gas supply, exploration, and joint operations, including activities in the Bay of Bengal. Russia has also emerged as one of India’s largest crude oil suppliers, helping stabilize global energy markets and supporting India’s energy requirements during periods of geopolitical volatility.

Another significant dimension of bilateral energy cooperation is nuclear power development. Russia has

played a major role in supporting India's civilian nuclear energy programme through technology transfer, technical expertise, and financial cooperation. The Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant in Tamil Nadu, developed with Russian assistance from Rosatom, represents one of the largest examples of Indo-Russian technological collaboration in the energy sector. Beyond the initial two reactors, both countries have worked to commission another four units, which will be operational soon to expand the project with additional reactors and explore advanced technologies such as small modular reactors, floating nuclear power plants, and other peaceful applications of nuclear technology. This partnership contributes to India's clean energy transition, diversification of energy sources, and long-term electricity generation capacity while strengthening Russia's position as a leading global provider of nuclear technology and energy solutions.

DEFENCE COOPERATION

Defence cooperation has long been one of the most significant pillars of India–Russia relations, contributing substantially to both strategic security and economic collaboration. Since the Cold War period, Russia (formerly the Soviet Union) has remained India's principal supplier of defence equipment, providing aircraft, tanks, submarines, and missile systems. In the post-Soviet era, this partnership has evolved from a traditional buyer–seller model into a broader framework of joint research, development, and co-production. Major collaborative projects such as the BrahMos missile system demonstrate the depth of technological cooperation and industrial partnership between the two countries.

In recent years, India has continued to strengthen its air defence capabilities through major procurements from Russia. India has already received three out of the five contracted squadrons of the S-400 Triumf air defence system and is reportedly considering the acquisition of additional units to further enhance its multi-layered air defence network. The Indian Ministry of Defence has also signed a contract worth approximately \$238 million for Vertical Launch Shtil surface-to-air missile systems for the Indian Navy, aimed at improving warship protection against aerial threats.

Furthermore, India and Russia are engaged in advanced consultations regarding the possible joint production of Su-57 fifth-generation stealth fighter aircraft in India. Such initiatives highlight the growing emphasis on technology transfer, local production, and long-term defence industrial cooperation between the two countries.

COAL INDUSTRY MODERNIZATION

Cooperation in the coal sector represents an important dimension of India–Russia economic and technological engagement in the energy industry. The Jhanjra coal mine, designed and constructed with Soviet technical assistance in the 1980s, remains one of the most promising supply units in India's coal sector. Russian companies such as Rusugolmash and Zarubezhugol have expressed strong interest in participating in projects aimed at modernizing India's mining infrastructure. The Giproskhakt Institute has also implemented several design projects under a memorandum of understanding with the Central Mine Planning and Design Institute of India (CMPDII). According to Coal India Limited, Russian mining equipment is technologically advanced, cost-competitive, and suitable for developing new open-cast mines in India.

INVESTMENT

Investment cooperation has become an increasingly important dimension of the economic partnership between India and Russia, although the overall level of mutual investment has historically remained limited. Earlier estimates suggested that total Russian investment in India was around USD 200 million, while Indian investment in Russia reached approximately USD 2 billion, with a major share coming from ONGC Videsh Limited's USD 1.7 billion investment in the Sakhalin-1 energy project. Despite the dominance of private sectors in both economies, private companies have been relatively slow to explore business opportunities in each other's markets. However, efforts have been made to encourage greater private sector engagement through initiatives such as the Indo-Russian Investment Forums held in 2007 and 2008, which aimed to strengthen business partnerships. Indian companies such as the Sun Group, Tata, Mahindra, and Reliance

have explored opportunities in Russia, while Russian firms including AFK System and Basic Element have shown growing interest in investing in India's telecommunications, infrastructure, and industrial sectors.

PHARMA SECTOR

India, often referred to as the "pharmacy of the world," is one of the largest global producers of generic medicines and vaccines, and Russian healthcare markets increasingly rely on high-quality and affordable pharmaceutical products manufactured by Indian companies. Several leading Indian firms, including Sun Pharmaceutical Industries, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, and Cipla, have expanded their presence in Russia through exports, partnerships, and distribution networks. In recent years, cooperation has also expanded to joint research, clinical trials, and vaccine production, most notably during the COVID-19 pandemic through the collaboration on the Sputnik V vaccine developed by the Gamaleya Research Institute. Further strengthening this partnership, a major Russian-Indian pharmaceutical plant is planned in the Kaluga region of Russia to produce high-quality anti-cancer drugs. The regional government has created a 100-hectare special economic zone to facilitate the project, highlighting the growing potential for collaboration in pharmaceutical manufacturing and healthcare innovation.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) COOPERATION

The information technology (IT) sector has emerged as an increasingly important area of cooperation between India and Russia in the post-Soviet period, reflecting the growing significance of the global digital economy. India is widely recognized as one of the world's leading providers of IT services and digital solutions, with an export market exceeding \$200 billion. Indian expertise in software development, digital public infrastructure, and IT-enabled services has created opportunities for collaboration with Russian technology institutions and enterprises. Areas such as cybersecurity, enterprise software, banking technology, and telecommunications have become potential fields for joint engagement. Indian firms are also exploring opportunities to provide data

center services and digital infrastructure solutions globally, including in Russia.

Recent initiatives have focused on strengthening technological partnerships through innovation platforms and research collaboration. Organizations such as NASSCOM and Russia's Skolkovo Foundation have promoted cooperation between startups and technology companies in fields such as artificial intelligence (AI), fintech, data analytics, and smart city technologies. Proposals to establish an Indo-Russian technology hub aim to combine India's large digital market with Russia's strong engineering and scientific expertise. Cooperation is also expanding in advanced fields including quantum communications, 5G networks, and AI-driven automation. With India's IT sector projected to reach \$400 billion by 2030, digital collaboration is expected to become a key pillar of India-Russia economic relations.

FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

The prospect of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) has become an important dimension of the expanding economic partnership. Negotiations have primarily taken place within the broader framework of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which includes Russia along with several Eurasian states. India and the EAEU have been working toward a comprehensive preferential trade agreement aimed at reducing tariffs, improving market access, and strengthening economic cooperation in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, agriculture, engineering goods, information technology, and energy. According to Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk, the first stage of negotiations has been completed and both sides remain optimistic about the progress.

Economically, the proposed agreement could significantly enhance trade flows by reducing regulatory and logistical barriers. It would also provide Russian businesses access to India's vast consumer market while enabling Indian firms to expand into Eurasian markets. Institutions such as the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Eurasian Economic Commission continue to assess the agreement's potential benefits,

making the FTA a key step toward deeper regional economic integration.

RARE EARTH AND CRITICAL MINERALS

Rare earth elements (REEs) have emerged as an important area of cooperation between India and Russia, particularly in the context of technological development and strategic resource security. These critical minerals are essential for advanced industries such as semiconductors, renewable energy technologies, electric vehicles, defence systems, aerospace manufacturing, and nuclear energy. Russia possesses significant reserves and technological expertise in the mining and processing of rare earth materials, while India has a growing industrial demand driven by its expanding electronics, clean energy, and defence manufacturing sectors. Globally, Russia also controls substantial shares of several strategic resources, including enriched uranium, palladium, industrial diamonds, titanium, and vanadium, which are crucial for high-technology industries.

Recent collaboration efforts include a Memorandum of Understanding between India's TEXMiN (Technology Innovation Hub on Mining) and Russia's GIREDMET research institute to cooperate on rare earth and critical mineral technologies. With India holding approximately 6–7 million tonnes of rare earth reserves and Russia possessing around 3–4 million tonnes, this partnership aims to strengthen supply chains, promote technological exchange, and support the development of high-technology industries in both countries.

RAILWAY COOPERATION

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, India–Russia economic cooperation expanded beyond defence into sectors such as railways, infrastructure, and heavy industry. In the railway sector, both countries have explored collaboration in modernization, high-speed rail technology, and infrastructure development. Agreements between Indian Railways and Russian Railways have focused on projects such as station redevelopment, freight corridor development, redesign of coaches, and the introduction of advanced signalling and engineering systems. Russia

has also expressed interest in supporting India's high-speed rail initiatives by providing technical expertise and technology. Such cooperation aims to improve transport efficiency, strengthen industrial supply chains, and enhance regional connectivity, thereby contributing to broader economic and infrastructural development.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) COOPERATION

Artificial intelligence (AI) has recently emerged as an important frontier in the technological and economic partnership between India and Russia. Both countries recognize AI as a key driver of innovation, economic growth, and national security in the digital era. Russia has strong capabilities in advanced computing, machine learning, and robotics, while India offers a vast pool of skilled IT professionals and a rapidly expanding digital ecosystem. Collaborative initiatives therefore focus on joint research, academic exchange, and innovation in fields such as data analytics, cybersecurity, smart manufacturing, and digital governance.

Government-level cooperation has further strengthened AI collaboration through institutional partnerships and technology forums. Initiatives involving organizations such as NITI Aayog and Russian technology institutions encourage cooperation in AI applications for healthcare, agriculture, urban management, and defence technologies. India's robust digital infrastructure—including systems such as UPI, recognized by the IMF as the world's largest real-time payment platform—provides a strong foundation for AI-driven innovation. Consequently, AI cooperation is becoming a significant component of the evolving India–Russia technological and economic partnership.

AVIATION SECTOR

The aviation sector has recently emerged as a promising area of cooperation between India and Russia, reflecting expanding technological and industrial collaboration. A significant development in this field is the landmark joint venture agreement between Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Russia's United Aircraft Corporation (UAC) for the licensed production of the SJ-100 regional passenger aircraft in India. The agreement includes provisions for local manufacturing,

certification, sales, maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO), and technology transfer. This initiative represents the first full-scale passenger aircraft production project in India since the 1980s. The project is expected to strengthen India's aviation manufacturing capabilities while supporting regional connectivity initiatives such as the UDAN programme under the broader "Make in India" framework.

AUTOMOBILES AND PASSENGER VEHICLES

The automobile sector has also emerged as a growing area of commercial engagement between India and Russia, particularly in the two-wheeler segment. Indian motorcycle brands have gained increasing popularity in the Russian market due to their reliability, performance, and competitive pricing. Jawa motorcycles, manufactured by Mahindra-owned Classic Legends at its production facility in Pithampur, Madhya Pradesh, are among the Indian brands exported to Russia. These motorcycles combine retro styling with modern engineering, attracting a niche segment of consumers in the Russian market.

However, due to complex logistics, transportation routes, and distribution arrangements involved in deliveries to Russia, Jawa motorcycles are often priced higher compared to some competing models. For instance, Royal Enfield motorcycles, which are shipped directly from India with relatively streamlined supply chains, may sometimes be available at more competitive prices despite offering similar features. Nevertheless, the presence of Indian motorcycle brands in Russia reflects the expanding scope of India–Russia trade in the automobile sector and highlights opportunities for further growth in vehicle exports and industrial cooperation.

BEVERAGES AND FOOD TRADE

Trade in beverages and food products has recently become a small but growing component of India–Russia economic relations. In 2025, Russia imported beer from India for the first time, purchasing approximately \$140,000 worth between January and November, according to reports from RIA Novosti. Although the volume remains modest, the trade began gradually in mid-2025 and has shown signs of steady

growth. Overall, India's global beer exports reached about \$37.8 million, indicating the potential for expansion into new markets such as Russia. At the same time, Russia has increased its exports of alcoholic beverages to India. Russian vodka exports to India nearly tripled during January–October 2025, reaching around \$820,000, which represents a 2.9-fold increase and places Russia among the leading vodka suppliers to the Indian market.

Beyond beverages, food and agricultural trade between the two countries is also expanding. India has become Russia's largest supplier of shrimp, with imports reaching approximately 19,000 tonnes in 2025, while Indian pork exports to Russia tripled to about \$1.8 million. Improved connectivity through projects such as the International North–South Transport Corridor and the Chennai–Vladivostok Maritime Corridor is expected to further strengthen bilateral trade in food and beverage products.

FERTILIZERS AND CHEMICALS

Fertilizers and chemical products have become a crucial component of economic cooperation between India and Russia, particularly in recent years. India has emerged as the largest importer of Russian fertilizers, reflecting the growing interdependence in the agricultural sector. In 2025, India imported approximately 6 million tonnes of fertilizers from Russia, representing a significant increase compared to 1.1 million tonnes in 2021. The value of fertilizer shipments also rose sharply, reaching around \$3.02 billion—nearly 1.8 times higher than the previous year. The major categories of fertilizers imported by India include mixed fertilizers valued at about \$1.76 billion, nitrogen-based fertilizers worth \$763 million, and potash fertilizers amounting to approximately \$502 million.

The sharp increase in fertilizer trade has been partly influenced by global supply disruptions and Western sanctions on Russia, which encouraged Moscow to expand trade relations with friendly partners such as India. This growing cooperation plays an important role in supporting India's agricultural productivity and strengthening bilateral economic ties.

CONCLUSION

India–Russia economic relations have evolved significantly over the decades, expanding from a primarily defence-oriented partnership to a multifaceted collaboration encompassing energy, fertilizers, metals and minerals, petrochemicals, information technology, infrastructure, and advanced technologies. Despite strong political ties and decades of strategic cooperation, bilateral trade has historically remained below its potential. However, recent developments—including increased fertilizer trade, collaboration in artificial intelligence, semiconductor technologies, space research, railway engineering, shipbuilding, and biotechnology—indicate new momentum in economic engagement. India’s ongoing structural reforms, such as the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), labour reforms, and initiatives like “Digital India,” “Make in India,” “Made for World,” “Special defence corridor,” “Special Economic Zones,” “Startup India,” and Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes, have significantly improved the investment environment. These reforms create promising opportunities for Russian investors, particularly in sectors such as electronics, semiconductors, automotive manufacturing, and high-technology industries.

Future cooperation is expected to expand through initiatives such as a potential Free Trade Agreement between India and the Eurasian Economic Union, improved connectivity corridors, and stronger institutional mechanisms such as chambers of commerce and industry forums. Deeper collaboration between the private sectors of both countries, supported by prudent state intervention, will be essential to diversify trade and enhance economic integration. Strengthened economic ties will further consolidate the long-standing strategic partnership between India and Russia in an evolving multipolar global order.

FUNDING

The authors received no financial support for this research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

COMPETING INTEREST

The author declare no competing interests.

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Immigration, Remittances and Rural Development: A Case Study of Balasore District in Odisha

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ABSTRACT

In the rural area or household, remittances are quite vital in enhancing the life of the people economically. In Indian rural households, remittances are received by the family members from the internal migrants comprising of skilled, semiskilled and unskilled workers and white collared professionals working in different parts of India as well as from the Indian immigrants or diaspora living in different parts of the globe. India stands at the top in the world in terms of receiving foreign remittances. Remittances have been a very significant source of economic development and philanthropic activities. Remittances are used in meeting the food, health, education and other essential expenditure of the migrants' family members. Remittances stimulate economic development and generate economic activities in the area of origin of the migrants. Remittances are also used for the village development and many philanthropic activities including building of schools, hospitals, libraries, parks, roads etc. The paper tries to study the impact of remittances especially sent by the immigrant workers residing in different parts of the world on the rural economic development and philanthropy focussing on the immigrants from selected areas of Balasore district in Odisha.

Keyword: Immigration, Remittances, Rural Development, Philanthropy

INTRODUCTION

Migration is defined as a crossing of geographical space. Migration can be internal as well as international. International migration of Indians, widely known as the diaspora, generally refers to the emigration of people to foreign lands (Naujoks,2009). The money that diaspora members earn and save are sent to their home countries on a regular basis in the form of remittances. Remittances from migrants have become crucial in development studies during the last two decades. With increasing international and internal migration, they are considered to be an "important and stable source of external

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Received	Reviewed	Accepted	Published
04-June-2025	27-Sept.-2025	22-Oct.-2025	01-Dec.-2025

Volume	Issue	December	ISSN
No.7	No. 2	2025	2583-1852(P), 2584-0878(O)

How to Cite this Article : Maharna, Tapu. & Mohanty, Siba Sankar. Immigration, Remittances and Rural Development: A Case Study of Balasore District in Odisha. THE THIRD VOICE: REALITY AND VISION. 2025. Vol No-7. Issue No-2. December. Pp: 39-47, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19411868>.

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Available online at :
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DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19411868>
Article No - TVRV00095

development finance” for households in their source regions (Ratha, 2003), reducing transient poverty and, at times, structural poverty (Kapur, 2004; Quoted by Tumble, 2011). At the same time, remittances can lead to financial dependence, divert attention away from productive investments, and increase inequality in source regions due to the self-selection nature of migration (imf.org and Ratha, 2020).

In the beginning, remittance was primarily considered in terms of money. Over time, the concept of remittances became more expansive, and researchers began to pay more attention to the remittance patterns. Among the researchers who studied social remittances is Peggy Levitt. She had conducted research in the Dominican Republic and watched immigrants in the United States. Diaspora members who return to their home nations carry with them not just financial resources, but also the cultural and intellectual capital they have gained while living and working in the host country, as well as the knowledge and experience they have gained in the process (Peggy Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011). Diaspora members adapt to their new country’s culture, work and live among different nationalities, and bring these traits back to their home country which are more important than money sent by diaspora members to their native country of origin, according to Peggy Levitt and Lamba (Peggy Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011). According to Levitt and others, the four forms of social remittances that immigrants and members of the diaspora send back to their home countries are practises, social capital, identities, and norms (Peggy Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011). Apart from remittances people from diaspora transmit skill and expertise, which they propagate when they return home. The remittances are used for a variety of purposes and are sent via the correct channels.

Remittances are one of the prime revenue sources for several nations, and the large chunk of their GDP comes from remittances. They are crucial for the growth of those nations. In 2024 alone, remittance inflows to India reached an estimated \$129 billion (Ratha et al., 2025). For the past two decades, India has succeeded in maintaining its top position in so far as receiving of remittances is concerned. During the period of crisis remittances have been quite handy in addressing the economic challenges. Remittances from migrants significantly augmented the effectiveness of government cash transfer programmes to assist families experiencing economic challenges during the Covid-19 crisis (Asian Development Bank et al., 2020). Remittance money has

greatly supplemented govt’s initiatives in dealing with the economic challenges during covid-19 (Ratha et al., 2025). The flow of remittances to assist households with stretched finances should be a significant component of government initiatives to enable a worldwide recovery from the pandemic (Rutkowski M. et al., 2021).

The paper discusses the importance of remittances in addressing the household expenses and generating economic activities in the locality. It also analyses the shifting dynamics of remittances and assesses the value of remittances to national economic concerns. It tries to find out the influence that remittances have on the immigrant families in Balasore district of Odisha analysing various sources and utilization of remittances sent back home by immigrants.

The principal income source for immigrant households in the selected villages of Balasore district of Odisha under study was money sent back home by immigrants. At the time of the field study, immigrants’ households were receiving remittances. The study also covered the method of sending remittances that immigrants employed. It also analysed the frequency of the transfer through official and informal channels studying if there had been any variations in frequency throughout the period. Another important fact is that remittances lead to the socio-economic wellbeing of households, including the elimination of credit constraints, the lifting of families from the economic status they were prior to the immigration of their members, and the accessibility of better schooling or education and better healthcare for the households.

The village demographics and socio-economic characteristics of the immigrants, which includes information such as the path they took to migrate, the countries they resided in before to leaving, and the employment they held once they arrived in their new nations of residence etc. are examined in the study. As per the field study, considering the education level of the immigrants, maximum number of immigrants were having degrees in technical education, which is the highest number in so far as selected immigrants are concerned. It was found that the majority of immigrants worked in the professional sector either with a technical degree or in low-skilled employment like driving. A total of 46.7% of the immigrants are employed in professional positions such as CA, doctors, engineers, and educators, compared to a mean of 6.7% in the skilled worker sector and 10.0 percent in the clerical sector. Educators, professors, and lecturers make up a significant portion of the immigrant population, at around 13.3%.

OBJECTIVES

The paper makes an attempt to study the utilisation patterns of the remittances by the immigrant households and the remittance induced economic activities improving the economic status of the family and contributing to village development.

METHODOLOGY

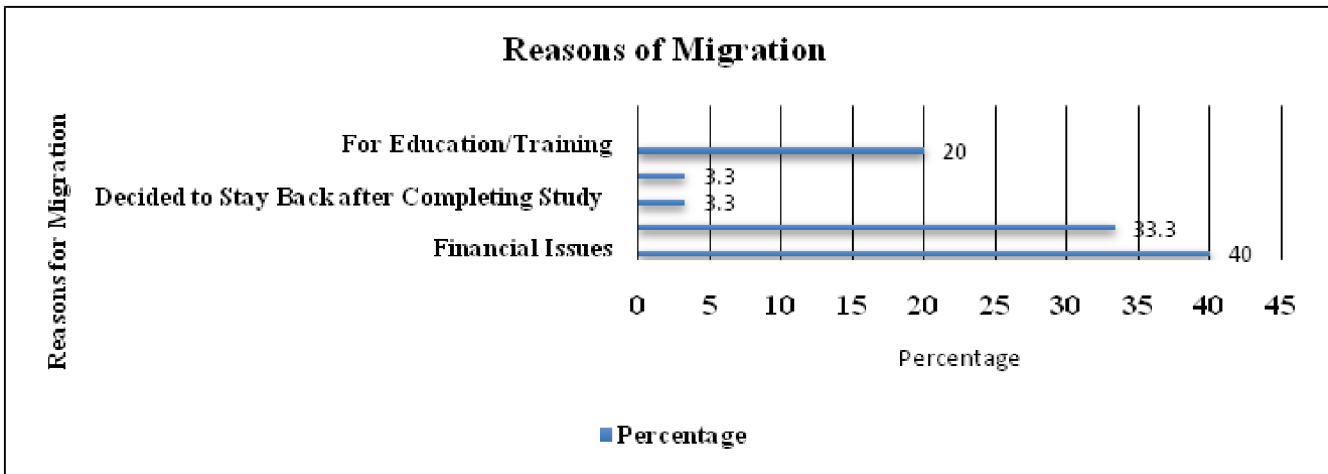
This research study uses both qualitative and quantitative tools. A detailed questionnaire was prepared containing the demographic details, remittance sending patterns, use of remittances by the households, contribution of remittances to local economic development and philanthropic activities carried out by the immigrants. The total sample size of the study is 30. Random sampling method was used for finding out the respondents. The field study was conducted in the selected areas like, Balasore Town, Balasore Sadar, Basta, Baliapal, Chandipur, Jaleswar, Bhograi, Khaira, Remuna, Soro, Bahanaga, Nilagiri, and Rupsa in Balasore district of Odisha. SPSS was used for categorisation and analysis of data.

IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Out of the total number of households of the immigrants under study 40.0 percent are found to be nuclear families, 50.0% are found to be joint families, and the remaining 10.0 percent are found to be extended families respectively. From the study it is found that an overall 80.0% of the households resided in pucca houses, while 20% of the families lived in bungalow type houses. None of the households lived in kucha houses. This is indicative of the fact that more amount of money are spent by families on the construction of houses. It is obvious that the building or renovation of these residences resulted in the generation of employment prospects for local workers. The construction or renovation of those houses is typically performed by individuals who either belong to the village or from the nearby villages.

REASONS OF MIGRATION

One of the most critical elements in each immigration research has been the motivation for the migration. Migration may be better understood by looking at the push-pull forces. Apart from the conventional causes for migration, this research has taken into account other factors that are specific to the studied region.



Source: Author's estimation of primary data

However, from the data collected from the field most of the immigrants are largely driven by 'financial issues,' according to the findings it is 40 percent. However, 'greater economic prospects' are cited as the second most important reason, accounting for 33.3%. 20.0 percent of the people moved abroad (primarily to the United States) because they wanted to get better education. 3.3 percent of the immigrants had relocated to other countries 'with spouse.' 3.3 percent of the

immigrants stayed back in the host countries after completing their study.

MODES OF TRANSFER OF REMITTANCES

In the digital era, the old ways of sending money through friends, relatives or postal money orders have largely given way to modern banking systems and digitalisation platforms. This transformation has made remittances faster, safer and more reliable to migrant

communities to support their families as well as the villages. Broadly remittance transfer flows for two purposes, one is to economically support immigrant households and another for philanthropic purpose.

Mode of Sending Remittances to Immigrant Household

Mode of Sending Remittances to Immigrant Household	Percent (%)
Direct Transfer (Online Banking) to Family Accounts	95.0
MTO (Money Transfer Operators)	5.0
Total	100.0

Source: Author's estimation of primary data

As per the mean field study data given above on mode of sending remittances to the household of immigrants, it is found that 95% of remittances are sent directly to the accounts of family members of immigrants through online banking.

The immigrants from the Balasore district of Odisha have faith in numerous village/town bodies/trusts that care and look after social problems in the countryside. Diaspora members pay remittances on a regular basis, which are used for projects in villages such as planting trees, beautifying towns, sanitation, caring for the cow shelter, maintaining village ponds etc.

Mode of Transfer of Remittances to the Village/Town Bodies for Philanthropic Purposes

Mode of Transfer of Remittances to the Village/Town Bodies for Philanthropic Purposes	Percentage
Direct transfer (online banking/ remittances services) to village account	60.0
Direct transfer to other immigrant/NRI friends' bank account from other village	10.0
Direct transfer to Bank Account of Village Samiti	6.7
Post office /Money order	3.3
Relatives	6.7
Friends	3.3
MTO (money transfer operators)	10.0
Total	100.0

Source: Author's estimation of primary data

In the study it has been seen that remittance transmission modalities are an important aspect of any remittance analysis. In the study, in so far as sending of remittances for philanthropic purposes are concerned, the majority (60.0 percent) of remittances were transferred directly to the village bank accounts, and 10.0 percent of the remittances were transferred to the bank accounts of immigrant/NRI friends of the immigrants mostly from other villages. A substantial 6.7 percent were transferred directly to the bank account of village samiti. In this survey, it was also observed that MTOs (10.0 percent) and post office or money order are used by a smaller number of immigrants to send money (3.3 percent).

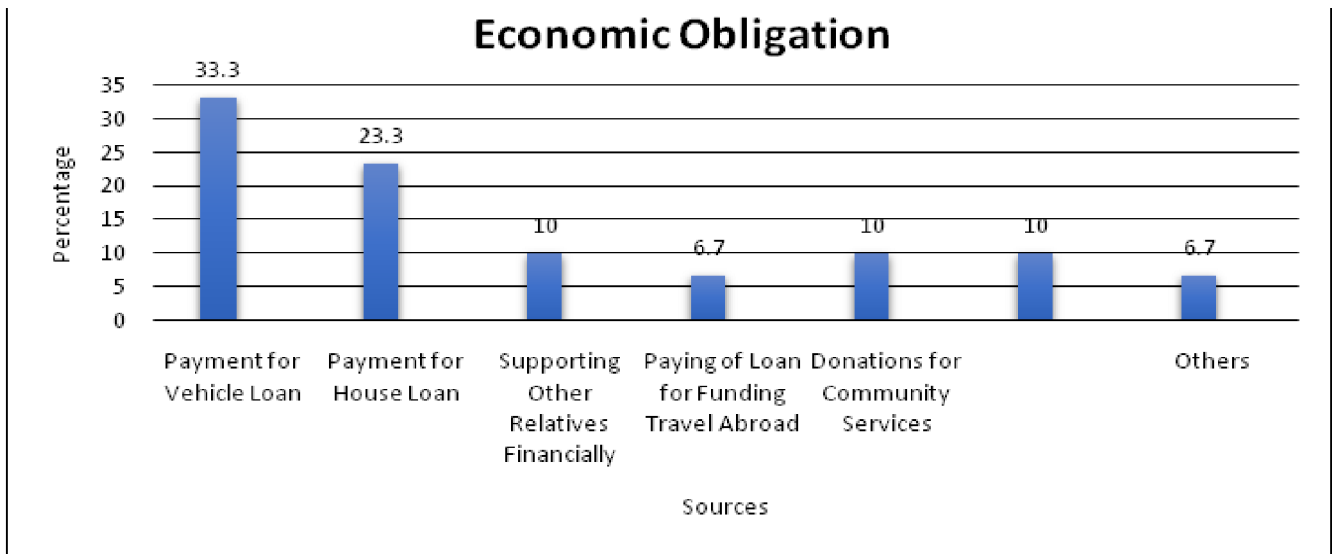
However, it should be noted that remittances from informal sources are received by a considerable majority of the total families. This suggests that, although informal channels of transfer are less common than official ones, they do exist, such as the hawala or hundi networks. It is necessary to emphasise in this regard that the cost of transfer and the time needed for transfer play a determining role in the choice of channels that is made by the immigrants (RBI, 2009; Singh, 2010). In addition, the level of financial literacy possessed by immigrants, in addition to that of the family members in their origin countries, may also be a key influence in deciding which channels are used.

USE OF REMITTANCES BY THE HOUSEHOLDS

The topics covered include the length of time that immigrant households have been receiving remittances; the number of times that remittances are received annually; the currency in which remittances are received; the purpose for which remittances are sent; the primary recipient of remittances; and whether or not there have been any changes in the size or frequency of remittance receipts. Along with the length of time that remittances are received, the frequency with which they are received and the regularity with which immigrant families get money sent back home are also essential factors in determining the effect of remittances. Out of mean samples 26.7 percent received remittances monthly and 6.7 percent received them irregularly, that is, it varied between years and could be twice a year

(20.0 percent), once a year (30.0 percent), or annually depending on the immigrant’s financial situation at the destination.

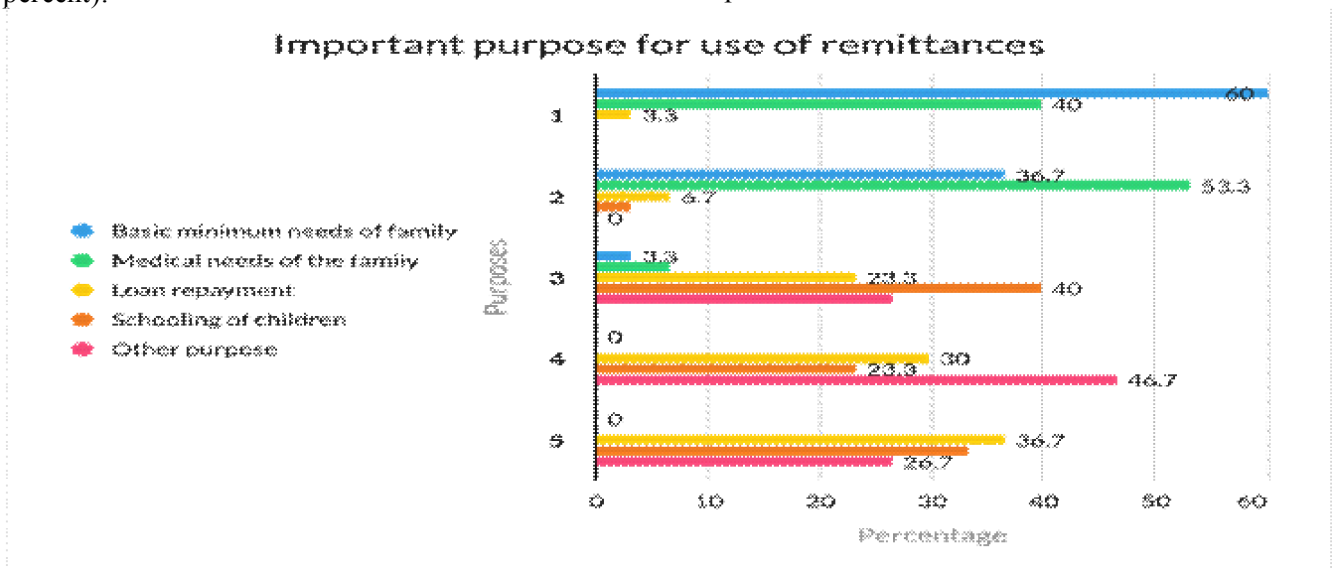
By studying the economic obligation of the households, the study was trying to find out the answers on spending by the households as per their urgency.



Source: Author’s estimation of primary data

Respondents were asked about their financial obligations, including payments on a vehicle loan (33.3 percent), house loan (23.3 percent), supporting other relatives financially (10.0 percent), contributions to social security premiums (10.0 percent), donations given for community services (10.0 percent), and payments for loans taken for meeting the travelling cost to go abroad (6.7 percent). Family debt repayment for vehicle loans is the most significant source of financial stress (almost 33.3 percent).

The reason for sending remittances is also an essential variable that allows us to identify the primary reasons why remittances are needed in families and so constitutes an important driver of remittance size. In the survey, respondents were questioned about the precise multi-response reasons why migrants would contribute money to homes. Below table and figure depict the many objectives for which migrants transferred money to homes, in order of significance, as indicated by respondents.



Source: Author’s estimation of primary data

M1: Most Important, 1M1: First Most Important, 2M1: Second Most Important, 3M1: Third Most Important, 4M1: Fourth Most Important

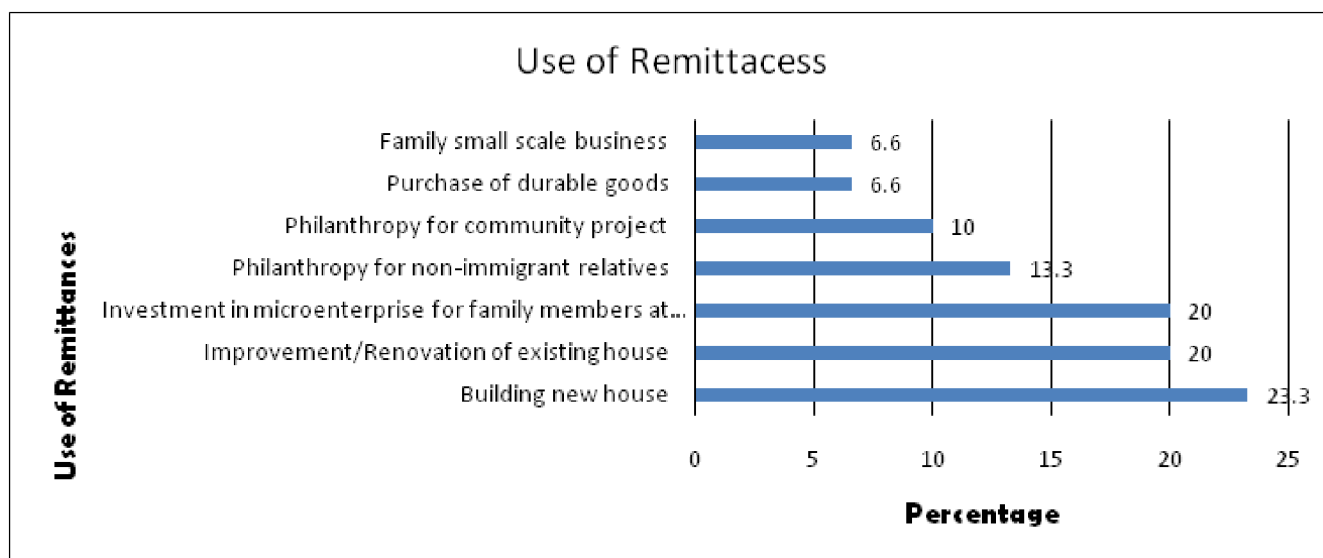
PURPOSES	PERCENTAGE				
	MI	1MI	2MI	3MI	4MI
Basic minimum needs of family	60.0(18)	36.7(11)	3.3(1)	00.0	00.0
Medical needs of the family	40.0(12)	53.3(16)	6.7(2)	0.00(0)	00.0(0)
Loan repayment	3.3(1)	6.7(2)	23.3(7)	30.0(9)	36.7(11)
Schooling of children	0.00(0)	3.3(1)	40.0(12)	23.3(7)	33.3(10)
Other purpose	0.00(0)	0.00(0)	26.7(8)	46.7(14)	26.7(8)

The most important reason for sending money was to meet the basic minimum needs of the family, such as food and other daily requirements (60.0%), followed by medical needs of the family (40%) and loan payment (3.3%), as selected by households with varying opinions.

However, when it comes to families sending remittances for other purposes, investments in land, business ventures, etc. are hardly mentioned. Repayment of loans,

medical expenses, and investment remained equally major reasons for sending remittances by immigrants.

The information shown in the graph demonstrates the proportion of immigrant families who utilised money from remittances to particularly construct new dwellings, remodel or renovate existing houses, and acquire commodities. It also states the philanthropic activities undertaken by the immigrants.



Source: Author's estimation of primary data

It can be observed from this graph that a substantial 23.3 percent of immigrant families in the villages of Balasore district utilised remittance money towards the construction of new dwellings, and that 20 percent of households also spent money on improving/renovating their current homes. It is obvious that this results in the creation of job opportunities in the locality. The remittance money was utilised by certain members of immigrant families to establish microenterprises or to

invest in commercial operations. Also, a sizeable percentage of immigrant households in the villages, used the money from their remittances to buy long-lasting and other goods that are not available in the village. This led to the generation of some trade activities in the villages, as residents stated that some retail businesses are established in the village to satisfy the requirements of the villagers and the immigrant households are the regular buyers and their purchasing was more. It was

observed that in the selected villages of Balasore district many immigrant households employed labour from their own households for domestic work.

The researcher noticed through the responses of the respondents that the remittances sent back by immigrant households generate employment opportunities for local people in the village. These employment opportunities can be found in the construction industry, in business and microenterprises, and in trade with the surrounding area.

It is the ability of the household to earn additional money by investing remittance money. Remittances have enormous contribution on the creation of asset particularly the ownership of lands in the home countries of migrants. Families of migrants who had agricultural land also tended to invest the remittances in the creation of land asset. That demonstrated that remittances and migration from rural to urban areas served investment as well as consumption purposes (Tumbe, 2016). According to another study conducted in Botswana revealed that remittances are often invested in fixed capital, such as lands, cattle, or homes (International Trade Administration, 2025). Respondents under study were found investing in microenterprises of the locality such as ice factory, prawn farming etc.

IMPACT OF REMITTANCES ON VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

Money sent by immigrants to their home countries are indicative of the economic importance of immigrants. The influence of remittances on homeland development would depend on the reason for the transfer of remittances. Remittances can have an impact on macroeconomic and microeconomic research. In terms of macroeconomics, remittances: 1) help receiving families prosper and provide temporary emergency funds; 2) tend to increase during times of economic crisis and natural disasters; 3) raise living standards through human and capital investment (health, nutrition, and education) and asset building (such as real estate, business, and saving); and 4) have effects on families and society outside of the receiving families, among other things (Hidayati, 2018). Remittances are a reliable source of cash, a vital supply of foreign exchange for the nation, and a solution to the pressure on the value of the currency in terms of macroeconomics (Hidayati, 2018).

Based on the research on the overall development scenario of the villages, it is found that there was a lot of variation in the development pattern

of the villages with regard to the most fundamental facilities, schools, and educational opportunities, as well as medical care services. The community derives the majority of its revenue from agriculture and fisheries production, with less developed processing industries. The village's efforts to improve themselves do not have adequate funding to support them. The contributions by the immigrants have greatly facilitated the community development activities.

The village's social and economic improvements are made better due to the remittances. The improvements can be marked in the living conditions of the households and the developments in the locality. Even if they were physically separated, remittances were immigrants' attempt to continue their socio-economic ties with their home nations. NRIS along with the immigrant population have contributed for the building of various colleges. It is observed that some urban as well as rural area colleges are founded or collaborated with NRIS or immigrants. It's worth noting that the villages' immigrant populations have been actively participating in a number of community development initiatives. Some Gulf immigrants have donated land to the panchayat for an animal hospital and a local Muslim association with Gulf connections has funded orphanages in the village. The Gulf connections and the NRI community's collective remittances have contributed a lot for the development of both non-immigrant households and their village community in the areas selected for the study. Immigrant families also gave money to orphanages, temples, churches, gurudwaras, and mosques.

It was found that the remittances sent back by immigrant families influenced the non-immigrant households in various ways, such as via charitable contributions. This was yet another fascinating aspect of the data. During rituals, particularly weddings and funerals, it was found that immigrant families in villages give money to some of their non-immigrant relatives living in the villages. There was an act of philanthropy that took place in the form of financial support or certain helps by the immigrants/immigrant households in the form of giving jewellery, items, goods etc., for the weddings and other celebrations of their non-immigrant relatives.

The diaspora's philanthropically driven efforts are studied and examined. Diaspora philanthropy focuses on reducing poverty, delivering social justice in the form of universal healthcare, universal education,

a clean environment for people and animals to live in, human security, particularly for disadvantaged populations, and the enjoyment of human rights. The Odia diaspora's charity activities are studied via interviews with local people of communities.

There are several places in the Municipality and nearby Gram Panchayat where social remittances have played an important role in creating various philanthropic work. Some works carried out by these remittances are in the form of a well-established public library, clean roads, water supply for the whole town, a well-maintained public park, and schools, all of which have been benefited significantly by the remittances from Odia immigrants. During the field visit of this research work, the researcher found out that several communities are the cleanest in the area.

Religious people tend to give generously to charity. Religious groups across the globe generate money to support their programmes and initiatives. To organise various religious programmes and functions, there is a need for financial support. Every state in India has a big number of immigrant groups who support religious festivals and activities. Lord Venkateshwara at Tirupathi, South India, receives contributions from both overseas Indians and foreigners. Hindu diaspora members generously contribute to ISKON, Jagannath Temple etc. Similarly other religious communities contribute to the building of mosques, churches, gurudwaras etc. and provide financial support to various programmes and festivals.

Members of the Odia diaspora community residing in different countries, particularly in USA, Australia, UK, and Canada etc. have built temples dedicated to God Jagannath. They have been donating money for the building of new temples and the rehabilitation of existing and damaged temples in Balasore. From the field survey it is known that a diaspora member regularly visits Baba Bhusandeswar Shiv Mandir in Balasore. The Mandir is open to the public free of charge, a sign that the religious remittances sent back to Odisha by the Odia diaspora have been put to productive use.

CONCLUSION

Remittances, immigration, and national growth are all interconnected. Remittances contribute for village development. Majority of people reside in rural areas in emerging nations, and poverty rates are strongly

correlated with the location of these populations. Most people in rural villages are subsistence farmers, making it difficult to escape poverty. Diaspora remittances to India significantly improve rural income, and these rural people are more likely to spend since money is readily available from family and friends in the Indian diaspora (Azad, Nirmal S. and Amandeep Kaur, 2004). Other options for increasing village revenue exist. Adopting modern technology in agriculture is one such option, and using diaspora funds, machinery required for agricultural labour in rural regions may be purchased. The development of non-agricultural work may also be impacted by remittances from the diaspora.

As crucial components in the migration process remittances cannot be dissociated. Remittances are another good that migrants produce, and their families in their home countries anxiously await them. Remittances, however, are not only welcomed by the families of migrants, but they also benefit their home countries. Remittance is therefore a process of migration that is transmitted to the homeland in both tangible (such as commodities or money) and immaterial (such as the improvement of skills and developmental ideas that have advantages for the homeland of migrants) forms (Hidayati, 2018). Remittances have indeed been contributing to the rural development improving the economic life of the rural people.

From the result of the household survey and the interviews taken from the Sarpanch, Ward members and other people of the respondents' villages in Balasore, it was found that fairly a substantial number of immigrant households in Balasore are involved in donation for plantation, innovation, schools, colleges, schools for blind people and some projects like, mineral drinking water plant etc. which symbolises the development of villages in the study area. The study further finds that each family pays money to the community development project. These individual contributions from houses make a significant contribution to the overall welfare of the community in the village. The self-sufficiency of the village, which includes the provision of fundamental utilities such as a well-paved road, power and water supply, and municipal amenities like, schools and hospitals can be ascribed to the initiatives and contributions made by the community's immigrants. Undoubtedly, remittances play a very pivotal role in the rural development as has been found out in the field study conducted in the Balasore district of Odisha.

FUNDING :

The authors received no financial support for this“research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

COMPETING INTEREST :

The authors declare no competing interests.

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From Oral Memory to Institutional Recognition: A Historical Study of Bnei Menashe Identity Formation

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ABSTRACT

The Bnei Menashe of Northeast India have attracted sustained scholarly attention, largely framed around debates concerning origins, authenticity, and religious legitimacy. While existing studies have provided valuable ethnographic, theological, and institutional insights, they have often approached Bnei Menashe identity as a claim to be verified rather than as a historical process to be explained. This article advances a different analytical perspective by examining the historical formation of Bnei Menashe identity through the interaction of oral memory, colonial and missionary encounters, religious reformulation, and institutional mediation. Drawing on memory studies, constructivist diaspora theory, and postcolonial analyses of knowledge and recognition, the study traces how dispersed oral narratives concerning migration and ancestry were gradually reconfigured into a coherent identity capable of institutional recognition. It argues that oral memory functioned as a dynamic historical practice, continually reshaped in response to changing epistemic and political conditions, rather than as a static repository of ancestral truth. The article further demonstrates that recognition by religious and state institutions did not simply affirm identity but transformed it, standardizing narratives and practices within regulated frameworks of belonging. By reframing the Bnei Menashe case from questions of authenticity to processes of historical formation, the study contributes to broader debates on diaspora, memory, and the governance of identity in postcolonial and transnational contexts.

Keywords :

Bnei Menashe; oral memory; identity formation; recognition politics; colonial knowledge; Jewish diaspora; Northeast India

INTRODUCTION:

The Bnei Menashe are a community from Northeast India, primarily from Mizoram and Manipur, who claim descent from the biblical Tribe of Menashe—one of the “lost tribes” exiled by the Assyrians in the eighth century BCE. They emerge from among the broader Chin–Kuki–Mizo peoples, who are collectively referred to by many within the community as Zo. The term Zo has gained increasing acceptance as a self-designation because there is no single universally agreed-upon

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Received	Reviewed	Accepted	Published
02-June-2025	27-Sept.-2025	22-Oct.-2025	01-Dec.-2025

Volume	Issue	December	ISSN
No. 7	No. 2	2025	2583-1852(P), 2584-0878(O)

How to Cite this Article: Singh, Kshetrimayum Malemngamba. & Gupta, Rajneesh Kumar. From Oral Memory to Institutional Recognition: A Historical Study of Bnei Menashe Identity Formation. THE THIRD VOICE REALITY AND VISION. 2025. Vol No-7. Issue No-2. December. Pp: 48-60, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19411893>

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DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19411893>

Article No - TVRV00096

nomenclature encompassing the Chin, Kuki, and Mizo groups across India and Myanmar. Within this larger Zo population, only certain sections adopted Judaizing practices and articulated claims of Israelite descent. It is these Judaizing Zo groups who came to be known as Shinlung/Bnei Menashe.

Their claim to Israelite ancestry rests on oral traditions and ritual practices interpreted as echoes of biblical heritage. The Sikipui festival, for example, is associated with a memory of crossing the Red Sea, while the invocation of “Menasseh” in moments of danger is understood as a remnant of tribal identity (Hmar, 2019). Over time, these narratives formed the foundation of their aspiration for Aliyah—immigration to Israel. Recognition of the Bnei Menashe as Jews has been highly contested and politicized. In 2005, Rabbi Shlomo Amar, the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, designated them as Zera Yisrael (“seed of Israel”), enabling immigration under special provisions (Parfitt, 2024). This decision was not grounded in genetic validation—DNA studies found no direct link to other Jewish populations—but in sustained Judaizing practices, oral tradition, and political advocacy by religious-Zionist organizations (Devir, 2017). The contrast with groups such as the Lemba of southern Africa—who possess genetic markers associated with Jewish populations yet remain unrecognized—underscores that Jewish identity is shaped not solely by ancestry, but through religious, institutional, and political validation (Parfitt & Semi, 2013).

Today, the Bnei Menashe population is estimated at approximately 10,500, with more than 4,500 settled in Israel and around 6,500 awaiting Aliyah (Schejter et al., 2023). Migration requires preparatory religious training, Hebrew instruction, and demonstration of knowledge of Jewish law. Upon arrival, immigrants enter absorption centers and undergo formal Orthodox conversion. NGOs such as Shavei Israel have played a central role in facilitating this process (Egorova, 2016).

The Bnei Menashe have consequently become a prominent case in Jewish studies, diaspora studies, and the anthropology of religion. Existing scholarship has documented their religious transformation, migration trajectories, and encounters with rabbinic authorities,

NGOs, and the Israeli state. Much of this literature, however, approaches their identity through questions of authenticity, conversion, and recognition—treating Jewishness primarily as a claim to be evaluated.

This article shifts the focus from authenticity to historical formation. It argues that Bnei Menashe identity is not an ancestral essence awaiting confirmation, but a historically constituted process shaped by oral memory, colonial and missionary encounters, postcolonial transformations, religious reformulation, and institutional mediation. Rather than asking whether the Bnei Menashe are “really” Jewish, the study examines how narratives of belonging emerged, gained coherence, and became institutionally recognizable.

Drawing on secondary literature—including ethnography, historical scholarship, and analyses of institutional discourse—the article adopts a historical-interpretive approach attentive to process, contingency, and power. Colonial governance and missionary activity introduced classificatory regimes that privileged written scripture, genealogy, and linear historical reasoning over oral tradition. These epistemic hierarchies persisted into postcolonial regimes of recognition, shaping how religious and state institutions evaluate belonging. Recognition thus operated simultaneously as inclusion and governance: it enabled migration and citizenship while regulating identity through conversion requirements, legal categories, and bureaucratic procedures.

By conceptualizing identity as a dynamic product of interaction between community agency and institutional power, this study contributes to broader debates on diaspora, memory, and recognition. The Bnei Menashe case demonstrates how imagined homelands are historically constructed and how recognition both enables and constrains belonging. In doing so, the article advances a process-oriented framework for understanding how identities are produced, stabilized, and governed within postcolonial and transnational contexts structured by unequal regimes of knowledge and authority.

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

A substantial body of scholarship has examined the emergence of Israelite ancestry claims among the Bnei Menashe of Northeast India. This literature spans

anthropology, Jewish studies, migration studies, and religious sociology, and has been instrumental in bringing the community into academic visibility. Yet it reflects distinct analytical orientations—some privileging cultural comparison and memory, others emphasizing religious transformation and institutional mediation, and still others situating the Bnei Menashe within global debates on “lost tribes.” A critical engagement with these strands reveals both their contributions and their limitations.

One influential line of scholarship focuses on indigenous intellectual production and the construction of Israelite ancestry through oral history, ritual memory, and material culture. Zaithanchhungi (1990) represents one of the earliest and most significant indigenous voices articulating a Mizo–Israelite connection. Drawing from village elders, ritual chants, sacrificial customs, and symbolic motifs, she identifies parallels interpreted as evidence of descent from Manasseh. Her reading of the “dog ate the script” legend as a metaphor for the loss of Torah, and her comparison between the Mizo Naupuakpuan shawl and the Jewish tallit, illustrate how material symbols become sites of identity-making. Jenkins (2019) demonstrates that Zaithanchhungi’s work shaped not only local discourse but also Israeli rabbinical deliberations during the 2004–2005 recognition process. Carmichael (2025) similarly characterizes these traditions as a “living archive,” suggesting that memory operates as an alternative mode of historiography.

By contrast, Parfitt (2013) argues that Lost Tribes narratives in Northeast India emerged through missionary mediation and were later appropriated by local actors. From this perspective, Israelite identification reflects modern religious encounter rather than ancient continuity. Across these debates, however, a common analytical orientation persists: the privileging of verification. Whether through theology, genetics, or rabbinic authority, much of the literature implicitly asks whether Bnei Menashe descent claims are authentic. Oral traditions are evaluated for plausibility, genetic studies are invoked to confirm or deny ancestry, and institutional rulings are treated as final arbiters of belonging.

A second strand of scholarship emphasizes religious transformation. Weil’s (2003) “dual conversion” model proposes that the Shinlung/Bnei Menashe moved first from indigenous religion to Christianity and subsequently from Christianity to Judaism in a process of re-traditionalization. Weil (2004, 2016) further argues that Judaization synthesizes biblical motifs, local myths, and geopolitical imaginaries—particularly Israel as homeland—into a new ethnic-religious identity. Samra (1996) traces this second conversion to the prophetic revelations of Challianthanga (Pu Chala), whose emphasis on Sabbath observance and ritual reform initially operated within a Christian framework before crystallizing into a distinctly Jewish orientation. Hmar (2019) situates these developments within broader religious imagination and socio-economic hardship, noting how biblical notions of chosenness and promised land resonated with the Chin–Kuki–Mizo experience.

A third body of work foregrounds institutional mediation and transnational networks. Samra (2019) documents interactions with Amishav, Shavei Israel, and key rabbinic figures such as Rabbi Avichail and Rabbi Amar, demonstrating how legitimacy, conversion, and aliyah became tied to bureaucratic procedures and geopolitical considerations. Weil (2016) highlights how organizations translate local identity claims into globally recognized Jewish categories, facilitating migration while imposing Orthodox frameworks. Parfitt (2024) situates the Bnei Menashe within a global category of “new Jews,” mediated by NGOs and religious activism, while Elazar (2023) argues that Zionism has transformed Lost Tribes narratives into projects of recognition and settlement that often reproduce hierarchical distinctions between established and “outsider” Jews.

Despite their differences, these strands frequently treat identity as a claim to be evaluated rather than as a historical process to be explained. This study departs from that verification-centered orientation. Instead of adjudicating authenticity, it examines how Bnei Menashe identity emerged, gained coherence, and became institutionally consequential over time. Three interrelated theoretical perspectives guide this approach: memory studies, constructivist diaspora theory, and postcolonial analyses of knowledge and recognition.

From the perspective of memory studies, oral traditions are understood not as static survivals but as historically situated practices. Halbwachs (2020) argues that collective memory is socially framed and continually reconstructed in light of present conditions. Applied to the Bnei Menashe, this perspective highlights how narratives of migration, exile, and ancestry were reshaped through missionary education, colonial classification, and engagement with Jewish institutions. Memory becomes a dynamic resource through which belonging is negotiated rather than a fixed archive of historical fact.

Constructivist approaches to diaspora further help explain this process. Classical diaspora models assume dispersion from a clearly identifiable homeland accompanied by sustained collective memory. The Bnei Menashe case complicates this assumption. For much of their history, the Kuki–Chin–Mizo peoples understood themselves through indigenous cosmologies and later Christian frameworks. Israelite motifs existed as diffuse references—such as memories of Manmasi—but did not initially constitute a coherent ethnic narrative. Only in the mid-twentieth century were these fragments consolidated into a unified story of descent from the Tribe of Manasseh. Benedict Anderson’s (2006) notion of imagined communities clarifies how collective identity is sustained through shared narratives and ritual performance rather than genealogical continuity. Anthony D. Smith’s (1988) ethno-symbolist framework further explains how older myths and symbols are reinterpreted to construct modern ethnic identities

Postcolonial scholarship provides a critical framework for understanding how such identity claims become legible within regimes of recognition. The identification of the Bnei Menashe with Israelites can be understood as a form of historical reclamation shaped by colonial governance and missionary encounter. Colonial regimes introduced classificatory systems that privileged linear historical reasoning, written scripture, and documentary evidence over indigenous oral traditions. Within these epistemic hierarchies, tribal knowledge was frequently dismissed as anecdotal or emotional rather than rational or factual—a process described in discussions of tribal marginalization as

“epistemicide,” the systematic devaluation of indigenous modes of knowing (Bodhi & Jojo, 2019). These epistemic structures persisted into postcolonial regimes of recognition, where state and religious institutions evaluate belonging through their own interpretive frameworks (Bodhi & Jojo, 2019).

Recognition thus operates as a mode of governance. While it enables migration and citizenship, it simultaneously regulates identity through conversion requirements, bureaucratic procedures, and doctrinal standardization. These dynamic produces what may be termed epistemological mutation: the restructuring of communal self-understanding in order to align with dominant epistemic norms. Communities such as the Bnei Menashe therefore engage in strategic adaptation, translating their narratives into forms legible to hegemonic institutions. In this sense, knowledge production becomes inseparable from power.

By integrating these perspectives, this study conceptualizes Bnei Menashe identity formation as a layered historical process. Oral memory supplied narrative resources; colonial and missionary encounters reshaped epistemic legitimacy; and religious and state institutions translated claims into regulated categories of belonging. Identity emerges neither as a timeless inheritance nor as a mere fabrication, but as a negotiated outcome produced through interaction between community agency and institutional authority. In shifting attention from authenticity to historical formation, this framework reframes the Bnei Menashe case as a revealing instance of how identities are produced, stabilized, and governed within postcolonial and transnational contexts structured by unequal regimes of knowledge and power.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF ORAL MEMORY

Prior to colonial rule, societies inhabiting the hills of present-day Northeast India—particularly the Kuki–Chin–Mizo groups among whom the Bnei Menashe later emerged—were organized around kinship, clan affiliation, and customary authority. Political life was decentralized, with sovereignty exercised through village chiefs rather

than territorial states. Mobility was integral to social existence, shaped by shifting cultivation (jhum), ecological constraints, inter-group conflict, and strategic relocation. Villages functioned as autonomous units, and frequent movement in search of arable land contributed to social fragmentation and localized identities (Vumson, 1986). The absence of a sustained writing system meant that historical knowledge was transmitted primarily through oral forms. Although oral accounts refer to a “lost script,” written documentation only emerged following Christian conversion; much of the earlier record derives from colonial and missionary observers (Suantak, 1988). Linguistically and anthropologically, the Zo are classified within the Tibeto-Burman family, a position supported by genetic studies (Suantak, 2011).

Within this oral milieu, collective memory was expressed through ritual, genealogy, song, and storytelling rather than through linear chronicles or territorial historiography. A widely shared origin myth recounts emergence from a cave known as Chhinlung (Jinlung or Sinlung), preserved in songs and legends such as Tuanbia and recorded in colonial ethnographies (Das, 2021). While some narratives situate Chhinlung in regions of China and link migration to ancient Chinese imperial periods, such claims remain speculative in the absence of written corroboration (Gangte, 2010). These origin traditions emphasized social continuity, migration, and kinship solidarity rather than a singular homeland consciousness. In this precolonial orientation, belonging was relational and situational, not anchored in an enduring territorial return.

The later association of sections of the Chin–Kuki–Mizo peoples with the ancient Israelites exiled by the Assyrians in the seventh century BCE emerged within modern historical and religious discourse. Unlike the cave-origin narratives, the Israelite connection was not a continuous ancestral memory, but a reinterpretation shaped by new epistemic environments. Colonial administration and missionary pedagogy introduced classificatory regimes privileging scripture, literacy, and genealogy as markers of civilizational legitimacy. These epistemological hierarchies redefined what counted as authoritative knowledge and marginalized indigenous modes of remembering.

Missionary encounters in the mid-nineteenth century played a decisive role in this transformation. Protestant missionaries, highly successful in spreading Christianity in the region, drew parallels between local traditions and biblical narratives, framing indigenous motifs through scriptural lenses. Millenarian expectations and narratives of lost knowledge resonated with existing cultural themes of exile and restoration. Drawing on Scott’s (2009) work on Zomia, such heterodox religious movements can be understood as responses to state encroachment and coercive control. In this context, the Bible introduced by Baptist missionaries was sometimes perceived as the restoration of a lost sacred text, reinforcing the appeal of scriptural frameworks. While the majority of Mizoram and Manipur remained Christian, some groups adopted Judaism, forming the nucleus of what would later become the Bnei Menashe. Elazar (2023) situates this development within broader reactions to Indian state control in the 1960s, when religious reorientation provided an alternative idiom of identity and resistance.

Under these combined colonial and missionary pressures, oral memory underwent gradual reconfiguration. It did not vanish; rather, it adapted. Motifs of migration, loss, wandering, and the recovery of a sacred book acquired new significance because they could be aligned with biblical narratives of exile and redemption. Memory, in this sense, functioned not as a static archive but as a dynamic practice responsive to changing historical conditions. For marginalized communities navigating asymmetrical regimes of knowledge, the reframing of oral tradition offered a means of engaging institutions empowered to validate or exclude.

Central to this mnemonic transformation is the figure of Manmasi, remembered as an ancestral leader associated with migration and survival. Oral accounts describe a homeland to the west, a dramatic river crossing, prolonged wandering, and the loss of a sacred text to be restored in the future. Although the community historically lacked Torah scrolls or Hebrew manuscripts, these narratives were preserved through songs and ritual performance. Carmichael (2005) argues that such oral memory functions less as empirical documentation than

as a symbolic map sustaining belonging across temporal rupture. Klein (2000) further suggests that modern memory discourse “re-enchants” the past, sacralizing recollection and investing it with moral authority. The reinterpretation of Manmasi as the biblical Menashe exemplifies this process: an ancestral figure embedded in regional tradition is recast as a progenitor of ancient Israel, collapsing temporal distance and anchoring contemporary identity in sacred history.

The Sikipui festival provides a particularly illustrative case of mnemonic reinterpretation. Celebrated primarily by the Hmar subgroup as a spring harvest festival, Sikipui includes a ritual chant describing a great sea divided, communal peril, and divine guidance through cloud and fire—imagery reminiscent of the Exodus narrative (Exodus 14:1–31). While such motifs appear across various ethnic traditions in Northeast India and reflect shared experiences of migration and survival, Judaizing groups increasingly interpreted them through an explicitly biblical lens. Scholars such as Green (2014) caution that the identification of Sikipui with the Exodus depends upon prior assumptions of Israelite descent. Supporters nevertheless cite its ritual centrality as evidence of retained Israelite memory (Zaithanchhungi, 1990; Hmar, 2019). From an analytical standpoint, the significance lies not in proving historical continuity but in understanding how selective elements—particularly the motif of sea-crossing—were privileged to support claims of ancient origin.

Hendel’s (2001) concept of mnemohistory clarifies this dynamic. The biblical Exodus itself was never a fixed historical record, but a tradition repeatedly reshaped to address evolving theological and political concerns. In a similar fashion, the Bnei Menashe reinterpretation of Sikipui demonstrates how collective memory operates as a resource for identity construction. By aligning local ritual with sacred scripture, the community articulated a past that authorized contemporary aspirations for recognition and return. Cultural parallels documented by Zaithanchhungi (1990) between Mizo–Chin–Kuki festivals and Jewish holy days, along with references to pre-Christian monotheism, further illustrate how selective comparison functions symbolically rather than evidentially. Traditions were not

merely recalled but revalued, modified, and reclassified within a biblical framework.

By the late twentieth century, this mnemonic reinterpretation developed into organized religious reformulation. The Judaizing movement among Chin–Kuki–Mizo communities unfolded in two phases. The first, from the 1950s to early 1970s, combined Christian elements with pre-Christian practices and selected Old Testament observances, such as Sabbath-keeping. These early expressions were largely syncretic and locally interpreted. The second phase began in the 1970s, when contact with Jewish communities in Kolkata and Mumbai introduced normative rabbinic standards. Subsequent engagement with Rabbi Avichail and Israeli religious authorities accelerated the shift toward Orthodox Judaism. Ritual practice was standardized, genealogies systematized, and community members trained in rabbinic institutions, marking a transition from mnemonic flexibility to institutional legibility.

Engagement with transnational religious networks further consolidated this transformation. These networks provided symbolic authority and material support while simultaneously introducing hierarchies of authenticity. Identity narratives increasingly emphasized covenant, continuity, and ancestral return in forms resonant with global Jewish discourse. This process entailed both empowerment and constraint: it expanded access to transnational belonging while narrowing acceptable expressions of identity. Oral memory was not abandoned but disciplined and oriented toward recognition. Through these layered transformations—from precolonial oral consciousness to missionary reframing and organized Judaizing reformulation—Bnei Menashe identity emerged not as an inherited essence but as a historically produced formation shaped by shifting epistemic regimes and institutional mediation.

RELIGIOUS REFORMULATION AND INSTITUTIONAL MEDIATION

The transformation of Bnei Menashe identity from a localized origin narrative into an institutionally recognized Jewish category unfolded through a sustained interaction between internal religious reformulation and external gatekeeping authorities. During the late twentieth

century, segments of the community began articulating their identity explicitly in Jewish terms, adopting ritual observance, dietary laws, and calendrical practices aligned with normative Judaism. Local leaders reorganized oral traditions into standardized genealogical and theological forms that could be rendered legible to rabbinic and transnational religious institutions. Identity thus became institutionally actionable through translation into accepted religious and bureaucratic norms, reflecting both community agency and the structuring power of authoritative institutions.

This process must be situated within broader Zionist engagements with the idea of the Ten Lost Tribes. In the early twentieth century, figures such as Yitzhak Ben-Zvi explored Jewish communities in the Middle East and Central Asia, linking them to dispersed Israelite tribes in an effort to preserve Jewish heritage. By the late twentieth century, however, the focus shifted toward religious Zionist circles that framed the rediscovery of “lost” tribes as part of a messianic project of national and spiritual redemption. Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail, active from the 1970s, identified communities including the Pashtun, Kashmiris, and Bnei Menashe as potential descendants of the Lost Tribes. Supported by religious Zionist leaders such as Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook and Rabbi Shlomo Goren, Avichail’s efforts were embedded within a theological narrative that linked reconnection with lost tribes to biblical prophecy and historical continuity (Elazar, 2023). What began as marginal speculation gradually gained traction within certain religious-nationalist circles.

Direct institutional mediation began in 1979, when Bnei Menashe groups distancing themselves from Christianity came under the influence of Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail and his organization, Amishav (“My People Returns”). Avichail’s mission was to identify and reconnect “lost” Jewish tribes with mainstream Judaism and facilitate their return under the Law of Return. His suggestion in 1980 that the community adopt the name “Children of Menasseh” provided a formal Judaic framework for their identity. Subsequent visits to Manipur and Mizoram, along with the distribution of ritual items and opportunities for religious training in Israel, institutionalized this connection (Weil, 2003;

Thangtungnung, 2015). Parallel efforts by Michael Freund through Shavei Israel further expanded this mediation. However, tensions emerged between Amishav and Shavei Israel over funding from Christian organizations, reflecting broader dilemmas regarding ideological purity and financial pragmatism (Halkin &Thangiom, 2022). Shavei Israel has been criticized for favoring those close to its leadership in the aliyah process, while sidelining Bnei Menashe members historically aligned with Avichail’s Amishav, effectively creating a monopoly over immigration pathways. It was only in November 2025 that the state government formally handed responsibility for Bnei Menashe aliyah to the Jewish Agency, marking a significant institutional shift (Business Standard, 2025)

Early interactions with established Jewish communities in India reveal both partial inclusion and boundary enforcement. While some students from Northeast India studied alongside Bene Israel Jews in Bombay and received limited institutional support (Weil, 2003), others encountered exclusion, as in the 1996 incident when Shinlung members in New Delhi were not counted toward a minyan due to lack of formal conversion. These encounters reinforced the centrality of recognized conversion pathways in determining legitimacy. By the 1970s and 1980s, deputations to Israeli authorities and appeals to Prime Minister Golda Meir signaled a deliberate effort to secure recognition, while religious training in Israel further aligned communal practice with Orthodox norms.

Organizations such as Amishav and Shavei Israel operated within a messianic Orthodox framework that regarded the return of “lost Jews” as part of a divine plan for redemption. Integration was structured around Hebrew acquisition, Orthodox ritual observance, and formal conversion, embedding Bnei Menashe identity within a specific interpretation of Jewish authenticity. As Charmé (2012) argues, this model privileged European-based Orthodox traditions and limited space for alternative expressions of Jewish culture. Recognition, in this context, did not celebrate diversity but sought conformity to established halakhic standards.

At the same time, these processes intersected with demographic and geopolitical concerns. Shavei Israel's alignment with the Chief Rabbinate ensured halakhic recognition while simultaneously contributing to broader objectives of strengthening Israel's Jewish population amid declining immigration and demographic competition (Charmé, 2012). Michael Freund framed immigration of communities such as the Bnei Menashe as a response to demographic imbalance, emphasizing national security and Jewish continuity. The positioning of Bnei Menashe migrants in areas such as Gush Katif—where they were described as replacements for Palestinian laborers—illustrates how religious inclusion intersected with territorial politics (Abu El-Haj, 2012). Recognition thus operated within intertwined theological and national frameworks.

Debates over genetics further underscores the politics of authenticity. The absence of genetic evidence linking the Bnei Menashe to Middle Eastern populations did not prevent their recognition as Zera Yisrael in 2005 by Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar, whose decision was grounded primarily in religious commitment rather than biological proof (Carmichael, 2025). By contrast, the Lemba, despite genetic studies identifying the Cohen Modal Haplotype, have not received comparable rabbinic recognition. David Goldstein (2008) cautions against reducing religious identity to DNA markers, and Kirsh (2021) similarly notes that genetic findings often reinforce rather than overturn institutional authority. These cases demonstrate that rabbinic interpretation, not genetic science, ultimately governs recognition.

Recognition of self-identifying Jewish groups without established documentary continuity remains mediated through institutional gatekeeping (Afsai, 2016). In Israel, Jewish identity is determined through a complex interplay of rabbinic authority, state policy, and political considerations. Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar's 2005 designation of the Bnei Menashe as Zera Yisrael acknowledged ancestral connection but did not confer full halakhic status; Orthodox conversion remained a prerequisite for immigration and citizenship. This graded recognition underscores how belonging operates along differentiated categories rather than simple inclusion or exclusion.

Theoretical perspectives on recognition clarify these dynamics. Charles Taylor (2021) conceptualizes identity as dialogical, formed through engagement with “significant others,” and distinguishes between equal dignity and recognition of difference. The Bnei Menashe sought not only formal inclusion but affirmation of their historical narratives as legitimate expressions of Jewish identity. Axel Honneth (1995) further identifies love, rights, and solidarity as spheres through which recognition enables self-realization. In this case, rabbinic endorsement provided legal and religious rights, while advocacy organizations affirmed communal worth within a broader redemptive narrative.

At a deeper level, these processes reflect what Michel Foucault describes as the productive nature of power embedded in knowledge regimes. Rabbinic authorities determined the criteria of valid religious truth, while local traditions were repositioned as incomplete until translated into Orthodox discourse. Power operated relationally: between secular state actors such as Interior Minister Avraham Poraz and religious authorities such as Rabbi Shlomo Amar; between advocacy organizations and governmental institutions; and between communal aspirations and institutional norms (Abu El-Haj, 2012). Identity was not discovered but produced within these intersecting structures.

Yet power was not unidirectional. The Bnei Menashe mobilized the Lost Tribes narrative strategically, engaging institutional frameworks while asserting agency in shaping their own historical claims. Recognition therefore generated ambivalent outcomes. It enabled migration, citizenship, and integration into global Jewish networks, transforming imagined affiliation into tangible belonging. Simultaneously, it subjected identity to regulation, surveillance, and normalization, narrowing acceptable forms of practice even as it expanded opportunity. Religious reformulation and institutional mediation thus reconfigured Bnei Menashe identity within a postcolonial and transnational landscape in which belonging is negotiated through structures of authority rather than inherited as immutable essence.

DISCUSSION: IDENTITY, POWER, AND RECOGNITION

For communities without a script or sustained written literary tradition, oral history serves as the

principal medium through which the past is reconstructed and transmitted. As James C. Scott suggests, where history is not fixed in written form it retains a degree of flexibility, whereas written texts function as authoritative benchmarks that stabilize interpretation by providing standards against which deviation can be measured. Among the Zo peoples—whose earliest written records were largely produced by colonial administrators, missionaries, and ethnographers—oral memory operated as an adaptive resource through which displacement, religious transformation, and aspiration were interpreted. When missionary education and colonial administration introduced new epistemic frameworks privileging scripture, literacy, and genealogy, oral traditions did not disappear; rather, they were reformulated in ways that rendered collective memory legible to transnational religious organizations, the Chief Rabbinate, and state institutions.

This transformation exposes the epistemological hierarchies embedded in regimes of recognition. Legitimacy was not determined solely by historical continuity but by the capacity to articulate identity in forms intelligible to authoritative institutions. The translation of memory into genealogical and textual language did not constitute fabrication; it reflected the uneven distribution of authority in defining valid knowledge. Memory became historically consequential insofar as it could be aligned with prevailing religious and institutional criteria.

Recognition as Jewish thus depended not only on descent claims but on the presentation of those claims within normative religious frameworks resonant with religious-national institutions. Numerous communities in Asia and Africa assert Israelite connections, yet many remain unrecognized; even groups such as the Lemba of southern Africa, despite genetic discussions linking them to Jewish ancestry, have not received formal recognition from Israeli religious authorities. Recognition operates through defined religious and institutional standards. The Bnei Menashe, whose organized Judaizing movement began in the 1970s, struggled for decades before being recognized in 2005 by the Sephardi Chief Rabbi as Zera Yisrael (“seed of Israel”), a decision

that facilitated their aliyah (Shashoua, 2016). Following sustained contact with mainstream Jewish institutions, they increasingly aligned their practices with normative Judaism, and Orthodox conversion in Israel became a prerequisite for citizenship, reflecting the authority of the Chief Rabbinate in matters of personal status law.

The institutional context within Israel further clarifies the regulatory dimension of recognition. The Chief Rabbinate controls marriage, burial, and other aspects of religious status, while the Law of Return (1950) grants automatic immigration and citizenship to Jews, with its 1970 amendment extending eligibility to certain non-Jewish family members. The Bnei Menashe were not automatically eligible under the Law of Return because their Jewish status lacked halakhic recognition, and their Aliyah was halted in 2003 by Interior Minister Avraham Poraz (Abu El-Haj, 2012). It was ultimately the Chief Rabbinate’s 2005 ruling recognizing them as Zera Yisrael that enabled their migration, subject to Orthodox conversion. Recognition therefore functioned not as a purely humanitarian gesture but as a mechanism embedded within institutional authority, defining criteria of belonging while simultaneously granting access to mobility and citizenship.

At the same time, the Bnei Menashe were not passive recipients of institutional power. By adapting ritual practice, standardizing narratives, and aligning their aspirations with established frameworks, they strategically positioned their claims within structures that regulate belonging in Israel. Religious organizations advocating on their behalf maintained ties with the Chief Rabbinate and segments of the religious-nationalist camp, including actors concerned with demographic and ideological consolidation. Through sustained lobbying and advocacy, organizations such as Amishav and Shavei Israel cultivated relationships with rabbinical courts, officials within the Interior Ministry, and political elites—including figures aligned with Benjamin Netanyahu—connections that proved central to advancing recognition and facilitating Aliyah (Devir, 2017). In this sense, recognition emerged through negotiation within unequal power relations rather than unilateral institutional benevolence.

The historical trajectory of the Bnei Menashe also complicates classical diaspora theory. Traditional diaspora models described by Safran, Clifford, or Cohen often assume a continuous homeland consciousness sustained through collective memory. By contrast, the first recorded claim linking the Zo people to Jewish identity emerged in 1951, and a more organized Judaizing movement developed only in the 1970s, followed by gradual interaction with mainstream Jewish institutions. Earlier origin myths located the Zo in sites such as Chhinlung/Shinlung, often identified with regions in China, whereas later narratives connected them to the northern Israelite tribes exiled by the Assyrians in the seventh century BCE. After nearly 2,700 years without documented continuity as Jews, they were recognized in 2005 as Zera Yisrael (Shashoua, 2016). Israel thus became meaningful as a homeland not through uninterrupted attachment but through narrative reinterpretation, religious reformulation, and institutional mediation. Homeland consciousness in this case was historically produced rather than merely preserved.

This trajectory must also be situated within a postcolonial framework. Colonial and missionary encounters reshaped the conditions under which history could be articulated by privileging scripture, literacy, and genealogy as markers of civilizational legitimacy. When missionaries arrived in Northeast India in the late nineteenth century, Zo communities were frequently portrayed as “tribal” and uncivilized due to shifting cultivation practices and the absence of a written script. Engagement with the Bible enabled reinterpretation of pre-Christian rituals and figures—such as “Manasseh”—within Old Testament narratives. Similarities between local practices and Exodus motifs were recast as signs of Israelite ancestry. This was not a sudden discovery but a gradual reconfiguration of memory in response to changing structures of power, later reinforced by efforts to conform to normative Judaism in pursuit of recognition. Despite formal recognition, the community continues to encounter suspicion and racialized challenges in Israel, underscoring that inclusion does not eliminate social hierarchy.

The regulatory character of recognition becomes clearer when viewed through Michel Foucault’s conception of power/knowledge. Institutional authorities determine what counts as valid religious truth, and subaltern forms of knowledge are reclassified as incomplete or deficient. The religious knowledge of the Bnei Menashe was treated as insufficient until translated into the authoritative discourse of organizations such as Shavei Israel, whose interpretation of Judaism became the legitimate framework through which recognition could be secured. Rabbinical courts, as gatekeepers of Jewish identity, issue rulings based on maternal descent or recognized conversion, decisions that determine who may marry, who belongs to the Jewish community, and who is entitled to religious burial (McGonigle & Herman, 2015). The Bnei Menashe achieved recognition not through genetic validation but through affirmative institutional endorsement by the Israeli Chief Rabbinate, illustrating that Jewish identity is produced within institutional regimes rather than determined by biology alone.

At the same time, recognition has ongoing social consequences. Bnei Menashe migrants in Israel frequently adopt religious and social practices prevalent in the broader Orthodox environment, practices that are then transmitted back to communities in Manipur and Mizoram. Because these practices originate in Israel, they acquire enhanced legitimacy, and those who have undergone Orthodox normalization are often regarded as authoritative custodians of communal tradition (Elazar, 2023). Through this feedback loop, engagement with Israeli orthodoxy reshapes the Bnei Menashe as a Lost Tribe fashioned increasingly in the image of mainstream Judaism.

Jewish organizations themselves operate through divergent frameworks of recognition. Amishav ties legitimacy to Orthodox conversion, strict religious observance, and immigration to Israel, reinforcing halakhic authority and Zionist authenticity. American pluralist organizations, by contrast, emphasize sustaining Jewish life locally and valuing cultural diversity; groups such as Be’chol Lashon promote multiracial Jewish identity and inclusion. Concerns regarding immigrants

from the former Soviet Union who did not meet strict halakhic standards have further entrenched Orthodox insistence on conversion, a policy extended to the Bnei Menashe (Charmé,2012). Across these cases, recognition reveals the normative and hegemonic assumptions that structure definitions of “authentic” Judaism.

Ultimately, the Bnei Menashe case demonstrates that recognition is not an endpoint but an ongoing process. Recognition inaugurates new phases of regulation, negotiation, and adaptation within institutional frameworks. Identity continues to evolve as it interacts with religious authority, state governance, and everyday social practice. Memory, power, and institutional mediation remain intertwined, shaping not only who is recognized but how recognition itself is produced and sustained.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined the historical formation of Bnei Menashe identity by moving beyond debates over authenticity and origin to focus on the processes through which belonging was produced, stabilized, and institutionally recognized. Rather than treating identity as a fixed inheritance, the study has approached it as a historically constituted phenomenon shaped by oral memory, colonial and missionary encounters, religious reformulation, and institutional mediation. In doing so, it situates the Bnei Menashe within broader debates on diaspora, memory, and recognition.

A central argument has been that oral memory functioned as a dynamic and adaptive practice. Narratives of migration, loss, and ancestry were not static survivals of an ancient past but resources through which the community interpreted changing historical conditions. Under colonial governance and missionary influence, new epistemic hierarchies privileged written scripture, genealogy, and linear history. Within this transformed landscape, Israelite descent narratives emerged as historically situated responses to new regimes of knowledge and authority.

Religious reformulation and institutional mediation were crucial in translating memory into

recognized belonging. The adoption of Jewish ritual practice, standardized genealogies, and formal conversion procedures rendered identity claims legible to religious and state authorities. Recognition thus operated simultaneously as inclusion and governance: it enabled migration and citizenship while regulating identity through legal, bureaucratic, and religious norms.

The Bnei Menashe case also contributes to diaspora studies by demonstrating that homeland consciousness can be historically produced rather than continuously preserved. Israel became meaningful as an ancestral homeland through processes of reinterpretation and institutional recognition. More broadly, the study shows that identity formation in postcolonial contexts unfolds within unequal regimes of knowledge and power. The significance of the Bnei Menashe experience lies not in verifying descent, but in explaining how particular narratives became socially effective and institutionally consequential. Identity, as this case demonstrates, is historically made through the interaction of memory, power, and institutions.

FUNDING :

The authors received no financial support for this “research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

COMPETING INTEREST :

The authors declare no competing interests.

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Karmakanda Classical Analysis

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ABSTRACT:

Karmakanda Shastra, the inclusion of the golden principles of various Indian economic philosophies in the ideologies, change and sublimation are found every now and then. Keeping in view the usefulness of Indian theistic philosophy for human society, if any branch of knowledge has made the most successful experiment to use the principles discussed in practical form, then it is Karmakanda Shastra. We can see the practical use of the Tatva Mimamsa of Sankhya philosophy in Ritual Science in various forms. In which resolution prayers are offered for the removal of bodily, divine, material, physical, verbal, mental and worldly sorrows. We can see the clear shadow of science in these mantras. Therefore, the contributions of Ritual Science can be described more in experiences than in words. Basically, it is possible to get the prosperity of the origin of sanskars and qualities from various dimensions of Karmakanda Shastra.

Keywords: Vedaang, Kalpasutra, Pourahitya, Karmakanda, Anushtaan, Pujan, Upachaar.

INTRODUCTION

Ritual has deeply adopted five forms of knowledge in its favour. For example - Mantras from Vedas, sentence-meaning structure from grammar, Panchang science from astrology, Kritakritya from religious texts and story-context from Puranic knowledge. By combining the above five aspects, the priest transforms the ritual into uniformity. Through ritual, providing peace or happiness to others by eliminating their suffering and re-establishing oneself towards God by providing energy in cultured life, this is the main objective of the performer of ritual. The foundation of this universe was laid by Yajna, and after this principle is proved, now it is also to be proved that what was received as a result of the yajna-like ritual? If the yajna-like ritual has been performed, then definitely the result will be achieved. Yajna was performed by Swayambhu Brahma¹, due to which the universe was created based on sound, touch, form, taste and smell, in which five sense organs, five organs of action, five

tanmatras, mind, intellect and ego were respected. Living beings were created.

HISTORY OF KARMAKANDA

This universe is created by Karmakanda (rituals). Divine himself has given this proof for his creation. It

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Received 07-June-2025 Reviewed 27-Sept.-2025 Accepted 22-Oct.-2025 Published 01-Dec.-2025

Volume No. 7 Issue No. 2 December 2025 ISSN 2583-1852(P), 2584-0878(O)

How to Cite this Article: Shatapathy, Balaji Kumar. Karmakanda Classical Analysis. THE THIRD VOICE: REALITY AND VISION. 2025. Vol No-7. Issue No-2. December. Pp: 61-69, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19411929>.

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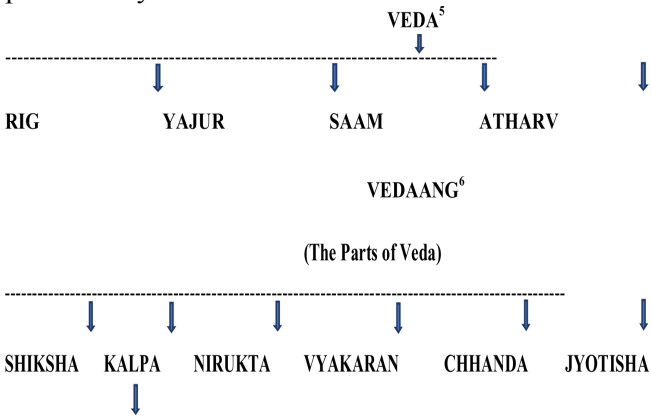


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DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19411929>
Article No - TVRV00097

embellishes Brahma (The Creator) and expresses its position, structure, and expanse. God has accepted this special process of Ritiology (Dharma-Karma).² Hence its importance is as much as the requirement of religion. Ritual is a science. Agni (Fire) is its main deity. Veda gives its proof as its witness. Hence Veda itself gives the proof as the source of rituals.³

It is very important to know in which order Veda has included rituals. Vidhi (The VEDA) says-*Vidhirvidheyah Tarkashcha Vedaah*⁴ Ritual has been given its systematic position in the branch/part distinction protected by Vidhi. As -



Let's know the Kalpa in details. The word Kalpa (कल्पः) is derived from the dhatu “कल्प्” used in the sense of Vidhi (विधिः -injunction).

एष वै प्रथमः कल्पः प्रदाने हव्यकव्ययोः।⁴

Defines Kalpa as विधिः। Vidhi to follow in the offering of हव्यकव्याः। havyakavyas (yajna vidhis). कल्प्यते विधीयते।⁸

Defines kalpa as vidhis (for yajnas)

वैदिकविधानज्ञापकेशास्त्रभेदेस

चाश्वलायनापस्तम्बबौधायनकात्यायनादि-सूत्रात्मकः।⁹

Kalpa is defined as the (set of) sutras defining the vaidikavidhanas (vedic rituals) as given by Ashvalayana, Apastamba, Baudhayana, Katyayana among others.

As given by Vishnumitra, and Vedacharya Dr. Raghunir Vedalkar coated -

कल्पो वेदविहितानां कर्मणामानुपूर्व्येण कल्पनाशास्त्रम्।¹⁰

ie. Kalpa shastra is a guideline for all the actions laid down in Veda (such as yajnas and yagas).

Now, let we know about **SUTRA**. Because Kalpa is concluded by sutras. **Short sentence composed in a peculiar style is called Sutra**, i.e., a thread. The lakshana (Symptoms) of Sutra is as follows-

अल्पाक्षरमसन्दिग्धं सारवद्विश्वतोमुखम्।
अस्तोभमनवद्यञ्च सूत्रं सूत्रविदो विदुः।¹¹

A sutra is said to contain extremely few (as possible) syllables, without any ambiguity in the concept presented, representing the essence in a universal manner. A diffuse and scattered precepts are succinctly systematized in a compact sentence called sutra, just as the loose fibers are compressed into a terse thread.

Among the different types of Sutras composed during Sutra period the Kalpasutras are by far the most important reflecting the cultural history of that period. [1]

¹ Shukla Yajurveda Madhyandini Samhita, 13/3, by Pandit Daulatram Gaur, Published by Sri Thakur Prasad Pustak Bhandar, Kachaudi Gali, Varanasi (U.P)

² Rig-Veda – 1/164/50, Publisher Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, 56-57 Institutional Area, Janakpuri, New Delhi 58. & Shukla Yajur veda Samhita- 13/03, By Dr.Kailash Chandra Dave, Publisher Chaukhamba Sanskrit Bhawan, Varanasi

³ Rigveda- 1/1/1, Publisher Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, 56-57 Institutional Area, Janakpuri, New Delhi 58.

⁴ ParaskarGrihyasutra, 2/6/5, Page. No- 286, Commentaries by Harihar & Gadadhar, Edited by Dr.Brahmananda Tripathy, ChaukhambaSubharati Prakashan, Varanasi (U.P)

⁵ Mundakopnishad 1/5, Text- Upanisat-Samgrahah, Page no. 16, By- Prof.J.L.Shastr, Edited with Sanskrit introduction. Publisher – Motilal banarasi das publishers PVT Ltd, Delhi

⁶ Mundakopnishad 1/5, Text- Upanisat-Samgrahah, Page no. 16, By- Prof.J.L.Shastr, Edited with Sanskrit introduction. Publisher – Motilal banarasi das publishers PVT Ltd, Delhi

⁷ Manusmriti - 3.147

⁸ Shabdakalpadruma – Page No. 64, Publisher - Nag-Publishers, 8A/U.A.3 Jawahar Nagar, Delhi-7.

⁹ **Vachaspatyam – Page No.1817a – 35, Printed by Kavya Prakasha Press in 1873, Calcutta (W.B)**

¹⁰ Vedic Sahitya ka Itihaas, by Vedacharya Dr.Raghunir Vedalkar, Page No. 335, Published by – Chaukhamba Orientalia, in 131-Gokuldas Sanskrit Granthmala, Delhi-7.

No doubt Vedas have given their place to **Kalpasutra**¹² i.e., rituals in their branches or Shadang. Kalpasutra is a synonym of rituals. Samhita, Brahman, Aranyak, Upanishad, Kalpasutra, Pratishakhya, these are different for each of the Vedas. The principles of rituals are said to be-

- The main principle of rituals is to establish the religious system in society by keeping in mind the customs and rituals of the Sanatanis.
- Ritual implements the entire religious and spiritual system on the basis of science and philosophical principles. This is called Kalpasutra or Karmakanda.
- Ritual connects the Yagya and social rites of the Grihastha as prescribed in the Vedas and the daily worship rituals with spirituality and leads to salvation.
- Ritual is the only simple spiritual and religious method which is the soul of the religion and rites of Sanatanis and the basic foundation of all religions - Ritual.
- Ritual, which supports all the daily, occasional, desired and selfless karma of life - Ritual.
- Ritual beautifies our social conduct, thoughts and practical lifestyle through worship, rites, and ceremonies.
- Ritual organizes lifestyle through religious places, supports human values and controls the individual and society.

According to the principle of Karmakanda/ Kalpasutras, it is divided into four parts.¹³

श्रौतसूत्र, गृह्यसूत्र, धर्मसूत्र एवं शुल्बसूत्र ।।

Shrautasutra, Grihasutra, Dharmasutra and Shulbsutra.

In the four parts of Kalpasutra (Rituals), the first is Shrautasutra,¹ the second is Grihasutra,² the third is Dharmasutra³ and the fourth is Shulbasutra.⁴ The amalgamation of these four is Kalpasutra, which is the foundation of rituals. The above is Shrautasutra, Grihsutra, Dharmasutra and Shulbasutra based on the differences in the Vedas.

If I briefly describe all four, then **Shrautasutra** is the rule of propounding the actions of the entire Vedic rituals, yagya etc. **Grihyasutra** duly propounds all types of rites, duties, and rituals from birth to death. And **Dharmasutra** propounds the complete system of various religions, economic, social, and political duties, ashrams, duties of various castes, marriage, succession etc. **Shulbasutra** is the method of architecture which duly connects the construction of temples, pavilions, buildings etc. with its size, type, distinction, and determines the direction, time etc. It also propounds all the principles of Vastushastra in the form of architecture.

Rituals string together all human values. Yajurveda mainly provides detailed description of rituals. Each Veda has its own Shrautasutra, Grihsutra, Dharmasutra and Shulbasutra describing various ritualistic principles. Hence, it is undoubtedly clear and proven that the foundation of rituals is from **Kalpasutras**.¹⁸ These Kalpasutras are the soul of the entire religious culture of Sanatanis.

Under the Vedas, rituals play an important role in the development of the individual or the society.¹⁹ It plays an important role in the development of the individual or the nation through dissemination of the same thoughts to the masses. The fact worth noting here is that each Veda has its own scriptures like Dharmasutra, Shulbasutra etc. which

have been expressed earlier. From each situation, it can be imagined that to what extent the Kalpasutra or ritual,

¹¹ *Sanskrit Vangmay ka BrhadItihas, Dvitiya Khand –Vedang Page No.56. By - Pt. Baldev Upadhyaya (1997) Published by Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Sanskrit Sansthan.*

¹² Paniniya Shikshya 41-42, Page No.48, Edited & commentary by Vidyasagar Dr. Damodar Mehta, Publisher – Motilalbanarasi das publishers PVT Ltd, Delhi.

¹³ Katyana Yajna Paddati Vimarsa, Page No.7, By Dr. Manohar Lal Dwivedi 1988 New Delhi Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, Janakpuri, New Delhi-58

¹⁴ Veda Pramanaya Mimamsa Tatha Rishi Dayanand by Shrinivas Shastry 1989 Kurukshetra, Kurukshetra Vishwa Vidyalaya (Haryana)

¹⁵ Ved Darshan, Page No- 348, By Virendra Gupta, Prakashan Mandir, Muradabad((U.P)

¹⁶ Vedic Sahitya Aur Sanskriti Ka Svarup, Page No.-6, by Om Prakash Pandey, Published by Vishwa Prakashan, in 1994, Ansari Road, New Delhi.2

¹⁷ The Veda and Indian culture: an introductory essay. By Kireet Joshi, Maharshi Sandipani, Rashtriya Ved Vidya Pratisthan, Ujjain. Publisher- – Motilal banarasi das publishers PVT Ltd, Delhi

¹⁸ Kalpasutra by Kundan Lal Sharma 1981 Punjab Vishweshwaranand Vedic Shodh Samsthan by Vishweshwaranand Vedic Shodh Samsthan.

¹⁹ Katyana Yajna Paddati Vimarsa, By Dr. Manohar Lal Dwivedi 1988 New Delhi Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, Janakpuri, New Delhi-58

such an extensive nature by the Vedas, has its own status, justification and necessity.

Rituals are the direct manifestation of the divine statue. And the seed of the structure of the entire universe is present in his heart. Rituals are the philosophy of process and thoughts which always moves forward for the welfare of living beings, that is - priest.²⁰

पुरः अग्रे हितं यः करोति सः पुरोहितः ।

Purah agre hitam yaah karoti saah purohitah.

The ritualist/priest who does good for the entire city/village etc. is a priest. Therefore, the first mantra of Adi Veda gives the name of the world priest -

अग्नि मिळे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देव ऋत्विजं होतारं रत्न धातम् ।।

सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः ।

अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वमेष वोऽस्तिवषटमधुक ।।

*Agni mile purohitamyagyasya dev
ritvijamhotaramratnadhatamm.*

Hence it is said - Purodhaah. It means that this is a special person who is always ready for the welfare of all living beings. Ritual expresses the principles of mantras along with philosophical thoughts and the role of scientific examples on the practical platform. In the tradition of development of knowledge and science, this world philosophy has spread till Saraswati Smriti and Puran Vangmay, which is further playing a meaningful role in the development of world-humanity in the form of the use of ritual priest scripture and religious scriptures. Hence the Veda says -

वयं राष्ट्रे जागृयामः पुरोहिताः स्वाहा ।।

Vayam Rashtre Jaagriyaamah Purohitaah Swahall

Ritual has deeply adopted five forms of knowledge in its favour. For example - Mantras from Vedas, sentence-meaning structure from grammar, Panchang science from astrology, Kritakritya from

religious texts and story-context from Puranic knowledge. By combining the above five aspects, the priest transforms the ritual into uniformity. Through ritual, providing peace or happiness to others by eliminating their suffering and re-establishing oneself towards God by providing energy in cultured life, this is the main objective of the performer of ritual.²² Ritual propounds the hand form of Veda. For example -

हस्तौ कल्पोथ पठ्यते ।।

HastauKalpothPathyate²³

India is famous all over the world for its spirituality. Rituals teach us to improve our lives and to control the individual and society through religious ceremonies. Keeping in mind all the above examples and the eternal norms, if it is stated that the creation began based on rituals, then it would not be an exaggeration. Because Vedas, Puranas, Agamas and other scriptures also provide evidence for this. Lord Krishna says in the Gita that, -

सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः ।

अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वमेष वोऽस्तिवषटमधुक ।।

*Sahayagya Prajah Srishtava Purovacha Prajapatih |
Anen pranashyadhwmesh vostivashatmadhukad ||*

The foundation of this universe was laid by Yajna, and after this principle is proved, now it is also to be proved that what was received as a result of the yajna-like ritual? If the yajna-like ritual has been performed, then definitely the result will be achieved. Yajna was performed by Swayambhu Brahma²⁵, due to which the universe was created based on sound, touch, form, taste and smell, in which five sense organs, five organs of action, five tanmatras, mind, intellect and ego were respected. Living beings were created.

Since we have already described that this process is completely functional, if we want to explain its specific description based on science, then here-

²⁰ Amarkosh- 2/8/5, Namalinganusashnam, with Rasala commentary, Edited by Dr. Ramasahankar Tripathy, Published by Chaukhamba Sanskrit Bhawan, Varanasi (U.P)

²¹ Yajurveda- 9/23, Shukla-Yajurveda Samhita, by Dr.Kailash Chandra Dave, Published by Chaukhamba Sanskrit Bhawan, Chowk Varanasi (U.P) Part 3, Page No. 197, By Raja Radhakanta Dev, Published by NAG Publisher, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi

²² Shabdakalpadrum Part 3, Page No. 197, By Raja Radhakanta Dev, Published by NAG Publisher, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi

²³ PaniniyaShikshya 41, Page No.48, Edited & commentary by Vidyasagar Dr. Damodar Mehta, Publisher – Motilal banarasi das publishers PVT Ltd, Delhi.

²⁴ Gita – 3/10, Page no 74, Series No-1562, Published by Gita-Press Gorakhpur, Govinda Bhawan, Office Kolkata (W.B)

²⁵ Shukla Yajurveda Madhyandini Samhita, 13/3, by Pandit Daulatram Gaur, Published by Sri Thakur Prasad Pustak Bhandar, Kachaudi Gali, Varanasi (U.P)

विशिष्ट ज्ञानं इति विज्ञानम्।

Vishist Gyanam Iti Vigyanam.

That is, we call analytical criticism and proper interpretation of any subject as science. While describing science in detail, we will say on the basis of Nyaya Shastra that knowledge is direct and indirect. For example, sound, touch, form, taste, smell, despite being Panch-Tanmatra, are indirect here. Here they are working as invisible power. Because only we can experience it. Without experiencing it through the five senses, we cannot tell what we have experienced. This experience also needs a medium through which it can be experienced. For example, ears for hearing, skin for touch, eyes for seeing, tongue for taste, and nose for smell. Through these, we can hear, experience, see, taste and smell respectively. Apart from this, happiness, sorrow, desire etc. are internal experiences. All the above processes are used for the purpose of rituals. Along with this, psychology is also very helpful in this. This special knowledge is such that it is proved by itself without being told. This is for the satisfaction of the mind. We consider it necessary to describe all this because their cooperation is very necessary to explain the special knowledge or science of knowledge.

Let us try to understand **Karmkanda** in detail. Let us think it over. An activity full of karma. With the help of these two, Karmkanda are formed. Here the question arises that, what is Karma? What kind of Karma? First, let's take Karma as an analysis. This word derived from कृ धातु (Kru Dhatu), which means any work. What kind of work should it be? And what should be its form? This determines the system, and the word **Kanda** is the spiritual form of the sequence (Serial, steps or chapters) of emotion. When the subject-rich Karma is with meaning or when it becomes Karma-rich, then it is called a Karma. We call it Pooja/Vidhi/Karmakaand, Prayogik or Practical offerings to our beloved God. What is the purpose of rituals? The proclamation is, -

Rituals have been made for achieving desired goals and avoiding evil. Because nothing in this world is without any purpose or reasons.²⁷

प्रयोजनं सम्प्रवृत्तेः कारणं फललक्षणम्।
प्रयोजनमनुद्दिश्य न मन्दोऽपि प्रवर्तते ॥

The above slokam comes in Sarvavedanta Sara Sangraham of Shankara in the part.. Sadhanachatushtayam. The reason for embarking on any human activity is with the expected result in sight. Without any result or utility in sight even the dull headed persons would not embark on an activity. For any activity, there should be an aim, and there should be a reasonable expectation of achieving such result. Without any use or purpose in sight, no one, even if he is dull headed would ever engage himself in any activity. Of course, there can be fallacies in the expectations, in the way the activity is pursued, and the projected results. And the result might not be as effective as expected. But without an expectation no one would do any work.

Various scriptures have expressed karma on the basis of their own principles. For example, -

- Nyay-Shastra²⁸: Utkshepana, Apkshepana, Aakunchana, Prasarana and Gamanani
- Srimad Bhagavad Gita²⁹: Karma, Akarma
- Tantra Shastra³⁰: Maran, Mohan, Vashikaran, Stambhan, Uchatan
- Vedanta Shastre³¹: Nitya, Naimittik, Prayaschit, Upasana, Kamyas and Nishiddha

There is no completeness of rituals. Because there is no limit to rituals, we can determine the use and rules to some extent. The experiments which are commonly practiced in rituals, and their scientific as far as possible, are described. Here, the basis of the two subjects is the substance and the other is the practice or rule. If we consider the practice as a special action by separating the substance, then it will not be an

²⁶ Amarkosha 1st Part 5/3, Page no. 49-50, Commentator Pandit Vishwanath Jha, Publisher – Motilal banarasi das publishers PVT Ltd, Delhi.

²⁷ Sarvavedant-Siddhant-Sara-Sangraham, Sadhan-Chatustay, of Aadi Shankaracharya, Verses no.11. by Swami Bodhatmananda Saraswati, Published by Brahmavidyapeeth, Kailash Ashram, Rishikesh (U.K)

²⁸ Nyaya-Siddhanta Muktavali (Karma Purpose Case) Pratishakshya Khanda 1 & 2. Page no.117, Verse Nos. 6 & 7 By Dr.Mahananda Jha, Published by Chaukhamba Sanskrit Bhawan, Chowk Varanasi (U.P)

²⁹ Gita 4/16, , Page no 99, Series No-1562, Published by Gita-Press Gorakhpur, Govinda Bhawan, Office Kolkata (W.B)

³⁰ Tantraraja Tantra Vol. 1&2 by Sri Kapildev Narayan, ChaukhambaSubharati Prakashan, Varanasi (U.P)

³¹ Vedantsaar, by Srimad Sadanand, Commentary by Dr. Ramashankar Tripathy, Published by, Balakrushna Tripathy, B-1.122-31, Dumrao Colony, Assi, Varanasi, (U.P)

exaggeration. We consider it appropriate to describe the description based on the subject on the basis of the substance i.e., material or what is called treatment in rituals, because the special substance of rituals is considered to be treatment. The count of treatment is innumerable, it keeps telling on the basis of the ritual. The number of treatments is divided into many types. There are at least five treatments. For example - fragrance, flower, incense, lamp, offering. This is generally used for every deity. But there is no end to more and more, it is called infinite treatment. The different types of worship and worship of **Panchopchara, ShodashUpchara, Shatopchara, Sahasropachara, Rajopchara and Anantopchara**³² are found in the different rituals of rituals. The deities are presented and kept in an established manner for the planned ritual. Thereafter, the Upchara of the deities, that is, their worship, begins. The quote says -

उपचारेप्रियोविष्णुः अभिषेकेप्रियः शिवः ।
नमस्कारेप्रियोभानुः ब्राह्मणः भोजन प्रियः ॥

*Upachare-priya-vishnuh Abhishekepriya Shiva |
NamaskarePriobhanuhaBrahminhBhojanpriyah |*

Let us clarify again that the transformation of material or the description of material for a particular deity is either in accordance with the scriptures or is offered on the instructions of the Acharya. But without treatment, it is impossible to get the result of rituals. Mental treatment is also available with zero material in rituals.³³ But it depends upon the status and circumstances of the seeker or the parishioner. Ritual method worship has presented a practical form in society and world philosophy.

Rituals are performed with determination, will fulfill all desires. Srimad Bhagwat Mahapurana proves this.³⁴ The performance done with the feeling of ritualism to fulfil the resolution is direct and divinity. On the basis of ritual, here it is from a particular deity. What is the scientific reason for this? Here the deities are invoked based on work. The main deity worshipped for the ritual which is done for a particular work embellishes the prominence of that ritual. There are some deities' worth noting, who are generally invoked in every special work. Like Ganapati, Ambika etc. Now we can also say on a

psychological level that, i.e., when we get the invitation card, the name of the head is mentioned in it. But that invitation card is related to all the members of the family. In the ritual, the deities are invoked. Along with the deities, there are Adhi-devata and Pratyadhi-devata along with their group. Those who are also related to their friends Vahana etc.

The main topic is, why should we perform rituals? Shri Krishna has expressed this topic very clearly in the Geeta.³⁵ The question is, why should we invoke someone? It is very important to have a clear purpose. It was expressed earlier - rituals have been made for achieving the desired and avoiding evil. To fulfill our wishes or to make our work successful, a particular deity should be called. There is a specified time for this, just like we call friends/relatives etc. Here also there is a specified time for the deities. Among the deities there are fierce, simple, medium types of deities. The worship and rest of all the gods and goddesses is different. Their substance and purpose are different. For example, an eye doctor cannot see the heart, and a heart doctor cannot treat bones..... etc. Therefore, the work is not successful without making any deity the reason.

What can be the treatment for the presently invited and established deities? When the arrangements for invocation are made, just as we welcome a guest, similarly the deities have to be welcomed many times over. They are first welcomed with water five times. For example, water is given to their feet, water in their hands, water in their mouth, water for bathing and again water for sipping. In such a situation, a divine arrangement of purity and cleanliness can be seen from a scientific point of view. For cleanliness, a special Amrit element, which is called Panchamrit, is made of five things. Cow's milk, curd, ghee, honey, and sugar. A mixture of these five, or separately, is given to the deities for bathing. Divine bath is offered with many special substances. After Panchamrit bath, Gandha Snan i.e. sandalwood water is taken. GarbhodakaSnan i.e. bath is taken with coconut water. Bath is taken with the juice of many types of fruits. After that, bath is taken with the water of holy rivers like Ganga etc. after which bath is taken with sea water. After giving many divine baths, pure bath and pure water bath is also practiced. Bathing of the deities is also known as divine bath or Abhishek. Thereafter, divine clothes are offered. Again, after

³² Kalyan, Jeevan-Charya Anka, by Sh.Radhesyam Khemka, March 4,2024, Published by Gita Press Gorakhpur.(U.P)

³³ Sri Durga Saptashati Gita.Press, Text Code no. 1567, Page no. 319, Published by Gita Press Gorakhpur. (U.P)

³⁴ Srimad Bhagavatam Mahapurana- 8/24/60,Text Code no. 29, Page no. 361, Published by Gita Press Gorakhpur. (U.P)

³⁵ Gita 3/9, Text Code no. 1562, Page no.73, Published by Gita Press, Govind Bhawan, Kolkata (W.B).

sipping, adornment. Sandalwood, vermilion, whole rice, flowers. There are many types of flowers which are offered based on the deities. Which flower is to be offered to whom there is also a separate rule, which is described on the basis of rituals? The deities reside in the divine feeling of fragrant substances, various perfume substances (turmeric-gulal..etc..), incense, lamp, offering, fruits, betel leaves, offerings, request/prayer etc. When the offering is done with such divine feeling, then the mind of the person becomes more relevant and joyful. This divinity helps in making the person more spiritual and cheerful.

With all the remedies/substances, one or the other gets an emotional connection with nature that has positive energy. The person prays for the fulfillment of the resolution that has been made. After making his feelings clear in the waves of continuous mantra-japa, stuti, meditation, prayers, the seeker gets the desired result. Through all these activities like archana, sahasrarchana, havan, yajna, donation, atonement, the person expresses his dedicated feelings towards the gods. *Yathapindetathabrahmande*, we see all the above-mentioned activities being done in this body every day, somewhere or the other, in some form or the other to some extent. A form is created to do the same feeling in the gods in a divine manner. In the end, here also the words of Gita prove that-

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।
तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्रामि प्रयतात्मनः ।।³⁶

Patram PushpamPhalamToyyon jo Mein
BhaktyaPrayachchati|
Tadhaanbhaktyupahritmashnamiprayatmanah |

God himself has said this in the Gita. It makes us simple, serious and philosophical. Puja and rituals are an invaluable treasure in keeping us social and spiritual. No such substance is used as treatment or worship which is unproven. Hence, all this is scientific and psychological as well as useful.

This ritual is completely scientific. And this Sanatan Dharma tradition, which has been going on from the beginning of creation till today, keeps on displaying

its divine and supernatural powers in some form or the other in the chronological order. This ritual is prevalent through various mediums and methods. Hence, ritual is not a superstition or unauthentic. This ritual is not limited to worship only. In every field, whether it is physical, mental or economic field, ritual establishes its supremacy. Ritual improves spiritual, supernatural and physical conditions. Every question has been proved through the science of knowledge through logic.

Ritual is a very skillful way of performing rites and each of its methods. Ritual is used to bring prestige and progress in every sphere of life through ritual. A person comes into the world through conception³⁷ and merges with the Almighty through the funeral³⁸, and rituals have a very important role in sending off the family with peace and harmony.

The scope of rituals is not limited. It has many actions, many methods and many such arrangements, which are not possible to present in a normal way. In the above situation, only the feeling of sacrifice is possible, which is very simple and difficult too. Shrimad Bhagwat Gita teaches the mantra of attaining peace through sacrifice³⁹. Through Rishi-Chhand-Devta, rituals prove the mantra method. Aura is created by the recitation of each mantra. That is, it proves helpful in giving positive environment.

Mantra recitation is a method of treatment. It is an authentic scientific method, by which many types of diseases and sufferings can be cured. Even today, many types of diseases are cured through ritualistic ceremonies, which leaves no stone unturned in making a person prosperous. This ritual has been changing its form from the Vedic times till date, but not as its result. The essential method, procedure, and the result of ritualistic ceremonies are its main sources. Along with these two methods, Vedic karma and Puranic karma, a tantric ritual also exists, which is seen in ritualistic ceremonies.

The scope of rituals is very vast. Rituals can even help you attain heaven; such an incident is described very seriously in the Vedas. Rituals facilitate the means to attain God. There is no such area of life where rituals do not have their place. There is no limit

³⁶ Gita 9/26, Text Code no. 1562, Page no.211, Published by Gita Press, Govind Bhawan, Kolkata (W.B).

³⁷ ParaskaraGrhyasutra 1/13/1, Page no.165 Commentaries by Harihar & Gadadhar, Edited by Dr.Brahmananda Tripathy, Chaukhamba, Subharati Prakashan, Varanasi (U.P)

³⁸ ParaskaraGrihyasutra 3/10/1 Page no.427,Commentaries by Harihar & Gadadhar, Edited by Dr.Brahmananda Tripathy, Chaukhamba, Subharati Prakashan, Varanasi (U.P)

³⁹ Gita 12/12, Text Code no. 1562, Page no.280, Published by Gita Press, Govind Bhawan, Kolkata (W.B).

to development which is not easy and possible in rituals. What is necessary is its focus, its method, its process and dedication to it. The ease, divinity and seriousness of rituals are all contained in its resolution. Tithi, Nakshatra, day, Yoga and Karan all these together prove the scientific nature of rituals. Performing ritualistic ceremonies arbitrarily, whenever and wherever also becomes the cause of fault, sin and somewhere negative reaction. Let us explain by example. If you use electricity properly, then you can get light through bulbs etc., air through fans and comfort through many experiments. But if the same electricity is touched even a little by an uncontrolled medium, death is also possible. Therefore, by thinking and understanding the rituals and experiencing joy in them, the means of attaining God is - Ritual. It is mentioned in Istaputra Kaumudi -

यथा देवे तथा मन्त्रे, यथा मन्त्रे तथा गुरौ ।
अद्वैत भाव संसिद्धः नरो मुञ्चयते बन्धनात् ।।

Yathadeve and mantra, yatha mantra and Guru |

*Advaita Bhava Sansiddha: Naro Munchayate Bandhanaat*⁴⁰

Our radiant prayer is the philosophical contemplation of ritual science. The inner parts of the flower offering offered at the moment of completion of any ritualistic ceremony do not support or glorify a lowly, poor, downtrodden and destitute person or society, but they wish for a very prosperous, radiant person and nation with divine supremacy. They do not consider human life to be the result of the union of physical forces but consider it to be the result of a huge sacrifice being performed by nature and man. They pray for the universal progress of man.

यज्ञेन यज्ञमय यन्त देवा तानि धर्माणि प्रथमा न्यासन्न ।
तेह नाकं महीमानः सचन्त यत्र पूर्वे साध्याः सन्ति देवाः ।।⁴¹

*Yagyenyajnamayayant deva
taanidharmaniprathamanyasanna |
Teh nakanmahimaanhsachant yatra
purvesadhyahsantidevah |*

We also see that in the Karmakanda Shastra, the inclusion of the golden principles of various Indian economic philosophies in the ideologies, change and

sublimation are found every now and then. Keeping in view the usefulness of Indian theistic philosophy for human society, if any branch of knowledge has made the most successful experiment to use the principles discussed in practical form, then it is Karmakanda Shastra. We can see the practical use of the Tatva Mimansa of Sankhya philosophy in Ritual Science in various forms. In which resolution prayers are offered for the removal of bodily, divine, material, physical, verbal, mental and worldly sorrows. We can see the clear shadow of science in these mantras. Therefore, the contributions of Ritual Science can be described more in experiences than in words. Basically, it is possible to get the prosperity of the origin of sanskars and qualities from various dimensions of Karmakanda Shastra. Only research on this is necessary. But the sad thing is that in the minds of people, rituals have been confined to a petty process of knowledge. The generosity of rituals can be seen from the mantras propounded in the Vedas.

उद्वयं तमसस्परी स्वः पश्यन्त उत्तरम् ।
देवं देवत्रा सूर्यमगन्म ज्योतिरुत्तरम् ।।⁴²

*UdvayamTamaspari Swah PashyantUttaram|
DevanDevtraSuryamagnamJyotiruttaram|*

CONCLUSION

That is, we should rise above the darkness and attain the best heaven, and after seeing the great God Sun, merge in the light form of the Supreme Father God. This is the feeling of every living being that the rituals are trying to prove through complete rules. Friends, today this ritual has tied us together through Indian Sanskar Culture and the system of Katha-Pooja Vidhi. It is an important part of festivals, which is relevant even today. It proves that it should not be an exaggeration to say how intimate, wide and rich the dimension of rituals is.

FUNDING :

The authors received no financial support for this“research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

COMPETING INTEREST :

The author declare no competing interests.

⁴⁰ Istaputra Kaumudi, Nivedaniyam-Page no.i, Publisher - Nag-Publishers, 8A/U.A.3 Jawahar Nagar, Delhi-7.

⁴¹ Vajaseniya Samhita 31/16, Shukla Yajurveda Madhyandini Samhita, 31/16, by Pandit Daulatram Gaur, Published by Sri Thakur Prasad Pustak Bhandar, Kachaudi Gali, Varanasi (U.P)

⁴² Shukla Yajurveda Madhyandini Samhita, 20/21, by Pandit Daulatram Gaur, Published by Sri Thakur Prasad Pustak Bhandar, Kachaudi Gali, Varanasi (U.P)

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Rediscovering of India's foreign policy: Evolution of Look East Policy to Act East Policy.

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ABSTRACT

Background The dissolution of Soviet Union compels the then Government of India to find the alternative strategic partner to enhance the growing economy. As a result, The Look East Policy emerged as competent India's foreign policy. Initially The Look East Policy crafted during the early nineties by the Narsimha Rao government of India, stands as a significant embodiment of India's deliberate foreign policy approach aimed at Southeast Asia—a region known for its abundant resources and thriving prospects. Over time, this policy has evolved into a pivotal component of India's foreign relations, marking a distinct departure from its traditional foreign policy priorities.

Methods The study is definitely having a strong empirical bias. The scientific method has been followed to design the whole content of the study. Different testing methods for identifying different sets of relationship among the variables have also been executed. The study is both explanatory and experimental. Data have been collected thorough secondary sources and assembled data has been made.

Results Evolution of Look East Policy to Act East Policy has not only gained substantial momentum but has also acquired strategic depth. Both India and Southeast Asia share deep-rooted cultural and civilizational ties, and they share common interests spanning trade, tourism, investment, joint ventures, counterterrorism, climate change mitigation, and natural disaster relief. As major players in the global economy, their collaboration holds the potential to drive the development of the broader Asian region, benefiting the Asia-Pacific as well. Nonetheless, building a robust partnership in the 21st century will demand both ASEAN and India to surmount formidable challenges and capitalize on significant opportunities with a cooperative and forward-looking perspective.

Conclusion The present study has focused on Rediscovering of India's foreign policy and evolution of Look East Policy to Act East Policy. At present the

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Received	Reviewed	Accepted	Published
22-June-2025	27-Sept.-2025	22-Oct.-2025	01-Dec.-2025

Volume	Issue	December	ISSN
No. 7	No. 2	2025	2583-1852(P), 2584-0878(O)

How to Cite this Article: :Khandayatray, Mamata. Rediscovering of India's foreign policy: Evolution of Look East Policy to Act East Policy.. THE THIRD VOICE: REALITY AND VISION. 2025. Vol No-7. Issue No-2. December. Pp:70-75, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19411952>.

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DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19411952>
Article No - TVRV00098

fluctuating relations with neighbourhood have shown a very distressing picture of socio-political harmony. This paper aims to illustrate the burgeoning cooperation between India and ASEAN across various domains while addressing the obstacles impeding their collaboration. Subsequently, it concludes by exploring areas of alignment between India and the countries of Southeast Asia.

WHAT IS ALREADY KNOW?

- The Look East Policy include significantly enhanced economic growth through increased trade and investment with Southeast Asian countries.
- The Look East Policy promotes stronger strategic partnerships and countering China's influence, improved cultural and people-to-people ties, and enhanced regional connectivity via infrastructure projects.
- The Look East Policy expanded India's diplomatic presence and involvement in regional forums, contributing to regional stability and cooperation.
- The Look East Policy has helped open new markets for Indian businesses and facilitated technology transfer and skills development.

WHAT THIS ARTICLE ADDS?

- The Look East Policy opens new option for the regional cooperation and stability.
- The Act East Policy forged stronger diplomatic relationships with ASEAN and other East Asian countries, leading to greater regional cooperation.
- It emphasized building infrastructure like roads, railways, and ports to improve physical and digital connectivity between India and Southeast Asia, benefiting trade and tourism.
- The policy fostered cultural exchanges and people-to-people connections, which helped strengthen India's soft power and deepen relationships with regional countries.

Keywords : *Look East, Act East, Neighbourhood Policy, Foreign Policy, Social and Political, Connectivity and Capacity Building*

INTRODUCTION:

India's foreign policy aims to maintain international peace and security, oppose imperialism, and promote peaceful coexistence, based on the principles of non-alignment, mutual respect, and non-interference. India respects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of other countries and does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. India believes in equality and mutual benefit and promotes peaceful and political settlements of international disputes. The first prime minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru, shaped the country's foreign policy from 1947–1964. Still now India continues her stand to protect and promote the foreign policy. From the last part of the 20th century India focused on the Asian countries. Former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao launched look east policy in 1992 to strengthen economic and strategic ties with Southeast Asia, East Asia, and Oceania. It is a good opportunity for India to revive the ancient relations with the eastern countries of the world. The Look East Policy was more effective while the Prime Minister Narendra Modi started Act East Policy 2014, in order to expand its scope and involve in different sectors of the Asian organizations. The relationship between India and east Asian countries will more beneficial for both sides.

The Look East Policy have significant role in India's social, political, economic, security and cultural relations with the rest of the other Asian Countries. To make greater economic power and strong relationship with other Asian countries the government of India is trying to expand her economic relationship with other nations and develop infrastructure as well as communication system. In the present global order, India is the major stake holder in order to maintain international peace and development. The East Asian states is an appropriate forum to begin structuring Asia's future role in the global order as its membership is more inclusive, involving all major countries. Even though it is too early to presume that the Look East Policy is a failure, sceptic argue that there is more rhetoric than substance in the policy with the North eastern region filled with armed insurrections and the subsequent law and order problem, the implementation of various developmental projects is an arduous task. (Sundaram.

A: 169:2013). The soul intention of the look east policy is making closer economic relations with the Asian countries. Now India is the part of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is the recognition on the part of India's elite of the strategic and economic importance of the region to the country's national interests. As Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said, the Look East Policy's is "not merely an external economic policy; it is also a strategic shift in India's vision of the world and India's place in the evolving global economy.

The position of India at present is growing economic power in the world. The current global financial turmoil represents an opportunity for Asia to assume global responsibilities commensurate with its strength. The EAS (East Asia Summit) is an appropriate forum to assume global responsibilities and commensurate with its strength. However, there are many hindrances will come but that should not stop the pursuit for economic development. The government of India needs to actively engage with the insurgent groups for political dialogue striving for peaceful solution to the discard old problems of the region and need to simultaneously go ahead with development projects. There is also an ardent need to give role to the Northeastern states in this policy. Thus, the proper implementation of the policy will help to develop this region.

JOURNEY OF LOOK EAST POLICY TO ACT EAST POLICY:

'Look East' meant looking eastward for fostering newer ties with the immediate neighbours of South East Asia. Look East Policy of India was launched in 1991 by the Government of India led by the former Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. The objective was to develop political, economic and security co-operation with countries in Southeast Asia. After the cold war, India wanted to act as a counterweight to China in Southeast Asia. The 'Act East Policy' of India launched in 2014 and helps one understand its difference with the 'Look East Policy' of India launched in 1991. Act East Policy of India succeeded Look East Policy. The main objective was to have greater engagement in all spheres with countries in Southeast Asia as well as with

far Eastern countries like Japan, South Korea, and countries in the Pacific region like Australia and New Zealand. India's Act East Policy is based on 4 C's – Culture, Commerce, Connectivity, and Capacity Building. As described by PM Modi, India's vision for the region is SAGAR – Security for All and Growth for All.

Thence, the Act East policy is an attempt to forge closer and deeper economic integration with its eastern neighbours as a part of the new *realpolitik* in evidence in India's foreign policy and the engagement with Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is the recognition on the part of India's elite of the strategic and economic importance of the region to the country's national interests. Thus, the success of the policy depends on the commitment of the Indian government to implement the proposed plans and projects under the policy and to give role for the Northeastern states in this policy. Nearly a decade since India initiated its Act East Policy, there has been substantial progress in expanding economic and strategic engagement with the rest of Asia. The ancient civilization links have been bolstered by deepening economic and strategic relations, though the linkages between the two require substantial strengthening. India is now a member of the East Asian Summit (EAS), comprising 16 countries, which include the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Japan, China, Republic of Korea, Australia and New Zealand. India is also a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum, which promotes dialogue among Asian and select major non-Asian powers on security issues.

The important factors influencing Act East Policy includes tends to connect to ASEAN and the East Asian nations with an *asianisation* content. In addition to India has made several multilateral agreements with East Asian nations that have boosted India's act east policy. The significant bilateral relationships include are India-China Relations, India-Myanmar Relations, India-Sri Lanka Relations and Asian nations. Other forums, regional groupings or platforms that have supported India's Act East Policy are BCIM – Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar Economic Corridor, BIMSTEC – Bay of Bengal Initiative of Multisectoral Technical and

& Economic Cooperation, SAFTA – South Asian Free Trade Area, ASEAN – Association of South Eastern Asian Nations, EAS – East Asia Summit, MGC – Mekong-Ganga Cooperation. The first Trans Asian Car rally from Guwahati to Batam (Indonesia) passing through North Eastern States of India, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia and Singapore in 2004 was an important sign for the advent of India's Look East Policy. Moreover several governmental initiatives that boosted India's Act East Policy are Trans Asian highway starting from Singapore to Istanbul passing through India, Trans Asian Railway from Delhi to Hanoi, 800 km long Trans-National Gas Pipe Line between Myanmar, Bangladesh and India

The North-Eastern states of India were given a direct role under the Act East Policy. Opening the doors for maritime oriented look east policy by bringing in pictures the coastal states of East India. This way it will help to build relations with southeastern nations that are dominantly coastal. The Act East Policy was seen as a step towards competing China's presence in East Asia and is a major initiative to establish peace and security in this region. The growing security threaten, compels Indian policy makers to strengthened the external relations in the east Asian countries. Both China and India emerged as economic giant in Asia Continent. China competes with India in the political, economic and military sphere and most importantly, for economic influence in the region of South East Asia. The responsibility of India is to compete with China in the international market. Indian leadership welcomed Foreign Direct investment (FDI) into India. The need of hour is to seek a new market for the growth of the domestic economy.

The growing middle class in our country demands economic security and stability in this region. As a result, the creation of more employment opportunities will help the economic stability. At present India seeks new markets to export its restless workforce. India has a robust economic relationship with ASEAN countries. Moreover, the Act East Policy is an Opportunity to revive the old culture with the other East Asian countries. History has proven that in ancient as well as medieval period India's socio-cultural as well

as economic ties with the eastern countries. It reflects that the present Act East Policy will create a platform for the revival the old relationship in a new format.

India is a country surrounded by the water bodies. The sea border is important for our security. But the present status quo, with USA as the recognized unilateral superpower ensures relatively little foreign military activity for both India and China. The expansion policy of China is the major concern for our country. As a result, India needs extension of its capabilities in water bodies. In naval projection of power, once again China is assessed as holding an upper hand. China has been building up its naval capabilities for decades in anticipation of a naval crisis in the Taiwan Straits. In contrast, India's navy of various classes is designed to mainly balance against Pakistan's naval assets.

The bilateral relationship of India with the other eastern countries will solve many unresolved problems. India's relationship with Barma is also largely based on a need to counter China's influence in the region. The Kaladan Project has secured India's Northeastern province with a lifeline for opening up trade and transport to the rest of ASEAN and the world. The new version of Act East Policy has the idea of counterbalancing China and New Delhi should strengthen its relations with neighbouring countries. With the aim of destabilizing China's position in these countries, India is developing a new strategy oriented at stressing geographical proximity as well as economic development to convince nations such as Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, but also Vietnam, Myanmar and other Southeast Asian nations. India planning for functional relations with Asian countries could be reinforced by commonality of affinity of cultures, balancing with diplomacy China's military superiority and economic advantage. The Act East Policy will develop connectivity with other countries. It will strengthen the linkages between ASEAN and India. India is in process of building India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and its extension to Lao PDR and Cambodia and has undertaken a new highway project connecting India-Myanmar-Lao PDR- Viet Nam-Cambodia as well as enveloping the Mekong-India Economic Corridor (MIEC) connecting Southeast Asia

to South Asia on the eastern part of India in order to add greater momentum to the growing trade and investment linkages between ASEAN and India.

CONCLUSION

The position of India at present is growing economic power. The current global financial turmoil represents an opportunity for Asia to assume global responsibilities commensurate with its strength. The EAS is an appropriate forum to assume global responsibilities and commensurate with its strength. However, there are many hindrances will come but, that should not stop the pursuit for economic development. The government of India needs to actively engage with the insurgent groups for political dialogue striving for peaceful solution to the discard old problems of the region. They also need to simultaneously go ahead with development projects. There is also an ardent need to give role to the Northeastern states in this policy. Thus, the proper implementation of the policy will help to develop this region. The relevance of India's Act East Policy and its focus on neighbourhood connectivity is high due to its strategic, economic, and geopolitical implications. The policy represents a proactive approach to strengthening India's ties with Southeast and East Asia, using the northeastern states as a gateway. Robust regional connectivity is critical for advancing these goals, countering China's influence, and fostering economic development in India's border regions.

FUNDING :

The authors received no financial support for this "research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

COMPETING INTEREST :

The author declare no competing interests.

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South-western tribes of Odisha : A Socioeconomic analysis

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ABSTRACT

Odisha is a tribal-dominated state. Since ancient times, many tribes have been living in its forests as tribes. Looking at the population ratio, it is known that about 23 percent of the total population in our state is tribal. Means, South-western part of odisha (kalahandi, koraput, rayagada, malkangiri) is located by approximately 45 percent tribes of the state tribal population. Therefore, although they constitute a large part of our population, the government has tried to provide them with real development, but it is not easily possible. They are living a neglected and dark life in inaccessible, remote areas without roads. But day by day, the government is paying close attention to their development. Various schemes are being implemented for their development. Roads are being built to access the forest areas that are an obstacle to their progress. Special attention is being given to their education, health and other advancements through blocks, tehsils. Here my study will be focus on their economic structure and social life.

Keywords: *Affluent, PVTGS, MNP, Conservation, Product, Indigenous, Implement, Merchant, Policy, Scheme, Provide, Trade, Selling, Market*

INTRODUCTION :

There are 62 tribal groups in the state. Out of which 13 are primitive tribal groups, 9 primitive tribal group or PVTGs are living in south-western area (kalahandi, koraput, rayagada and malkangiri). Some of the prominent tribal communities are - Kandha, Dal, Gadba, Gand, Didai, Parja, Banda, Banjara, Munda, Shabar, Kutia, Dongari, Khadia, Soura, Bida, Bhumija, Amanatya, Bhuyan, Lodha, Ho, etc. They mostly live in the tribal-dominated districts of Odisha, namely Koraput, Rayagada, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Kalahandi, Sundargarh, Ganjam, Gajapati, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Balangir, Phulbani, Angul, Nuapada, Bargarh etc. The largest number of them, namely - about 21 types of tribal live only in the undivided Koraput

district. Therefore, Koraput is a tribal-dominated district of Odisha.

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Received	Reviewed	Accepted	Published
12-June-2025	27-Sept.-2025	22-Oct.-2025	01-Dec.-2025

Volume	Issue	December	ISSN
No. 7	No. 2	2025	2583-1852(P), 2584-0878(O)

How to Cite this Article: Bhoi, Parikhita. South-western tribes of Odisha : A Socioeconomic analysis .THE THIRD VOICE: REALITY AND VISION. 2024. Vol No-7. Issue No-2. December. Pp: 76-80, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19411976>.

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Available online at :

thirdvoice.voiceforvoiceless.in

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19411976>

Article No - TVRV00099

Tribes are living in very remote areas and top of the hills, mountains and forests. These are further divided into two groups. Namely-

- (1) Pratna munda Tribe: Korenga, Juanga Gadiya, Santali,
- (2) Pratna Dravidian Tribe: Mundari, Bhumija, Parja, Kutia, Dangaria, Khand , Bonda, Didayi, Gond, Banjara etc.

Pratna Dravidian Tribes are found in Odisha. Meanwhile, the most affluent tribal settle in South-Western part of Odisha, especially in the districts of Koraput, Rayagada, Malkangiri and Kalahandi.

DISCUSSION :

The Kandha tribe is the most in terms of numerical superiority, while the bonda is the less numerous among these groups. Their economic development is very low. Since they have no land, they burn the forests and cultivate. They cut the forest and sow seeds of various crops. It has been said earlier that they earn money by collecting minor forest products from the forest and selling them in the market. Apart from this, they collect wood and leaves and sell them. This sale does not yield the expected profit. There is no work done. Apart from this, they collect and sell the leaves of the forest.

Currently, the Central Government has a project plan to provide flood protection in the forest areas. But the implementation has been stopped till date. The Central Government in October 25/1980, when Forest Conservation has done and the tribal who were in possession of the land were protesting for the provision of land. It was unsuccessful. A bill in this regard was introduced by the Government of India in Lok Sabha 2005. Its name is Schedule Tribe (Re-organization of Forest Rights) Bill; the bill includes how to help tribal living in forest areas if they are displaced. There is a proposal to provide a maximum of two and a half acres of land per tribal family. But that has not been implemented yet. During elections, political parties sometimes promise this to the tribal. But no action is taken.

ECONOMY STRUCTURE :

They earn money by selling of minor forest product. The yield of this crop is not sufficient. Their agricultural activities include various stages of festivals such as sowing seeds, sowing seedlings, planting rice plants, getting pregnant with rice flowers, harvesting rice and many more. South-western part of odisha's tribal family is a communal family. Even if it is just for food and drink, they need money for their daily needs, housing, etc. In the areas near malkangiri district, koraput district, Niamgiri, Perumunji, Lanjgarh areas in Kalahandi district. In these area's tribal included in the Karlapat sanctuary of kalahandi, Minajhola, Gumma, chatikona range of Rayagada district, laxmpur, Balda Cave m deomali range of koraput district , chitrakunda of malkangiri district pulses like- kolath, maandia, baajra, kaandul, katting, beerli, jhudung are mainly produced.

Under the influence of modernity, they have adopted rice as their staple food, but it is not sufficient. They selling products in the market at a low price, but when others bring some from them to the market, it is sold at double the price. As a result, the tribe are getting less profit in the form of money, while the traders and middlemen are getting more money.

Therefore, the government should make arrangements for business. They can get actual profit from their product. Paddy, Maandia, Gurji are their main food. The Mandia Rani festival is celebrated. It is also celebrated by other groups and caste in south-western Odisha. In morden term is the Nuakhai festival. it was started by the tribal firstly, there is no doubt about it. Earlier they did not pay attention to food and dress. But after coming in contact with the people of the modern era, they have led a new life. Due to the impact of this modernity, their expenses have increased. But on the other hand, their income is not that much.

However, the agricultural system has improved with their indigenious technology. They do not get agricultural schemes properly from the government. They have been collecting forest produce and growing some vegetables for their household expenses. Due to this vegetable farming, the economy has improved very slowly.

In addition, although they are unfamiliar with modern farming methods, they are using their own equipment and collecting food using various techniques. Now, with the improvement of their life, the form of money is being affected in many ways. For this, some people have learned to work as daily wage labourer to earn money, there is a shortage of money because they have no income, and they only get money from the things collected from the forest and from the pluses. Their expenses are more than their income.

As a result, that is why they are still the same as they were before. In this way, the negative impact is inevitable in any region; the lifestyle of this area's tribe is regulated by the natural structure and environmental conditions. In Kalahandi, koraput, malkangiri and Rayagada' approximately 50 percent of the land is mountainous. Of this, half of the land is not suitable for agriculture. In the plains, the farmers improve their economic misery to some extent by producing Rabi crops. The land of the tribal Sarvaswa groups is unsuitable for agriculture. They mainly depend on the forest for 8/9 months of the year. The mahul tree, the turnip tree and Salap tree are identified as their specific personal assets.

They get some money from the alcohol prepared from it. One makes a living by making mahul and rice wine all year round. Similarly, alcohol is prepared from the salap tree. One makes 5/6 months from the money earned by making alcohol from the salap tree. When the salap tree dies, it is cut down, the seeds are taken out, dried and rolled into a mat and made into cakes and cakes. During the rainy season, they take out many types of roots, dry that in the sun, roll them in a mat, make cakes and eat that. Similarly, mango takua and kasla kanda are also the means of their economy.

The Rayagada tribal of Lanjigarh earn money by harvesting mangoes, bananas, oranges, plantains, turmeric, mustard etc. They burn the forest and harvest the first year's harvest of kandul, seed, beeri etc. in the second year mustard, kangu, kasla and in the third year, when the land becomes fertile, they harvest paddy. In this way, the production of the tribes, fruits and hunting etc. continues. Traders or merchants go to the houses of

the tribal to buy forest products at a low price and sell them at a higher price in the plains. Therefore, the economic pressure on their livelihood is particularly high.

HEALTH AND POLICIES -:

During the British rule, missionary doctors used to provide medicine for diseases in tribal area's and free of cost. The tribal of this land faced still drink water suffering. There are no tube wells or ponds. Due to contaminated drinking water and food, various deadly diseases are spreading. For this, various steps were taken, and the tribal around that hill have started observing fasts from there. Since they are not allowed to go there, when doctors are denied, they believe in Gunigaredi Mannatantra Dai, Chiriguni etc. and observe fasts from government medical treatment. Although efforts were made to provide modern treatment to these tribal, it has not been possible.

Child mortality, malaria, cholera, worms, and obesity are particularly common among the tribal of Kalahandi and undivided koraput.

Therefore, a hospital should be established in the place where they are settled and it is only right to provide medicine free of cost. Their population is decreasing compared to other castes. Research has shown that the government has made arrangements for them in agriculture, cooperative animal husbandry, education, industry. Irrigation, women and they have provided education system and road construction system for children. But none of them have been implemented yet. If all those systems are implemented, their education and economic livelihood will be improved.

It is proof that the government is spending on tribal. But on the other hand, when we come to them, it is empty. Therefore, the government should adopt a proper method to implement. As long as the tribes of south-western part of odisha the rural or deep forests continue to suffer. India will be considered an Under Developed area for the KBK (undivided koraput) project; the Central Government gave Rs. 250 crore as Special Central Assistance to various departments in many times.

Another, newly implemented project is the 'Tribal Employment and Livelihood Programme'. It was launched in the state on October 7, 2004. Its objective is to improve the living conditions of the tribal in the interior areas, which is maximum cover particular these areas. The project was implemented in 30 blocks of 7 districts at a cost of about Rs. 403 crore for 10 years, but the tribals of Kalahandi, koraput, malkangiri and rayagada have not got a profit it. A bill was introduced stating that more than Rs. 30 crore was spent on the IFAD block among IFAD, DFID, WEP organizations. But the results were not encouraging.

There is a complete welfare department for the tribal. But if those measures were implemented properly, then with their progress, India's development would have progressed as a prerequisite. Its responsibility is assigned to all Welfare Officer like ADWO, DWO subdivision at the district level and a WO at the block level.

As per the recommendations of some committees, special arrangements should be made for the tribal villages, which are regulated for their protection (Regulation 2 of 1956) which is essential for implementation. Capitalists, traders and owners are taking the lands of the tribal in their own names and treat them as a labour. On the other hand, others take away their collected goods at a lower price. The government should make a special plan for them to buy the goods. As a result, the tribal directly benefited. The tribal group is mostly illiterate. There is no road to reach their villages. It was observed that out of the 8 villages in the block we visited and researched, only one school was there. It is unimaginable that they have remained, when education has spread in the country. They are still wandering in the dark world.

Today's, their economy has improved somewhat compared to the previous 10 years, along with the spread of education. The education system has become disconnected from their life. In 2003-04, Rs. 3 lakh was given for Pre Matric & Post Matric respectively. It does not seem that any tribal students have benefited from this.

CONCLUSION:-

Due to poverty, it has become difficult to study. Before acquiring education, one needs a livelihood. Therefore, they have to sacrifice their entire life in search of food. It seems essential to take steps for the development of education by taking steps for livelihood first. They are the exact copy of primitive man. Earlier, man lived in dense forests. Similarly, today, he is losing himself in the sound of the gurgling stream and the rustling of the trees. Makangiri, Rayagda, Koraput, Kalahandi district of Odisha's tribal people depend on agriculture, shifting cultivation, forest produce collection, and wage labour. Livelihoods are largely subsistence-oriented and vulnerable to natural and market fluctuations south-western part of Odisha's tribes.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS:

The author declares no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

FUNDING:

The author acknowledges the support of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) F. no. 02/104/2022-23/ST/TS/RP Dated 22.08.2023 under School of Odia, GM University, Amrut Vihar, Sambalpur, Odisha-768004, India

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Not applicable

Availability of data and materials

No datasets were generated or analysed during the current study

DECLARATIONS

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Competing interests

The author declares no competing interest.

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Antenatal Care and Birth-Preparedness among Rural Women in Bihar

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ABSTRACT

Background: The issue of maternal health is acute amidst rural Bihar, where the proportion of cases that lead to the use of antenatal care (ANC) and birth preparedness variables are lower than other countries and states.

Objective: This review article was conducted to conduct an examination on the association between ANC use and birth preparedness among rural women Bihar.

Methods: A search in PubMed Central and Google Scholar was performed whereby a literature review generated 676 records. Following the process of screening, 13 studies were to be synthesized in detail.

Results: Findings suggest that early ANC initiation is frequent but the results of covers and full visits of the service are suboptimal. ANC utilization is determined by education, socioeconomic status, mass media exposure and decision-making power of women. Culture, poverty, inadequate health infrastructure, and poor male engagement are significant obstacles towards ANC and preparedness. Although social programs that support women (i.e. Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) and Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA)) have been established, there are still gaps in service quality, counselling and financial preparedness. The reinforcement of the position of frontline health workers (ASHAs and Anganwadi Workers) has demonstrated itself as a possible answer to enhancing the Awareness of danger signs and institutional deliveries.

Conclusion: ANC use greatly benefits birth preparedness through planning of safe delivery, facilitating safe delivery transportation, financial preparedness and managing complications. Structural and cultural barriers need to be overcome through locally structured, community based, preventive implementation to enhance maternal health problems in rural Bihar.

Keywords: Antenatal Care, Birth Preparedness, Complication Readiness, Maternal Health, Rural Bihar.

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Received	Reviewed	Accepted	Published
15-June-2025	27-Sept.-2025	22-Oct.-2025	01-Dec.-2025
Volume	Issue	December	ISSN
No. 7	No. 2	2025	2583-1852(P), 2584-0878(O)
How to Cite this Article: Vardhan, Ayush. Review Article Antenatal Care and Birth-Preparedness among Rural Women in Bihar. THE THIRD VOICE: REALITY AND VISION. 2025. Vol No-7. Issue No-2. December. Pp:81-86, DOI : https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19412001 .			

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Quick Response Code:



Available online at :

thirdvoice.voiceforvoiceless.in

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19412001>

Article No - TVRV00100

BACKGROUND:

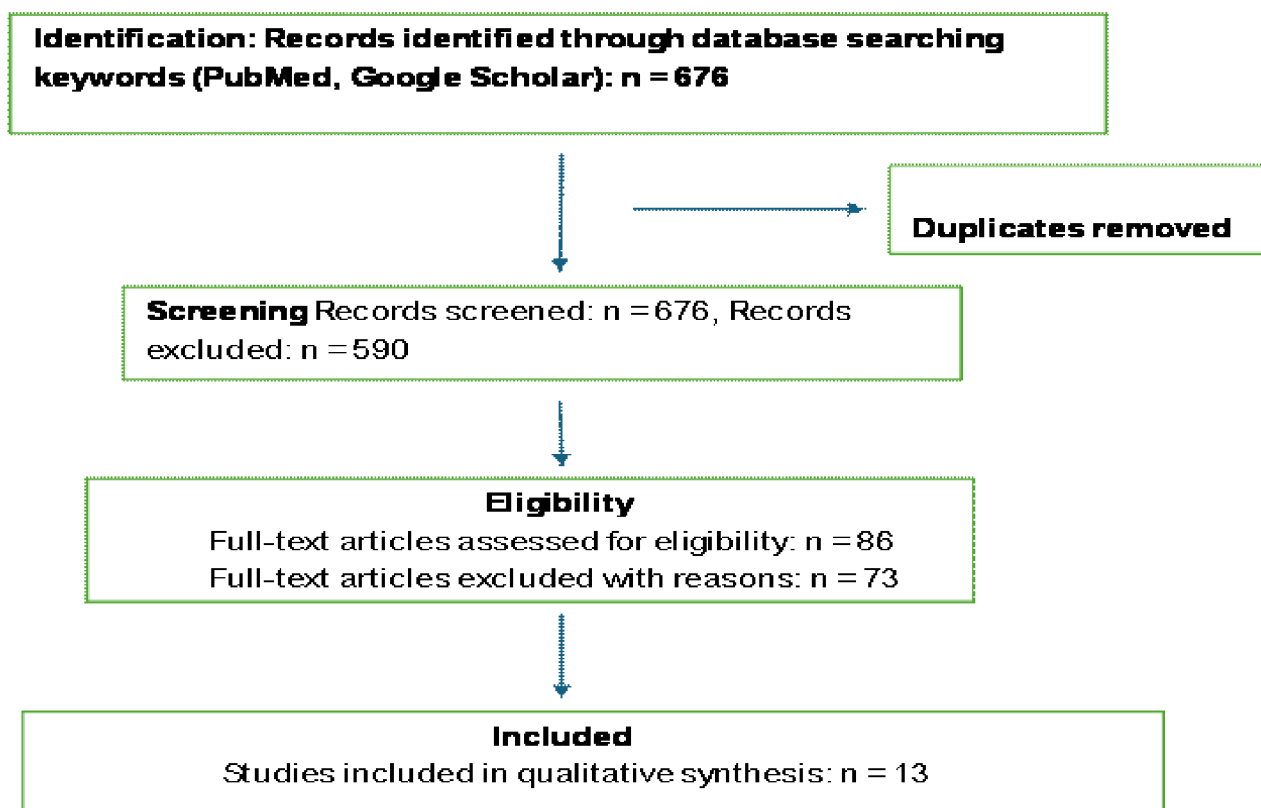
In most of India, improving maternal health remains a challenge, particularly in rural and underdeveloped areas like Bihar. Childbirth and pregnancy can lead to poor pregnancy outcomes that can be hazardous, but risks may be minimized if there are proper healthcare services and preparations (1). Birth Preparedness and Complication Readiness (BPCR) and Antenatal Care (ANC) are two crucial steps in ensuring mothers' safety and well-being. Antenatal care includes regular medical check-ups of pregnant women. Supplying of the necessary supplements such as iron and folic acid, health counselling, necessary tests such as blood pressure tests, blood and urine tests, and assisting in the early diagnoses of complications (2). Ideally, all expectant mothers' ought to have at least four ANC visits, yet in some of the states such as Bihar, most of the women get none or at most of subpar services (3). Only 9% of pregnant women in Bihar were receiving full ANC, or at least four agents, checking blood pressure, and testing blood and urine and taking iron-folic acid supplement (2). Comparatively, other, more developed states such as Kerala have much better coverage (4). Some of the factors that led to the low coverage in Bihar include a shortage of medical personnel, inadequate health facilities, long journeys by women to the clinics, and the lack of awareness of the women on the importance of ANC (4). Birth preparedness and complications readiness or BPCR is planning a safe birth with dealing to emergencies that might arise during pregnancy. This involves the choice of a local delivery centre, logistics, lowering the delivery costs, finding someone to be with the woman during labour and delivery, and guarding against any red flags. Females who have good ANC would be expected to be enlightened of these processes and prepare accordingly. According to research studies carried out in other regions of India, good ANC and increased birth preparation are tightly linked (5).

Early antenatal care (ANC) and regular checkups make a woman more likely to save money, choose a safe place to get deliveries and be ready to use the emergency services (6). The rural and underdeveloped regions record even a lower percentage

of women who are well prepared to have a child compared to the rest of the country (7). ASHA workers, in other words, the community health workers, also play a big role in enhancing ANC and BPCR (8). When FLW counsel jointly with pregnant women, attendance at check-ups improves and there is increased knowledge on birth planning (9). Still, there are numerous obstacles (10). Many women face barriers to timely and comprehensive care, including low educational attainment, cultural beliefs, poverty, gender inequality, and a lack of decision-making authority (6). Poor pregnancy outcomes in women in rural Bihar occurred mostly due to poor access to quality antenatal care (ANC) and poor birth planning. Deficiency of good-quality ANC services, as well as insufficient preparation in connection to childbirth remained to be the key determiners of low outcomes during pregnancy in the area. Bihar was an exceptionally socio-economically disadvantaged state in India where maternal health indicators metrics like full ANC coverage, institutional deliveries, and emergency preparedness were found to be significantly lower than at the national level (NFHS-5, 2021). This had been underscored in previous research that had pinpointed the critical role of ANC in psycho-practically preparing the organizations and families regarding childbirth. ANC was demonstrated to help to achieve health literacy, screen high-risk conditions early, and motivate people to seek health (WHO, 2016). Nonetheless, a substantial number of women in rural Bihar could not obtain full and/or untimely ANC due to various factors, such as illiteracy, poor healthcare facilities, deeply held cultural practices, and a lack of positive influence of the frontline health workers. Not only did these constraints deny women the care that is required throughout pregnancy, but it also led to avoidable maternal morbidity and mortality. Though ANC and birth preparedness had been studied in many settings, Bihar (rural) had isolated and few evidence collected. With the peculiarities of the socio-cultural and health system specifics of this area, it was essential to conduct research locally and make interventions practical. It is against this background that the current study attempted to determine the number and the quality of ANC services to women across rural Bihar,

specifically the timing, sufficiency and content of ANC visits. It also reviewed the level of birth preparedness, such as delivery facility choice, transport mode, financial savings, birth companion selection and birth danger indicators awareness. Moreover, the contribution of frontline health workers, particularly, ASHAs to ANC utilization promotion and encouraging birth preparedness practices at the community level were assessed by the study. The research aimed to produce

evidence addressing the above questions so that implementation of interventions on maternal health is informed by the schemes, like the Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA), and Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres. It was anticipated that the findings will support the presence of ASHA workers in maternal health promotion and support community health systems that are based in the community through local context-specific manners.



MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design

This research covers a systematic literature review in order to identify and examine the existing literature on the topics of antenatal care (ANC) and birth preparedness of women in rural Bihar.

SEARCH STRATEGY

A comprehensive literature search was performed across multiple databases, including PubMed Central and Google Scholar, the search targeted English-language publications released between 2010 and 2024.

KEYWORDS USED:

((“Antenatal care”[All Fields] OR “ANC”[All Fields]) OR (“Birth preparedness*”[All Fields] OR “BPCR”[All Fields])) AND bihar[All Fields] AND (“2020/01/01”[PubDate] : “2024/12/31”[PubDate])

INCLUDED STUDIES

The inclusion criteria were that they had to take place in rural Bihar or similar low-resource districts in India, or otherwise related socio-economic environment, as well as be concerned with women of reproductive age (15-49 years). The studies that were considered were those that had analysed the use of antenatal care (ANC) and/

or birth preparedness. Furthermore, only peer-reviewed publications or government reports that came up with a well-described methodology and results were included.

SCREENING AND SELECTION PROCESS

The MeSH terms I used are (“Antenatal care” OR “ANC”) OR (“Birth preparedness” OR “BPCR”). Search results were organized using Endnote reference manager. After duplicate removal, I found total 676 articles, out of which I selected 86 for my study and included 13 most relevant paper in my evidence table.

DATA EXTRACTION AND SYNTHESIS

A structured data extraction sheet was used to collect key details: author, publication year, study location, sample size, design, population characteristics, ANC and BPCR indicators, findings, and limitations.

RESULTS

FACTORS INFLUENCING ANC UTILIZATION:

A variety of socioeconomic and demographic factors influenced women’s utilization of antenatal care services. ANC services were found to be used by women who were exposed to the media, had

higher education levels, had more decision-making authority, and belonged to families with more money. Utilization was also enhanced by residency in Southern India. However, women from Central and Eastern India who lacked decision-making authority and income were less likely to use ANC services. The utilization of ANC services may rise because of women’s empowerment, education, and the elimination of financial obstacles.

LOW COMPLETION OF SUGGESTED ANC VISITS:

Despite the fact that most of the women sought antenatal care (ANC) early in gestation period, a small proportion of women attended the four visits as advised. The level of institutional delivery was rather high; however, the awareness of women on the danger signs of obstetric crisis was still insufficient. There were no plans in the form of blood donations or a place to give

birth. The level of education proved to be a critical factor of readiness to delivery and intrapartum complications.

ANC QUALITY AND PERCEIVED GAPS:

The quality of the services provided during antenatal was very heterogeneous. Although the surveys show that patients were generally satisfied, an independent assessment showed that there are considerable shortcomings in the services including pharmaceutical supplies and diagnostic equipment. These discrepancies were detected by incorporating data which was obtained in different modalities, such as the patient interview and facility audit. These results reveal the inadequacy of surveillance systems and funding to facilities in the rural areas.

KNOWLEDGE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING:

Role of Knowledge and Financial Planning
Proactive acquisition of knowledge related to obstetric danger signs associated with improved emergency preparedness in participants. Over half of them had been setting aside savings to deliver, and levels of knowledge of governmental financial assistance schemes were associated with high birth preparedness indices. Subsequently, creating awareness of these initiatives could have a beneficial effect on maternal health outcomes.

OBSTACLES TO BIRTH PREPAREDNESS AND COMPLICATION READINESS (BPCR):

Prenatal and postnatal preparedness was adversely affected by such factors as socio-economic deprivation, lack of awareness, and no access to services. Women said that they were not very informed about blood donation choices and state support initiatives. Less interaction of partners and dominant cultural ideologies also weakened the levels of preparedness. Community education and family involvement of ANC protocols are expected to alleviate such impediments.

IRON AND FOLIC ACID (IFA) SUPPLEMENTATION:

Females who took more than 100 IFA tablets were less likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth.

Additionally, the study raised concerns about an increase in cesarean sections and inadequate anemia management. In rural settings, maternal and child survival can be improved by having skilled health care workers and improved monitoring.

IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION AND PAST EXPERIENCE:

BPCR was more common among educated older women who had previously delivered in an institutional setting. This indicates the impact that healthcare access and prior positive exposure can have on maternal behavior today.

URBAN INFLUENCE AND TECHNOLOGY:

More independent women, such as single mothers, were better prepared in urban populations. However, working women lacked time to prepare. Familiar (non-institutional) support such as family or traditional birth attendants was preferred. Health tools had potential for enhancing awareness and support.

GAPS IN KNOWLEDGE AND PARTNER PARTICIPATION:

The majority of pregnant women and their partners were unaware of warning signs, particularly during the postpartum and newborn periods. There was a lot of money to be saved, but not many people chose a place to deliver or hired help with the labor before the baby was born. Partners who were educated were also more likely to participate. Male participation in maternal health must be enhanced.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY:

Even in more well-endowed regions such as Delhi, vulnerable women did not get proper ANC. However, increased access to primary care increased ANC utilization in previously underserved regions. It is absolutely necessary to boost government programs that provide primary health services.

CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

This review describes that there are close interconnections between antenatal care (ANC) and birth preparedness that play a significant role in determining maternal health outcomes in rural Bihar. Although there are a few state programs and community-based efforts,

the ANC coverage and quality is still not sufficient, something that limits the possibility of women planning the safe birth and possible complications. Power on households to choose, education of oneself and the power of socio-economic security were identified as important facilitators of both ANC utilization and birth preparedness whilst poverty and cultural access limits, poor health infrastructure and limited male engagement remained one of the main challenges to success. In the future, interventions are to help reinforced ANC in providing services through availability of medicines, diagnostic, and counseling services in communities. No less significant is the necessity to sensitize women and families about the significance of ANC, awareness of the danger signs, and advantage of delivering first babies in a facility, and spread the range of the financial protection programs such as Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) and Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA). To enhance community outreach, frontline health workers especially ASHA and Anganwadi workers should have continuous training, supporting supervision and performance rewards. Preparedness can also be enhanced by having more men engaging in the antenatal visits and the house-level planning. Secondly, the incorporation of mobile health (mHealth) systems has potential to introduce new contextual relevant solutions to enhance adherence and knowledge spread in the rural environment. By combating structural socio-economic limitations with transport vouchers, conditional cash transfers and community-based savings groups, it will also be critical. In the end, it should be noted that local, evidence-based, and culturally sensitive strategies need to be implemented to minimize maternal morbidity and mortality in Bihar and work towards practically reaching the national and global maternal health targets.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to say my thanks to Dr. Tanmay Mahapatra, who is the Director of Data and Learning in Piramal Swasthya Management and Research Institute, as he was of immeasurable assistance and advice in both choosing the research topic and in guiding me during the entire course of my research on the subject of the Antenatal Care and Birth Preparedness in Rural Bihar.

His professional input, motivation, and valuable recommendations played an important role in the development of this study and the quality of research.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND SPONSORSHIP

Nil

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest.

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Continuity and Change: Political Situation in Odisha from 2000 to 2025

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ABSTRACT

Odisha is a land of heritage sites, arts, cultures, traditions and plenty of natural resources. Since ancient times many rulers were ruled over odisha due to its location and geographical importance. When the rulers are from the same family that maintains power for several generations, then the dynastic rule has been initiated. There were several dynastic rulers were ruled to Odisha until it became a separate state as per modern time or before emergence of democracy. But after emergence of democracy in odisha as a state of India following India's independence from the colonial rule more than two hundred years of exploitative rules. Democracy gives opportunity to many new faces to be part of the ruling process as believed to the end of the dynastic rule. But frankly speaking a new kind of politics emerged in democracy due to the rulers has been chosen from same family by the voters from several elections which known as dynastic politics or political dynasties. Dynastic politics, which has been treated as the contrast of democracy, usually is a practical aspect of politics in many modern democracies. The political dynasties that exist in India are a product of democracy in India which has been reflecting in almost all the states including Odisha. since 1951 to 2024, there are seventeen general election has been conducted in Odisha where different dynastic leaders came into power but one who has ruled more than two decades and dominated the odisha politics i.e. Naveen Patnaik. The leadership style of him is usually linked to dynastic politics, making him as a central figure in the state as well as Biju Janata Dal (BJD). But after 2024 general elections the political landscape has been changed in odisha due to the emergence of a grassroots leader as a chief minister which replaced to the long standing and sitting dynastic ruler from his post. The central question of this paper is to understand what are the major factors behind the defeats of the most popular chief minister of India? The paper also explore answers of some other questions like how the present chief minister Mohan Majhi maintain the same popularity of odisha as maintained by Naveen Patnaik? How the present chief ministers fulfill the expectations of odisha people as they have changed the most dynamic leader? Can Mohan Majhi is able to provide good governance to people? What are major challenges in front of Majhi's govt. as odisha is one of natural calamities prone state? The paper concludes with some observations of Majhi Govt. regarding their ruling structure.

Keywords: *Democracy, Dynastic, Politics, Rule.*

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Available online at :
thirdvoice.voiceforvoiceless.in

DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19412020>
Article No - TVRV00101

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Received	Reviewed	Accepted	Published
02-July-2025	27-Sept.-2025	22-Oct.-2025	01-Dec.-2025
Volume	Issue	December	ISSN
No. 7	No. 2	2025	2583-1852(P), 2584-0878(O)
How to Cite this Article: Mallik, Dillip Kumar. Continuity and Change: Political Situation in Odisha from 2000 to 2025. THE THIRD VOICE: REALITY AND VISION. 2025. Vol No-7. Issue No-2. December. Pp: 87-96, DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19412020 .			

INTRODUCTION:

Odisha is known around the world not only because of its heritage, culture, temples, tourist spots, natural beauty, abundant natural resources but also its dynamic politics. The politics of Odisha formally started soon after it became a separated province after bifurcation from Bihar Province in 1936, under Government India Act of 1935 after relentless efforts by its formidable leaders like Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das and Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das. The leaders of Odisha, they put their tireless efforts not only for administrative purpose but also for empowering Odia speaking people for their cultural identity. After attainment of separate province, with support from Indian National Congress, the leaders were demanded the civil rights and greater autonomy from British rule. Against oppressive British rule and its ruling structure, the leaders were participated in various social reforms movements, opposed zamindari system and joined together in various liberation movement declared by national leaders for independence. National leaders and other leaders of different province including Odisha showed a big dissatisfaction against British rule as they took the resources from different parts of India for use of war at the time of World War without consulting them. Due to the transfer of resources, a food scarcity arises in Odisha which further developed unrest and anti governmental sentiments among Odia people. In response to these conditions, a strong sense of patriotism emerged among Odia leaders and their supporters, fueling their commitment to liberate their homeland from colonial domination and to participate in the broader national struggle for independence. The growing discontent among the Indian populace ultimately culminated in the passage of the Mountbatten plan by the British Parliament on July 18, 1947, which not only marked the end of British rule in India but also facilitated the independence of India and its provinces, including Odisha.

Odisha, following its independence from British rule, saw the unification of 27 princely states under the Odisha state agreement, ultimately becoming a part of India in 1950. Odisha's political scenario was dominated by the leaders of Indian National Congress (INC), as it

seen from the 1st general election (conducted in last part of 1951 and early part of 1952) and up to the 11th general election (from 1995 to 2000). Conversely, it is also found that, leadership shifted to other political parties in certain periods like from 1967 to 1972 coalition government formed by the Swatantra Party and Jana Congress, 1977 to 1980 by the Janata government, and 1990 to 1995 by the Janata Dal. A significant turning point in Odisha's political history occurred in 2000, when the Biju Janata Dal, a regional party established on December 26, 1997, emerged victorious under the leadership of its founder, Sri Naveen Patnaik, the son of Biju Patnaik, who had previously served as Chief Minister of Odisha from 1961 to 1963 and again from 1990 to 1995. The BJD secured a plurality of seats and, in coalition with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), formed a government with Naveen Patnaik as Chief Minister.

AN OVERVIEW OF ODISHA'S POLITICAL DYNAMICS UNDER NAVEEN'S LEADERSHIP

Odisha politics entered into the vibrant momentum after Naveen Patnaik became its chief minister in 2000. The political landscape of Odisha has been changed drastically under his guidance and supervision. Under his leadership, the BJD party maintained its dominance and supremacy in both the region and the Centre because Naveen Patnaik was the central figure of the party. Due to his long standing tenure (2000-24), he was able to served Odia people by giving better governance, paid more attention on welfare schemes, developed a horizontal political atmosphere where both leaders of ruling and opposition parties adhere political toleration, put all its administration efforts to manage and mitigate all the natural calamities and its crises through his sincere dedication (aimed at zero causality), able to maintain his popularity among the Odia people by addressing their local issues and problems and after all his versatile leadership qualities made him a popular global leader. Let us overview Odisha's political dynamic under Naveen's leadership.

- **Political stability and governance**

Naveen Patnaik's Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has maintained its hold on power continuously since 2000, which is quite rare in India's frequently volatile political

landscape. This long standing tenure has given opportunities for implementation of long term policies, reducing the interruptions that usually accompany changes in government. The major focus of BJD govt. on decentralization of administrative power, for that reason a new initiative was taken such as Mo **Sarkar** (My Government) program (2019), which focuses the citizen's feedback to improve the accountability of bureaucracy. In addition to the ensure the effective of the delivery of public services, a new form of governance model developed i.e. **5T** initiative (2019), which stands for Technology, Transparency, Teamwork, Time, and Transformation.

- **WELFARE PROGRAMS**

For the welfare of disadvantaged people in Odisha, BJD govt. put more emphasis on various social welfare programs like The *Madhu Babu Pension Yojana* (2008), which provided financial support to the old age people, widows, and divyanga etc., for the benefit of farmers community in Odisha he was introduced the *KALIA* scheme (2019) which stands for Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation, which offers direct cash transfers to the account of small and marginal farmers. Furthermore, to enhance women economic condition as well as their empowerment and capable them to participate in decision making process, a flagship initiative introduced which known as Mission Shakti (2001).

Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY): Another important initiative launched by the Patnaik's government in the field of health sector i.e. *Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY)* in the year of 2018 for the purpose to provide free medical assistance to the people of Odisha in all govt. medicals and some private hospitals.

People-centric policies: Throughout his tenure, many welfare schemes was introduced by his administration, such as in the housing sector the *Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana in 2014* (housing scheme) and in the pension sector the *Madhubabu Pension Yojanain 2008* (pension scheme), has received favorable responses from the public.

- **DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

Infrastructure and Urban Development: During the BJD regime, Odisha has experienced the rapid infrastructure development in terms of roads, ports, and urban facilities due to the investment a substantial amount of state's budget in this field. For the better connection from city to remote area and developed trade connectivity in Paradip and Dhamra ports The *Biju Expressway project* was introduced in the year of 2014. But apart from such development still rural areas are requires more attention.

Economic Growth and Industrialization: Odisha, since its origin, its economy totally depend upon on an agriculture and mining but BJD govt. brought a transformation in the field of economic growth by attracting many companies to invest their money in the field of steel, aluminum, and power industries and ensure to provide the abundant mineral resources, which are available in the different regions of Odisha, where companies are like Tata Steel and Jindal invested huge amount in Odisha. The year 2016 was the most influential year of Odisha as it became a manufacturing hub in the various sectors like textiles, electronics, and renewable energy by offering incentives for industries because of a flagship initiative launched i.e. *Make in Odisha* The state's GDP growth rate has consistently exceeded the national average, with per capita income rising from ¹ 11,976 in 2000-01 to ¹ 128,645 in 2022-23. On the other hand, his administration also been criticized by oppositions and many others due to the pertaining issues related to displacement (industrial project), environment matters, have sparked debates regarding sustainable development.

Steady Economic Growth: Under the leadership of Naveen Pattnaik, Odisha reached its highest economic growth which was above the national average. In the financial year (2022-23), the state's economy expanded by 7.8% in real terms, in contrast to the national growth rate of 7%.

Increasing Per Capita Income: Odisha's per capita income has experienced a remarkable annual compound growth rate of 10.9%, exceeding the national average of 9.4%.

Attracting Investments: During BJD regime, Odisha has better governance system and suitable economic policies, which attract to many Information and Technology (IT) companies and various other industries for investments.

Infrastructure Development: The state has initiated substantial infrastructure projects, including the building of the Gurupriya Bridge to bolster internal security and the Madhusudan Setu to enhance connectivity.

- **A CRISIS MANAGER**

Odisha is a natural disaster prone state, every year it has been faced numerous cyclone and other types of natural calamities. The Super Cyclone (1999) that badly affected the lives and resources of odia people due to the lack of early preparedness and technological support. After learning from super cyclone, Navin Pattnaik's administration developed a splendid disaster preparedness and response system and able to manage successive cyclones like Phailin (2013) and Fani (2019), which helped diminish casualties and received a strong appreciation from United Nations. The *Odisha Disaster Recovery Project* has bolstered coastal resilience, but the threat of climate change continues to loom large. This has helped reshape Odisha's reputation from being "disaster-prone" to "disaster-ready."

- **WOMEN SUPPORTERS**

Mission Shakti: This flagship initiative is all about empowering women and has made a remarkable difference in the lives of 7 million women who are part of 6 lakh Self Help Groups (SHGs). It's all about creating economic opportunities and providing financial support. The government set an ambitious goal of channeling Rs. 5000 crore to SHGs over 5 years, and they have made impressive steps toward that target.

33% Reservation for Women: Odisha govt. showed its impartial attitude towards gender equality community by passing 33% of reservation for women in parliament and legislative assembly.

- **A SPORTS ENTHUSIAST AND CULTURAL ADVOCATE**

BJD govt. has been made its dedicated efforts to endorse not only the odia language but also its culture and heritage. The result was odia language attained the classical status in 2016. Apart from that, govt. also provided its whole hearted support to made Odisha as a sports hub in India by hosting international hockey world cup, which has contributed to enhancing "Brand Odisha" on the global platform.

Emergence as a Sports Hub: Odisha is evolving into a prominent sports destination in India, attributed to significant investments in sports infrastructure. The state has effectively hosted major international events, such as the FIH Hockey Men's World Cup in 2023.

World-class Infrastructure: For smooth organize of Hockey world cup, BJD govt. spent huge amount to provide world class infrastructure facilities to abroad players and the result was the Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium in Rourkela, recognized as the largest fully-seated hockey stadium globally, along with Kalinga Stadium, exemplify this investment.

- **A CARETAKER OF HEALTH AND EDUCATION**

In the field of health and education, Pattnaik's administration put its sincere efforts towards health care and literacy enhancement of odia people by providing them free health checkup and medicine facilities under the *Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana(2018)*. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the way this govt. addressed issues of people by providing vaccine and oxygen which not only appreciated by various state's govt., national govt., and international agencies but also a role model for other states/nations. In the field of education, his administration also more cautious, as education is the benchmark of any society for its transformation. After realizing the same, lot of initiative had taken like *Mo School (2017)*, *Mo College (2021)*, and *5T Grants (2019)*. Under such schemes many grants have been implemented to improve college and school infrastructure. Under the "5T" governance model (Teamwork, Technology, Transparency, Time, and Transformation), this substantial initiative has transformed over 6,132 government high schools,

ensuring that students receive quality education comparable to modern private institutions, even in the most remote regions.

- **A VISIONARY GOVERNANCE LEADER**

The '5T' Model of Governance: In his later terms, Patnaik introduced the '5T' model – which represents Teamwork, Technology, Transparency, Transformation, and Timeliness – as a foundational principle for effective governance. Under the 5T model, the focus was to make governance system more accountable, efficient and to deliver various services to citizens for better outcomes.

"Mo Sarkar" Initiative: under this initiative, the administration provide a platform where citizen's feedback can to noted on various issues related to public services as delivered by the government. After receiving feedback from the people, the governance try to improve the delivery of public services.

Anti-Corruption Position: Naveen Patnaik has consistently upheld a "clean" reputation and is recognized for his strong opposition to corruption, even taking the step of dismissing ministers when deemed necessary.

No doubts, Naveen Patnaik's administration has been brought many remarkable changes in various sectors by taking effective measures and positive steps but at the same time the govt. was failed to address some the core issues like unemployment and uneven industrial growth which continue to exist. However, his long standing tenure and visionary leadership played a significant role in fostering considerable development and stability within the state of Odisha.

The Conclusion of an Era: Significant Reasons for Naveen Patnaik's Unexpected Loss in the 2024 Election, Odisha:

After more than 24 years of ruled over odia people, Naveen Patnaik's era was came into an end in 2024 during Odisha assembly election, was the signifying a substantial political transformation in Odisha, as for the first time BJP govt. was able received the majority seats winning 78 out of 147 seats, while

the BJD's representation diminished to merely 51. This kind of situation development due to combination of factors, including rising anti-incumbency sentiments, the BJP's tactical campaigning, and several significant missteps by the previously dominant BJD.

One of the narrative developed by BJP govt. during the assembly election that "**Odia Asmita**" (**Odia pride**) was in theft or decline due to BJD's influence. For the protection of same, people of Odisha need to change the present govt. by casting their votes towards BJP party. This narrative skillfully underscored the increasingly contentious figure of V.K. Pandian, a Tamil-born former bureaucrat who had become Patnaik's closest advisor and political strategist. The BJP skillfully describe that Pandian as an "outsider" wielding excessive influence, inciting concerns regarding the future of Odisha's governance and cultural identity. The notion that a non Odia was making pivotal decisions for the state struck a chord with numerous voters.

Second issue related to the **Naveen Patnaik's health, his age (77 years) and infrequently visibility in public life**. During the election rally, The public appearance of Naveen Pattnaik was not that much of good due to his words, which are fumbling and hands are vibrating. The same issues are highlighted by BJP national leaders during election campaign in Odisha including Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This resulted in a eye-catching leadership gap or alternative of Naveen Pattnaik, that the BJD found challenging to address.

After more than two decades in power, a natural wave of **anti-incumbency sentiment** began to emerge. Although Patnaik still maintained considerable personal popularity, frustrations with local MLAs and a sense of stagnation in certain areas ignited a desire for change. The BJP adeptly capitalized on this yearning for a new political alternative.

The BJD's **own strategies and calculations were gone wrong** during the election campaign, so that BJD party was decline. BJD leaders were overconfidence, as they won election several times, may have not engaged in the election campaign in dedicated manner. Moreover, there was no certainty who will be

the successor of Naveen pattanaik after his death and about party's future, gave fuel to BJP party to take advantage of.

Furthermore, the BJD's earlier strategy of offering issue-based support to the BJP at the national level while attempting to preserve a distinct identity within the state appeared to backfire. This "ideological vagueness" confused some voters, facilitating the BJP's portrayal as the sole genuine agent of change.

Unfulfilled Promises and Governance Issues:

It has been come to the notice of voters that many promises were not full filled by leaders of BJD party, after having rule over more than 20 years. Major issues like unemployment, agrarian distress, and insufficient healthcare infrastructure continue to be urgent issues. The opposition has highlighted these issues with the voters during election campaign and raises questions about the effective governance system.

Shift in Tribal and Rural Vote Banks: once upon a time, tribal and rural populations were big supporters and campaigners of BJD party but due to the land acquisition policies and inadequate welfare schemes, a unrest arises among these voters. During the election campaign, the BJP promised to the tribal and rural voters regarding the proper implementation of central welfare policies as it was not properly implemented by the present govt. have been game changer from shifting votes to the BJP.

Failure to Counter BJP's National Narrative:

During the election campaign, the BJD priorities over Regional issues and neglect by the Central Govt., as it have been the universal election campaign slogan, which are BJD party used to own the previous election. However, the BJP priorities over the National narratives like Hindutva and nationalism to draw the attention of odia voters which was not properly counter by the BJD party and its leaders.

Allegations of Corruption and Bureaucratic Overreach: The BJD political parties and its leader's image were damaged due to the allegation of corruption, nepotism, favoritism in the field of mining, land allocations and inefficiency of bureaucratic officers.

Youth and Urban Dissatisfaction: When the BJD party unable to provide employment opportunities to the youth in the urban areas, a strong dissatisfaction arises among them was resulted to the shifted of votes to BJP.

Strategic Errors in Alliance Formation: After the 2000 Odisha Legislative Assembly election, the BJD party maintains equidistance from the BJP and Congress and maintains same temperament in 2024 general election was proved one of the strategy errors. Because of this strategic error, the votes are gone to the pocket of opposition.

In contrast, the BJP not only adopted the proper planned election campaign but also focused the regional issues of Western Odisha as it has been continuously neglected by the BJD govt. by highlighting "Odia Asmita". The BJP's commitment towards the better development of the regions and provide opportunities to the various stakeholders due to the "double-engine" government created a sensation among the voters.

Ratnabhandar (the treasury of Lord Jagannath Temple in Puri) key issues were also highlighted by the BJP, which accused the BJD government of negligence and a ignore for Odia heritage.

Ultimately, the 2024 Odisha election emerged as big dynamite for the BJD. A potent combination of emotional appeals to regional pride, a well organized BJP campaign machinery, increasing anti incumbency sentiment, and the BJD's own strategic errors culminated in the conclusion of a long and illustrious chapter in Odisha's political history, paving the way for a new era of saffron governance under the leadership of Sri Mohan Charan Majhi.

SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF MOHAN MAJHI'S ADMINISTRATION IN ODISHA (2024 TO PRESENT):

As Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi's administration celebrates its first anniversary on 10/06/25, it has concentrated intensely on fulfilling the essential promises set forth in the BJP's election manifesto (Sankalp Patra). The Majhi's government has managed to execute various welfare schemes and address

issues through the effective decisions has display the efficiency and effectiveness of the administration. The following some of the important achievements have been mentioned of Mohan Majhi government during its first year:

• **KEEPING CORE MANIFESTO PROMISES**

After assuming the power from its 1st cabinet meeting, the Majhi's administration introduce various flagship initiatives to address public grievance:

- **Reopening of All Four Gates of Puri Jagannath Temple:** The very first and foremost decision taken by Majhi's administration on June 13, 2024, that reopen of all the four gates (Singhadwara (Lion gate-East), Hastidwara (Elephant gate-North), Vyaghradwara (Tiger gate-South), and Ashwadwara (Horse gate-West)) of the Jagannath Temple in Puri to manage huge crowd, as promised to people during election campaign.
- **Increased Paddy MSP to ₹ 3,100:** One of the important manifestos of BJP was to increase the price of paddy. Soon after capturing the power, the cabinet approved to increase the minimum support price for paddy to 3100 rupees for quintal..
- **Approval of the Subhadra Yojana:** During the election campaign, one of the election agenda was to provide financial assistance to women through a scheme i.e. known as Subhadra Yojana for women empowerment. Under such scheme, women will be received 50,000 rupees, where they are self reliance or financial self independent. After coming to the power, the majhi's government has been providing financial assistance to women in accordance to the guidelines of Subhadra Yojana.
- **Formation of a Committee for Ratna Bhandar:** The treasury house of the Jagannath Temple is known as Ratna Bhandar, which consists of the valuable jewels and ornaments of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Maa Subhadra. Last few couple of years before conduction of 2024 assembly election, a narratives and frustration was developed among people regarding the proper care and audit of the jewels and

ornament. Soon after coming to the power majhi's government constituted a High Level Committee for Ratna Bhandar Inventory (2004), consisting of Retired Judge of Odisha High Court, Shree Jagannath Temple Administration, Puri Collector, and others to supervise, inventory, security, and reopening of Ratna Bhandar treasury.

- To achieve better outcomes and result, the majhi's administration put more emphasis in the field of Governance and Accountability. Let's have close to at these field.
- **Tackling Corruption:** Corruption is an antithetical to integrity. It affects the administration and raise questions about the transparency of the government. After becoming Chief Minister of Odisha, Majhi's administration adopted the zero-tolerance policy on corruption and direction given to all the departments to follow the transparency in their every activity .
- **Commitment to "Good Governance" (Sushasan):** Sushasan is a dream project of every administration where Officials of the various departments have been directed to be more responsive and accountable to public concerns and frequently move to the remote areas to better know and address issues at the local level. After assuming power, Majhi's administration stress on Good Governance.
- Let's have an analysis on economic and agricultural initiatives. Majhis' government not only increased the minimum support price for paddy but also lengthening its focus on agricultural and economic field.
- **State Budget Priorities:** Under the 1st budget of Mahi's government, which introduced in July 2024 the focus was on infrastructural development, women empowerment, and agriculture due to the electoral commitment.
- **Renewed Investment Efforts:** The new administration is diligently working to foster a more attractive environment for industrial investment, with the goal of leveraging the "double-engine government" (BJP at both state and central levels) to draw in substantial projects.

Let us engage in a discussion regarding the management of natural disasters.

Since 1999, every year in the month of October is a panic period for Odisha people as well as govt. due to the natural calamities. It was also challenging for Majhis administration as previous govt. achieved more success or praise with zero causality, when meteorological department predicted about Cyclone Dana is going to affect Odisha in October 2024. With aim of zero casualties, he was moved with early preparedness and takes many measures to achieve the target. Those strategies his administration have been taken to manage the cyclone Dana and showed the commitment to disaster preparedness became widespread and received well recognition from both national and international level. The “zero casualties” achievement was a notable success, enhancing public confidence in the new administration’s ability to handle natural disasters. This initial challenge illustrated that the state’s robust disaster management system, combined with the new leadership’s proactive approach, could continue to protect lives and mitigate the impacts of such disasters.

- Lastly, let us discuss the healthcare and the social sector.
- Addressing Doctor Shortages: The last govt. was opened many new hospitals during their tenure but failed to appoint doctors against the total vacancy. The Mohan Majhis’s govt., soon after assuming power has been implementing various measures to attempt the numerous vacancies for doctors and paramedics in state-operated hospitals, with the objective of improving healthcare services, particularly in remote and village regions.

^{vvv} After completion of one year of his tenure as a chief minister, his govt. delivering various services as they promised during the time of election campaign, especially those pertaining to culture, religion, and agriculture. The forthcoming years will be more important as well as crucial for him and his administration for fully implementing its initiatives and

demonstrating a lasting influence on the state’s development and economy.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to say that Odisha politics became memorable for generation to generation because of Naveen Pattnaik and his effective governance towards welfare of odia people due to his visionary mind, versatile leadership and long serving period from 2000 to 2024. However, the year of 2024 became a historic day in Odisha politics not because of BJP emerged as victorious party but one of the most popular, people friendly leader was defeated. However, the year 2024 marked a significant turning point, as the BJP emerged victorious under leadership of Mohan Charan Majhi, initiating a new chapter in the state’s political leadership and priorities. This transition represents a pivotal moment, indicating a significant shift in the political preferences of the Odia electorate. The manner in which the state responds to evolving political dynamics while simultaneously achieving its developmental objectives will fundamentally influence its governance in the forthcoming years. As Odisha advances, the interplay between leadership, policy, and public sentiment will continue to shape its political trajectory.

FUNDING :

The authors received no financial support for this“research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

COMPETING INTEREST :

The author declare no competing interests.

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Geopolitics and Regional Security: Analyzing the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Blue Nile Basin

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ABSTRACT

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), is a monumental infrastructure project on the Blue Nile. It has emerged as a focal point of geopolitical tension and regional security concerns in the Nile Basin. This paper examines the geopolitical and regional security dynamics that surround this massive project, particularly its implications for Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt. The central question of the study is to see how does the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam reshape power relations and regional security in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt? It aims to understand how large hydro projects act as both development tools and sources of interstate tension in shared river systems. The research uses a qualitative design based on discourse analysis.

The study finds that water securitization and regional alliances are reshaping sovereignty and cooperation in the Nile Basin. It concludes that while the GERD symbolizes Ethiopia's pursuit of developmental autonomy, its sustainability hinges on trust, shared governance, and regional cooperation.

Keywords: *Geopolitics, Regional Security, Conflict Resolution, Hydro politics, Political Ecology*

INTRODUCTION

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), previously recognised as the Millennium Dam, is a monumental hydroelectric project in Africa, symbolizing Ethiopia's aspirations for economic transformation and energy security (Terrefe, B., 2021). It is located on the Blue Nile River in Ethiopia's Benishangul-Gumuz region, near the border with Sudan (Yihdego, Y., Tesfay, Y., & Gebrehiwot, M., 2021). Construction of the GERD began in April 2011, with an initial plan to be completed within five years and to start the impounding phase by 2017 (Ahmed & Elsanabary, 2015; Getachew, 2018). Today, the dam stands fully completed and operational. With a planned capacity of approximately 6,450 megawatts, the GERD is one of the largest dams globally, expected to significantly boost Ethiopia's domestic power supply and provide surplus

energy for export (Yihdego, Y., Tesfay, Y., & Gebrehiwot, M., 2021). The GERD stands 155 meters tall and stretches almost two kilometres in length (Negm, A., et

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Received	Reviewed	Accepted	Published
02-July-2025	27-Sept.-2025	22-Oct.-2025	01-Dec.-2025

Volume	Issue	December	ISSN
No. 7	No. 2	2025	2583-1852(P), 2584-0878(O)

How to Cite this Article: Anand, Rashmi Rani. Geopolitics and Regional Security: Analyzing the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Blue Nile Basin. THE THIRD VOICE: REALITY AND VISION. 2025. Vol No-7. Issue No-2. December. Pp: 97-113, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19412055>.

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DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19412055>
Article No - TVRV00102

al., 2018). The main dam is designed to reach 175 meters in height, while the auxiliary dam will stand at 45 meters (Pietrangeli, B., Bezzi, R., Rossini, M., Masciotta, P., & D'Alberti, M., 2017). The reservoir will cover an area of 1,874 square kilometres and will have a storage capacity equivalent to 1.3 times the annual discharge of the Blue Nile (Yihdego, Salem & Khalil, 2017). The dam is crucial for Ethiopia's goal of becoming a middle-income country, supporting economic development and energy needs.

The GERD has strategic importance for Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt; all of which rely heavily on the Nile for agriculture, energy, and water resources. While Ethiopia views the dam as essential for its growth, Sudan sees both benefits and risks due to its reliance on the Nile for irrigation and hydropower. Egypt, which depends on the Nile for over 95% of its water resources, fears the impact of the GERD on its water supply, particularly given its growing population and agricultural needs (Khayry, F., 2022).

For Ethiopia, the GERD has strategic significance and is critical for energy requirements and its strategy to transition into a middle-income country. The dam is expected to produce over 6,000 megawatts of power, considerably increasing the economy through both domestic consumption and potential export opportunities (Belay, Y., & Abebe, T. B., 2020). As a country with one of the lowest per capita electricity consumption rates, energy access and security are crucial for economic growth (Damena, G., 2020). Ethiopia has initiated several hydroelectric developments to meet the increasing energy demand and plans to export electricity to nearby nations (Ashebir, Dingeto & Hailu, 2022). This project aims to enhance energy security and drive economic growth by improving food security and shifting from subsistence farming to export-oriented agriculture, which relies on reliable irrigation for crops like tea, coffee, and flowers (Handiso, B. W., 2018). As a midstream country, Sudan sees both benefits and risks from the GERD. Situated amid Ethiopia and Egypt, Sudan relies heavily on the Nile for irrigation and hydropower. The Nile is also crucial for Sudanese agriculture, providing irrigation for crops like sorghum, wheat, and cotton, which are vital for food security in the already conflicted region (Basheer, M., Abdo, R., Eldardiry, M., & Khedr, A., 2025). Sudan also utilizes the Nile for hydropower generation, with projects like the Merowe Dam aimed at increasing electricity production (Abdullah, A. M., Rahman, S., Essex, S., & Benhin, J. K. A., 2020). Egypt relies on the Nile for

over 95% of its renewable water resources and has historically controlled its water usage based on colonial-era agreements (Mahemud, Eshtu & Tekuya, 2021). The Nile is vital for Egyptian agriculture, especially for water-intensive crops like cotton and rice, which require extensive irrigation due to the arid climate (Osman, H. S., A. N., & Ouda, A., 2020). The increasing population further intensifies the water pressure.

However, it has to be noted that the significance of GERD extends beyond the immediate riparian countries, influencing regional stability and growth in the broader Nile River Basin. The river supports linked ecosystem for 20 million people across its basin (*Nile Basin Initiative.*, 2020). As the longest river in the world, it passes through countries like Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya, DRC, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, and Egypt, covering about 10% of Africa (National Geographic Education., 2025, May 8). The Nile's two main tributaries, the White Nile and Blue Nile, converge at Khartoum before flowing into Egypt. The river traverses five distinct climate zones, making it crucial for survival in the arid region, where water is essential for agriculture, urbanization, and industry (Hale, T., 2023, March 13).

The reliance on traditional water-intensive crops like cotton and rice, which account for over 85% of water withdrawal, exacerbates the strain on the region's limited water resources (Ouda, S., Amer, M., & Norbha, A., 2018). This intensifies the complexities in managing the Nile's water, as seen in the political challenges surrounding GERD, where competing demands and limited resources have led to diplomatic tensions, threats of military action, and the need for international mediation.

CORE ISSUES

Ethiopia's accession to the 2010 Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA), was conceived as a modern legal instrument to promote fairness, equity, and shared responsibility among all Nile Basin countries, allowed riparian states to build dams, effectively nullifying colonial-era treaties that favoured Egypt's historical dominance over the Nile (Mbaku, J. M., & Antonio, E. K., 2025). Egypt and Sudan do not accede to the CFA. Their reservations are centred around provisions that redefine water-sharing principles, particularly the idea of "equitable and reasonable utilization." Historically Egypt is the dominant power in Nile politics and has long relied on the 1929 and 1959 water agreements that granted it a majority share of the

river's flow and veto power over upstream projects. From Cairo's perspective, the CFA threatens these established rights and, by extension, its national water security(Wouters and De Chazournes, 2018).

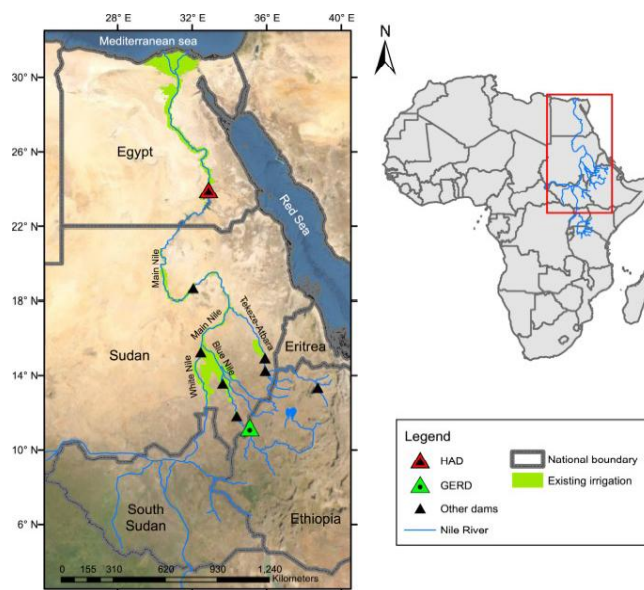
Sudan initially sided with Egypt but holds a more balanced view, recognizing the GERD's potential benefits like flood control, regulated flow, and electricity imports, while remaining concerned about operational safety and coordination. The countries' differing positions on the CFA show Nile water diplomacy is about sovereignty and identity, not just resources. True progress requires Egypt and Sudan to move from historical entitlement to shared destiny, making water a source of collaboration, not confrontation(Kahsay et al., 2015).

On September 10, 2023, Ethiopia completed the filling of the GERD, intensifying the water dispute with Egypt and Sudan (Yihdego, Y., Tesfay, Y., & Gebrehiwot, M., 2021). Egypt views Ethiopia's actions as a threat to its historical entitlement to the Nile's waters, while Ethiopia advocates for "reasonable and equitable" water usage that benefits all parties without causing significant harm (Sayed El Ahl, E. R., ElTarabishi, M., & Rashad, R., 2023). **Egypt does not agree with or recognize the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA)**, nor has it signed or ratified the treaty. Egypt's rejection of the CFA is the central point of the legal and political dispute over the Nile River and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) (Wouters, P. and De Chazournes, L.B., 2018).

Conversely, Ethiopia dismisses Egypt's historical entitlement, promoting a plan of "reasonable and equitable" utilization without imposing "significant harm" based on mutual gains. As a result, the conflict among Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan over the GERD remains unresolved.

The unresolved conflict over the GERD has strained diplomatic relations among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt; with negotiations frequently stalling due to mistrust and conflicting interests. This situation has heightened geopolitical tensions and the risk of conflict in the Nile Basin region, where the core issues include water allocation, environmental concerns, and political tensions. The dispute over the GERD (Map 1), has become a focal point of potential water wars in the region, threatening regional stability. It also includes water allocation and rights, hydrological and environmental concerns, political and diplomatic tensions, and the risk of water wars.

Map 1: Location of GERD, Ethiopia



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations

Note-The national boundary layer is created on the Database of Global Administrative Areas (GADM)

The present paper aims to evaluate how the construction and operation of GERD affect the geopolitical dynamics amid the Nile Basin countries, particularly Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan. It also explores the non-traditional security threats such as water scarcity, and how these could contribute to broader regional security challenges. The study of GERD is crucial for understanding the complex impacts of large-scale infrastructure projects on regional geopolitics, environmental sustainability, economic development, and social well-being. The significance of GERD extends beyond the immediate riparian countries, influencing regional stability and growth throughout the Nile River Basin.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative and empirical case study design, integrating both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data are derived from satellite imagery, which is employed for spatial visualization of hydrological patterns associated with the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). Secondary data include scholarly literature, policy documents, treaties, and media reports, which together provide contextual and interpretive depth. The study examines GERD through historical, political, and environmental lenses. The

research generates an in-depth understanding of the dam's implications for water allocation and rights, as well as its broader geopolitical, conflict, and cooperation dynamics within the Nile Basin.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Abdo and Khirelseid (2020), explores about Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and how it shapes Sudan's environmental and socio-economic future. Author argues that GERD has the potential to transform Sudan's water security and economic growth and regulate the flow of the Blue Nile solving problem of flood also. Infact GERD also opens the door for Sudan to access lower-cost electricity. Regulated water release from GERD could improve the performance of Sudan's own hydropower dams, such as Roseires and Merowe, making energy production more stable. The reduced silt deposition may have long-term implications for soil fertility and during drought years, differences in operational decisions between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt could create tensions. Despite these concerns, Sudan's potential gains outweigh the risks but only if all three countries commit to joint technical coordination, transparent data sharing, and cooperative water-management mechanisms.

Abdulla (2024) examines the multifaceted positive contributions of Ethiopian diaspora communities in the nation's diplomatic efforts around the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), highlighting their essential support in advocacy, financial mobilization, expertise sharing, and public diplomacy. Ethiopian diaspora communities have persistently championed Ethiopia's interests regarding GERD through global advocacy and lobbying initiatives. They mobilized networks in regions such as North America, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, utilizing mainstream and social media platforms to rally support, refute misrepresentations, and highlight the dam's development rationale. Notably, viral campaigns like #ItsMyDam galvanized both Ethiopian nationals and foreign supporters to promote Ethiopia's stance and counter diplomatic pressure. Diaspora through voluntary donations and targeted fundraising financial engagement has been indispensable for GERD's advancement, such as the purchase of diaspora bonds and members provided millions of dollars toward dam construction and subsequent operational stages. This sustained support not only showcased diaspora commitment but also bolstered Ethiopia's capacity to

Anand.: Geopolitics and Regional Security:

assert sovereign ownership over GERD, reducing external dependency.

Abdulla (2024) argues that diaspora communities have played a pivotal role in Ethiopia's diplomacy concerning GERD, spanning advocacy, resource mobilization, and technical support, and cultural outreach, ultimately facilitating progress in the face of external pressures. Their continued engagement is seen as instrumental in transforming Ethiopia's diplomatic landscape through resilient and collaborative strategies.

Abdulla (2020) examines the socio-economic impacts through the perception of local communities, who are affected by development initiatives like Merowe Dam in Sudan. Author have collected data from residents, government officials, dam implementation authority, NON-Government organisation etc. The analysis of the data shows that local people who are affected by these development initiatives are aware of the positive and negative impacts. Positive impacts are majorly increased food production, irrigation supply and electricity supply etc. negative impacts include resettlement, water shortages and rise in cost of electricity. There is policy implication because of these initiatives which include investments in the new settlement areas with respect to the agricultural economy, maintain a balance between different communities like relocated, upstream, and downstream locations.

Ahmed et al (2015) examines the effect of Great Renaissance dam on stream flow of Nile River, especially on Egypt and Sudan. HEC RAC model has been employed to study the possibility of dam damage. By running this model, it has been found that there are some merits and many drawbacks of this project on flow of Nile River. The major problem with this project is some weakness in the design of the dam.

Ali, Awol (2023) uses the concept of counter hydro hegemony which means action taken by weaker or upstream countries to challenge the dominance of downstream countries to use water of Nile River fairly. Signing of Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) has been based on fair and reasonable utilization approaches. Upper riparian states are building large dams and irrigation system like GERD, which weakens the historic dominance of Egypt on Nile river basin. In other words, Nile River is entering a new political era where counter hegemonic actions are breaking the old

myths that Egypt should always control the Nile River and this narrative is coming to an end.

Gashaw (2024) offers a comprehensive examination of how Ethiopia's hydropower expansion since 1991 has reshaped the country's geopolitical standing within the Horn of Africa and the wider Nile Basin. Heightened regional contestations around the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and Ethiopia's broader developmental aspirations. He situates, hydropower development within Ethiopia's post-1991 political restructuring, emphasizing how successive governments have framed large dams like GERD.

Muluken GEMECHU Worku (2024) study the tension and diplomatic deadlock between Ethiopia and Egypt because of the contradictory narration on GERD. The author employed qualitative research approach to understand the issue in greater detail and findings suggest that over politicization of the issue is dominant and there are huge misconception and mistrust on both side which sometimes lead to confrontation. Different actors like successive government officials, media and scholars have deepened the mistrust on popular narrative based on ultra-nationalism and political rhetoric. So, Author recommends that both countries Egypt and Ethiopia should Cooperate and widen diplomatic efforts to build confidence in GERD

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For studying the GERD and the water conflict amid Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan; the selected theoretical framework is Hydropolitics Theory and Political ecology. The Hydro politics framework focuses on the politics of water resource management, particularly in transboundary river basins (Elhance, A. P., 1997). The theory analyses how the GERD influences political relations, negotiations, and power dynamics among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt (Beyene, M. Z., Biederman, J., & Eshete, K., 2018). The theory can aid decision-makers in analysing collective risk and mitigating potential negative impacts of water conflicts. Therefore, understanding hydro-politics is crucial for predicting possible water-based conflict scenarios between riparian countries (Al-Muqdad, 2022).

In the case of the Nile Basin, water is not just a natural resource; it is a political resource. Ethiopia's decision to build the GERD represents more than an energy project. It is a declaration of sovereignty and self-reliance. Historically Egypt was the dominant power

on the Nile because of colonial-era treaties. While Sudan has balancing approach for cooperation, safety and equitable flow. Hydropolitics becomes the Lense to analyse how rivers become arenas of negotiation, rivalry, and regional diplomacy, reflecting shifting power relations in Northeast Africa (Lavers, 2024).

Another theoretical framework chosen for the study is Political ecology. It brings attention to the people and the environment and focuses on who benefits from large-scale water infrastructure like the GERD, and who bears the cost? While the dam promises clean energy and economic growth, it also raises questions about ecological balance, displacement, and the livelihoods of downstream communities.

The study by Atkins and Hope (2021) indicates that Bolivia and Brazil focused on how political ecology reveals the local scale's importance in critiquing global hydropower projects. So political ecology also emphasizes on the unequal distribution of power and resources in environmental issues. It examines how power dynamics amongst Ethiopia (upstream) and downstream countries like Sudan and Egypt influence decision-making around GERD. This also challenges sustainability claims and reshapes environments. In fact we can say that political ecology reminds us that the environment is deeply political and the decisions about water, energy, and land use reflect issues of justice, inequality, and representation (Harris, L.M., 2020).

Together, these two theories provide a holistic framework for the study. Both frameworks analyse power relations, study inequalities, and equitable water allocation mechanisms offering a comprehensive understanding of the GERD's social, political, and environmental implications. This approach is crucial for fostering regional cooperation, ensuring water security, and achieving sustainable development in the Nile basin (Harris, L.M., 2020). The above-given theories are apt to analyse how the GERD influences political relations, negotiations, and power dynamics among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt. They explore issues such as water security, power asymmetry, negotiation diplomacy, and the political and strategic dimensions of water resource management in transboundary river basins, helping to understand the strategies and processes through which countries negotiate water-sharing agreements (Casão, A., 2008). Hydropolitics explains the macro-level power dynamics between nations, while Political Ecology helps us understand the micro-level human and environmental impacts.

DISCUSSIONS

EGYPTIAN HEGEMONY OVER THE NILE BASIN: A HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY ANALYSIS

Egyptian hegemony over the Nile basin has been a defining feature of the region's history. It is mainly because of Egypt's strategic dependence on the Nile, its colonial era legal privileges and decades of political leverage. Egypt's dominance over the Nile's water resources stems from a combination of geographic, historical, and political factors. It has shaped the politics of the region for over a century, but now new states assert their rights and new infrastructures like the GERD emerges the historical dominance is being redefined, which is more equitable water governance across the Nile Basin (Zeitoun, M. and Warner, J., 2006).

The ancient Egyptians recognized the Nile's vital importance for their civilization's survival and developed sophisticated irrigation systems to harness its waters (Butzer, K. W., 1976). This historical dependence on the Nile fostered a sense of ownership and entitlement that has persisted through the centuries (Reynolds, 2024). During the colonial era, Britain recognised Egypt's strategic location and granted it substantial control over the Nile's waters through a series of agreements (Moore, S., 2024). In these colonial-era treaties, majority of water rights were granted to Egypt and Sudan via colonial accords, most notably the 1959 treaty, which further cemented Egypt's dominance by excluding upstream countries like Ethiopia (Muyali, 2024). And it laid the foundation for its continued hegemony in the post-colonial period. Due to historical, political, and economic clout, Egypt enjoys a disproportionately large share of the Nile's waters and shaping the region's political and economic landscape (Beyene, M. Z., Biederman, J., & Eshete, K., 2018). Egypt also controls the Aswan High Dam, which allows it to regulate the river's flow and store vast quantities of water, while Ethiopia and Sudan were left with less irrigation infrastructure (Beyene, M. Z., Biederman, J., & Eshete, K., 2018). This hegemony enabled Egypt to secure its water needs and maintain its agricultural and economic development (Moore, S., 2018).

However, in the 21st century, Egyptian hegemony over the Nile basin faced challenges because of the increasing demand for water resources by the rise of upstream countries. This legacy of hydro-hegemony of Egypt is now being challenged by Ethiopia's GERD which also targets to assert the rights of upstream states and promote equitable water sharing (Ali, 2023). However, the absence of comprehensive agreements and weak enforcement mechanisms, hinder cooperation among Nile basin countries, complicating efforts to address future water needs and climate change impacts. Thus, while Egypt's historical claims remain significant, emerging counter-hegemonic dynamics are reshaping the region's water politics (Muyali2024). These developments have led to tensions and disputes between Egypt and its upstream neighbours.

THE GEOPOLITICS OF THE GRAND ETHIOPIAN RENAISSANCE DAM REGION: A COMPLEX WEB OF INTERESTS

Since the announcement and construction of the GERD, it has emerged as a focal point of geopolitical tensions in the region primarily between Ethiopia and downstream countries like Egypt and Sudan. Ethiopia views the dam as crucial for its economic development and energy security, while Egypt, fears a significant reduction in its water supply resulting in a difficult negotiation process that, because of past accords and divergent national interests, has frequently come to a standstill (Wedajo, 2024). Literature indicates that the GERD symbolises a shift in hydro-political dynamics, challenging Egypt's historical hydro-hegemony and prompting Ethiopia to assert its rights to utilise shared water resources (Ali, 2023). Climate change and population expansion add to the complexity of this scenario by intensifying competition for water supplies, which could spark conflict if cooperative solutions are not given priority. Therefore, fostering a cooperative framework that acknowledges the interests of all parties is crucial for regional stability and sustainable water management (Gashaw, 2024).

COMPETING INTERESTS AND PERSPECTIVES

The construction of GERD has ignited intense nationalist sentiments in both Ethiopia and Egypt and

has become a focal point for historical grievances and contemporary anxieties. The dam is presented as a sign of national pride and economic progress in Ethiopia, while Egyptian media frequently highlights worries about water security and past agreements that support their interests (Wedajo, 2024). Ultimately, GERD serves as an example of how national identity and geopolitical concerns may entangle infrastructure projects, requiring cooperative solutions to prevent future problems.

In Ethiopia, the GERD represents national pride, nation self-reliance, and a pathway to economic transformation. The dam is expected to generate a significant amount of electricity, addressing Ethiopia's chronic energy shortages and boosting its industrial development, thereby enhancing economic landscape (Wedajo, 2024). The dam is also a means to assert its sovereignty over the Nile's waters and challenge the historical dominance of Egypt and fostering a narrative of reclamation of water rights (Quagliarotti, 2023). The government has actively promoted the GERD as a national project, emphasising its potential to generate electricity, boost industrial development, and alleviate poverty.

This narrative has resonated deeply with the Ethiopian public, who see the GERD as a source of national pride and a testament to Ethiopia's resilience, determination, and reinforcing national identity. It has become a rallying point uniting Ethiopians across ethnic and political divides (Quagliarotti, 2023). However, the GERD has sparked tensions with Egypt and Sudan, who fear negative effects on their water rights, leading to a protracted negotiation process that has often ended in stalemate (Goldberg, 2023).

Conversely, Egypt has viewed the GERD as an existential threat to its water security and national interests, as the Nile is the lifeblood of Egypt. Egypt's initial response to the GERD was marked by strong opposition and even veiled threats of military action (Gomaa, M. E., 2018). And any perceived reduction in its flow is seen as a direct challenge to the country's survival. It fears that the dam's filling and operation could reduce the flow of the Nile, impacting its agriculture, industry, and overall water

security (Gomaa, M. E., 2018). This rhetoric fuelled concerns about a potential conflict in the Nile Basin, raising the stakes for all involved. And hence the Egyptian government has invoked historical claims to the Nile and portrayed Ethiopia's actions as violating international law (Sayed El Ahi, ElTarabishi and Rashad, 2023). This narrative has stoked nationalist anxieties among the Egyptian public, who fear that the GERD could lead to water shortages, economic hardship, and social unrest. The dam symbolises Egypt's vulnerability and serves as a reminder of its historical grievances with Ethiopia (de Souza & Jara, 2023).

Political leaders in both Ethiopia and Egypt have played a crucial role in shaping and amplifying nationalist sentiments surrounding the GERD. They have used the dam to mobilize public support, consolidate their power, and deflect attention from domestic challenges. The rhetoric surrounding the GERD has often been inflammatory, with leaders invoking historical grievances and portraying the other side as an aggressor (Almesafri and Abdo, 2024).

Sudan's position on the GERD reflects a complex interaction of concerns and potential benefits. In Sudan, hydropower generation and water supply are expected to improve under both unilateral and cooperative approaches (Elsayed, H., 2022). Initially fearful about the dam's impact on its water supply, Sudan has started to acknowledge benefits such as flood control and enhanced electricity generation, which could support its development goals (Wedajo, 2024).

However, risks remain during the filling phase, which can reduce water availability and the possibility of increased sedimentation in its dams (Wheeler, K. G., Jeuland, M., Hall, J. W., Zagona, E., & Whittington, D., 2020). It seeks to balance its interests with those of both Ethiopia and Egypt. The international community like the African Union, the United Nations, and various donor countries, plays a vital role in promoting a peaceful resolution to the GERD dispute (Goldberg, 2023). The focus on shared interests, mutual benefits, and long-term sustainability is essential for overcoming the nationalist fervour and reaching a mutually acceptable agreement. However, it has to be noted that nationalism along the

GERD also poses challenges for reaching a cooperative and sustainable solution to the GERD dispute. The heightened nationalist sentiments in both countries make compromise difficult and increase the risk of escalation.

FUNDING THE GRAND ETHIOPIAN RENAISSANCE DAM: A MULTIFACETED APPROACH

Apart from engineering, the GERD also represents a significant financial pooling achievement through domestic resource mobilisation. The estimated construction cost of the dam was \$4.8 billion, which was secured through the employment of diverse strategies (Mahmoud, M. R., 2022). Fund-generating strategies included public contribution, taxation and revenue generation, and state-owned enterprises (Tadese, J., 2022, March 23). The Ethiopian diaspora actively engaged in e-diaspora fundraising efforts that highlighted national pride and commitment to development (Abdulla, M. A., 2024, April 6). The diaspora actively organised events and made substantial donations, reinforcing their connection to Ethiopia's progress (Embassy of Ethiopia, Brussels., 2020, March 25). Additionally, the government issued bonds specifically for the GERD project, both domestically and internationally, and was marketed as patriotic investments and attracted considerable interest from both individuals and institutions (Gevorkyan, A. V., 2021). It proved to be an effective fundraising mechanism. Profits from state-owned enterprises were also channelled towards the dam's construction (Gevorkyan, A. V., 2021). The GERD's funding model serves as an example of how developing countries can leverage their own resources and engage their citizens in national development initiatives. Ethiopia's success in funding demonstrates its commitment to self-reliance and its ability to leverage various financial instruments to achieve its development goals (Wedajo, 2024).

This financial strategy facilitated the GERD's construction and also fostered a sense of unity, despite ongoing regional tensions regarding the dam's operation and filling (Wedajo, 2024). Once operational, the GERD is likely to deliver power to 65 million Ethiopians, supporting the country's development efforts by generating revenue through energy exports to neighbouring countries and serving as a crucial input

for industrialization (Yihdego, 2020). It will also boost industrial growth, agricultural productivity through regulated water flow, and generate revenue from electricity exports to neighbouring countries (Kahsay et al., 2015). **Challenges**

ENVIRONMENTAL AND GEOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF THE GERD

The satellite imagery of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) illustrates the transformation of the Blue Nile between February 2019 and February 2022 (Fig1). In 2019, the river appears as a narrow flow, but by 2022, the GERD reservoir expanded as Ethiopia began filling the dam in stages between 2020 and 2022. The project stands as a symbol of national pride and economic ambition, as it is capable of generating over 5,000 megawatts of power for millions of Ethiopians. For Ethiopia, the GERD embodies the right to utilize its natural resources for national progress without external interference. Hydrologically, the images mark a turning point in the Nile Basin; geopolitically, they reveal shifting power relations—from a century of Egyptian dominance toward a more multipolar basin where upstream countries assert their rights (Beyene, Biederman and Eshete, 2018).

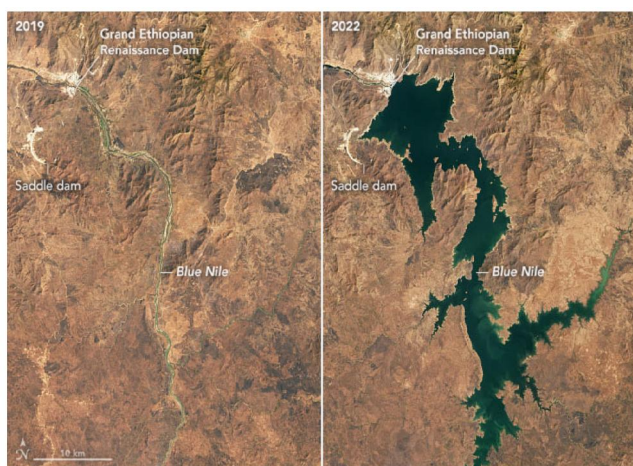
Beyond hydro politics, the reservoir has altered ecosystems, submerged valleys, and reshaped local livelihoods, reminding us that every technological achievement carries ecological and social consequences.

In their study Falco., Giulia and Fiorentino (2022), adopted an ecosystem approach and proposed an analytical model focused on the situation of the GERD on the Blue Nile. According to the study, the GERD is well-suited for applying the ecosystem analytical model. The GERD has far-reaching environmental and geological implications that require careful management and mitigation strategies. Environmental impact assessments have raised concerns about the GERD's downstream effects, on countries like Sudan and Egypt. Study shows that a failure of the GERD can lead to disastrous flooding, threatening infrastructure such as the Roseires, Sennar, and Merowe dams, as well as urban areas like Al Khartoum City and the Aswan High Dam in Egypt (Soliman, M. R., Balah,

A. M., El-Haddad, A., & El-Shorbagy, W., 2018).). The flood risks are worsened by factors such as structural instability and natural disasters, which can result in widespread loss of life and property (Elbelasy, Khater, Hassan & Ibrahim, 2024).

One of the critical environmental challenges posed by the GERD is sediment trapping. Dam captures a significant amount of sediment that would otherwise flow downstream. This can lead to several issues like sediment flushing and dredging. Implementing sediment flushing practices is essential to mitigate sediment accumulation in the reservoir. This involves periodically releasing water through the dam to carry the trapped sediment downstream, thereby reducing the sediment load within the reservoir. Continuous deposition of sediments in the dam would decrease the water-holding capacity of the dam. And it requires regular dredging. Regular dredging can help manage sediment build-up (Seleshi and Scharffenberg, 2020). This process involves removing sediment from the bottom of the reservoir to maintain its capacity and prevent it from becoming overly silted (Abdo, A. L., & Khirelseid, E. M., 2020). However, it has to be noted that, it is an expensive process and countries with a huge number of poverty-stricken can afford this technology.

Plate 1: Satellite imagery of GERD



February 6, 2019 - February 14, 2022

Source: https://eoimages.gsfc.nasa.gov/images/imagerecords/149000/149699/grandeth_oli_201937_lrg.jpg

CHANGE IN MICROCLIMATE:

The accumulation of a large volume of water in the GERD reservoir can significantly alter the region's microclimate. The high rate of evaporation from the reservoir can introduce several climatic changes. High rate of temperatures cause significant water evaporation within tropical countries of horn of Africa, posing a challenge to water management (Mohamed and Elmahdy, 2017). Evaporation losses from the fully developed GERD reservoir are assessed to reach a maximum of 0.4 billion cubic meters (bcm) (Tesfa, 2013). The evaporation of water from the reservoir can increase humidity levels in the surrounding areas. This change in moisture levels can affect local weather patterns, potentially leading to more frequent and intense rainfall. The altered microclimate may result in unpredictable weather events such as cloud bursts and flash floods. The long-term effects of GERD on the Blue Nile's hydrology are also influenced by unpredictable factors like climate change, which can impact future rainfall patterns. These events can pose significant risks to nearby communities, infrastructure, and agriculture (Gebre, S. L., 2020).

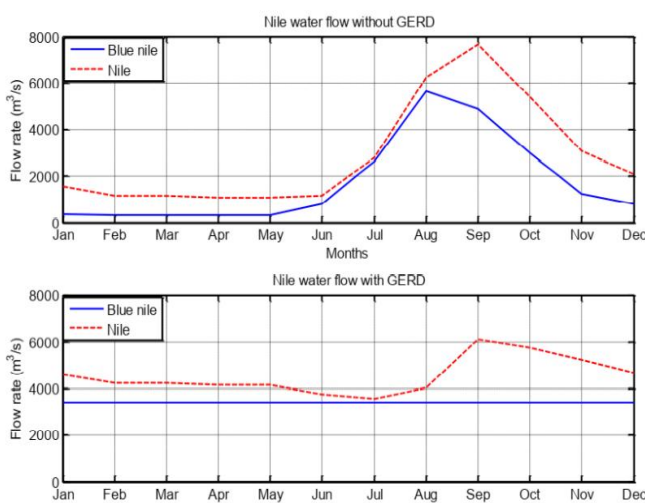
The GERD's massive water storage capacity also exerts considerable pressure on the subsurface rock, which can have geological consequences. The weight of the stored water can increase the stress on fault lines and subsurface rock layers. This added pressure can trigger localised earthquakes, known as Reservoir-Induced Seismicity (RIS). These earthquakes are usually minor, and can still pose risks to the dam's structural integrity and the safety of nearby communities (Kaleb, S. E., 2021).

CHANGE IN RIVER FLOW AND HYDROLOGY

GERD has significantly altered the natural flow of river Nile. Blum, Zaitchik, Alexander, Wu, Zhang, Shukla, Alemneh and Block (2019) discovered that Blue Nile's flow was influenced by various factors like rainfall patterns, upstream water use, and evaporation. Predicting the exact increase in summer discharge with perfect accuracy is challenging (Seleshi, Y., & Scharffenberg, W., 2020). The flow of the Blue Nile is expected to be moderate in the long run (Mordos, M. A., Sharfi, E. S. A., Mohammed, B. A., & Wheeler, K., 2020). The GERD's ability to regulate flow could potentially reduce flood peaks by 10-25% and increase average summer discharges by 10-500% depending on the hydrological conditions (Mordos, M. A., Sharfi, E.

S. A., Mohammed, B. A., & Wheeler, K. (2020). In their study, Elkrail and Omer (2015) examined the impact of the GERD's operation on Gezira State, focusing on its effect on groundwater recharge. Gezira State relies heavily on two crucial aquifers: the Nubian and Gezira aquifers, which primarily provide water appropriate for irrigation (Elkrail& Omer, 2015). The scholars concluded that the GERD's ruling of water levels, keeping them consistently high throughout the year, will enhance recharge and increase aquifer seepage. So, this study concludes that there is no adverse impact on aquifers and groundwater.

Fig 1: Water flow from the Blue Nile and Nile River before and after the construction of the GERD



Source: (Tesfa, 2013).

Stagnant water in the reservoir can increase the risk of waterborne diseases such as malaria and schistosomiasis. Adequate health interventions and monitoring are needed to address these risks. Disruptions in water supply can impact access to clean water for drinking and sanitation, with potential public health consequences(Beyene et al., 2018).

The creation of the reservoir is likely to result in habitat loss for terrestrial and aquatic species. This can lead to a reduction in biodiversity and changes in ecosystem dynamics. Alterations in river flow and sediment transport can impact fish populations and fisheries in the Nile, affecting food security and livelihoods for communities that depend on fishing. Changes in water temperature, flow, and quality can adversely affect aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity in the Blue Nile and downstream rivers(Seleshi and Scharffenberg, 2020).

However, the overall environmental impacts remain poorly understood, requiring complete assessments to mitigate risks and prepare emergency response plans (Sharaky, Elewa & Kasem, 2017).Rashad, Shaaban and Mago (2022), highlight the importance of assessing the dam's stability and potential failure scenarios, emphasizing the need for emergency action plans to mitigate extreme disasters like floods that could affect downstream countries.

**OPPORTUNITIES
EGYPT'S AGRICULTURE: ADAPTATION IN THE FACE
OF WATER SCARCITY**

The GERD poses a significant impact on Egypt's agricultural sector. It has been seen that Egypt's agricultural practices are evolving in response to the GERD and a series of transformative and adaptive measures to ensure food security and economic stability(Kandeel, A., 2021). According to Peng, Li, He, Cai, Zhang, Belete, Deng and Wang, (2022), Ethiopia's construction of the dam has led to challenges for Egypt's water and food security, escalating economic burdens. In response to anticipated water scarcity, Egypt is applying adaptive strategies, i.e. from crop selection, modern drip, and precision irrigation techniques to policy reforms and technological innovations(Peng et al., 2022). There is a shift towards drought-resistant crop varieties and crop diversification aims to reduce reliance on water-intensive crops like rice, which is known for its high-water consumption(Peng et al., 2022). In order to improve water efficiency in the cultivation of rice, modern irrigation techniques including alternating wetting and drying (AWD) are being used. These techniques considerably reduce water usage while maintaining yields (Lampayan, R.M., et.al. 2015). Furthermore, the nation is spending money on reusing treated wastewater for irrigation, especially for non-food crops, as this has been shown to be more cost-effective than using conventional groundwater sources (Wahid, Khairy & Krause, 2024). Moreover, investigating unconventional water sources like air conditioner condensate and rainfall offers more chances for sustainable irrigation. Taken together, these actions show a thorough strategy for managing water resources in the face of increasing scarcity (Gnedy, Daoud and Elmansy, 2023). Collectively, these measures replicate a wide-ranging approach to managing water resources amidst rising shortage. Elevated low flows from the GERD are likely to improve the water-food-energy nexus outcomes in Egypt under a complete assistance governance scenario, with a slight decrease in GERD hydropower

generation of 2,000 GWh/year (19%) (Elsayed et al., 2022).

NEGOTIATION AND DIPLOMACY

INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

The dialogues surrounding the GERD have become a focal point for international and regional governance efforts, particularly involving the World Bank (WB), UN, UN Security Council (UNSC), and AU (De Falco & Fiorentino, 2022). The UN emphasized promoting international water law concepts that support fair water-sharing agreements among Nile Basin countries for conflict prevention and peaceful settlement (De Falco, S. and Fiorentino, G., 2022). It also aims to address the needs of vulnerable populations affected by water management strategies. Conversely, the WB offers vital financial capital and technical know-how for cooperative water management projects, facilitating dialogue among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt concerning the GERD (De Souza *et al.*, 2023). However, the success of these struggles is hampered by historical treaties that favour downstream states and an absence of robust implementation mechanisms within the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) (Wouters and De Chazournes, 2018). Regardless of these challenges, improving the NBI's capacity might foster cooperation and lessen conflicts, emphasizing the necessity for integrative negotiation approaches to resolve ongoing disputes (Wedajo, 2024).

ROLE OF THE AFRICAN UNION:

AU plays a pivotal in mediating the GERD disputes by promoting the principle of “African solutions for African problems” to foster regional ownership (Tawfik, 2023). The creation of the International Panel of Experts and the Declaration of Principles show that, despite the lack of a legally enforceable agreement, AU-led negotiations have reduced the likelihood of future escalations (Wedajo, 2024). The AU's formal involvement began in **mid-2020** and matter was elevated to the **highest organs of the Union** including the **Assembly of Heads of State and Government** and the **Bureau of the Assembly**. This top-level engagement was not merely procedural but it shows **strong political commitments**. The AU became the platform through which Africa find an African solution to an African challenge. **Peace and Security Council did not take** direct control of the technical negotiations. But it offered a vital **institutional**

framework for dialogue and de-escalation. It reminded all parties that the dispute over the Nile was not just about water, but also about **regional peace and collective security** (Tawfik, M., 2023).

In order to address security issues related to water shortages and climate change in the future and work toward a lasting resolution in the region, the AU's sustained involvement is crucial (Birhan, 2024). After tensions escalated between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt over the GERD, the AU stepped in as a mediator in 2020. African Union (AU) has been approached to mediate the dispute, providing an opportunity to leverage its continental peace architecture framework through three main avenues: the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, which is the AU's supreme policy and decision-making body; the AU Peace and Security Council (APSC), the cornerstone of the AU's conflict prevention, management, and resolution framework; and the involvement of COMESA, the largest Regional Economic Community of the AU, aimed at promoting regional integration through trade and the development of natural and human resources (Tawfik, M., 2023). South Africa's president, acting as the AU Chair at the time, played a key role in facilitating negotiations (Tawfik, M., 2023). The AU's involvement helped to de-escalate tensions and prevent the dispute from reaching a boiling point (Tawfik, M., 2023). This encourages regional ownership of the issue and avoids external interference (Kasimbazi & Bamwine, 2021).

Despite these efforts, the AU hasn't yet been able to broker a concluding agreement on the GERD filling and operation process. Technical and legal issues remain sticking points. The AU lacks strong enforcement mechanisms to compel countries to adhere to agreements. Success relies on the willingness of all parties to negotiate in good faith. The AU faces the challenge of balancing the interests of all Nile Basin countries, which have varying needs and historical claims to the Nile water (Teshale, S. and Abebe, F., 2022).

THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA'S POSITIONS ON THE GRAND ETHIOPIAN RENAISSANCE DAM: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

GERD has attracted attention from global powers like the United States and China, who have contrasting approaches to the issue. The U.S. advocates for a multilateral, mediated solution, while China takes a more hands-off approach, focusing on bilateral relations with the involved countries. Significant steps

in the GERD negotiations include the formation of the International Panel of Experts, the Declaration of Principles, and the establishment of a Joint Research Group, with the U.S. and World Bank serving as observers (Khorrami, N., 2021). Despite these efforts, unresolved issues such as drought mitigation, a binding agreement, dam safety, and dispute resolution remain. These global powers' involvement adds another layer to an already intricate negotiation landscape (Tamerat, Y. and Haile, B., 2023).

THE UNITED STATES' POSITION:

The U.S.' active involvement and pressure tactics have made it a significant player in the GERD negotiations. The location of the dam was recognized and suggested in a study done by the US Bureau of Reclamation during a study of the Blue Nile amid 1956 and 1964 (Beyene, M. Z., Biederman, J. and Eshete, K., 2018). The Bureau deliberated for the dam to produce 1,400 MW of power with a reservoir volume of 11 billion cubic meters (bcm) (Ahmed & Elsanabary, 2015). It advocates for a multilateral, mediated solution that addresses the concerns of all riparian countries.

The U.S. has a vested interest in regional stability and conflict prevention in the Nile Basin. It also seeks to promote its values of transparency, rule of law, and equitable resource sharing. The U.S. has engaged in diplomatic efforts at various levels, including high-level visits, technical assistance, and financial support for mediation efforts (Solomon, B., 2020). It has also exerted pressure on Ethiopia to reach an agreement, including withholding aid and imposing sanctions. While it has expressed interest in a peaceful resolution, its actions haven't translated into a comprehensive political strategy. However, its recent actions have also drawn criticism from Ethiopia, which perceives them as interference in its internal affairs. The U.S. has expressed support for the African Union-led negotiations and has urged the parties to reach a comprehensive and legally binding agreement (Kifle, Z., 2024).

CHINA'S POSITION:

China has played a significant role in the GERD in Ethiopia, primarily through financing and construction. They've provided loans exceeding \$1 billion and are estimated to be involved in related power transmission projects (China AidData, 2023). China's involvement can be seen as part of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), aiming to develop infrastructure

projects globally and expand its economic influence. China has also supplied construction materials and technology for the dam (Oduro, G. B., 2022). Chinese companies, like Sinohydro and Gezhouba Group, have been awarded major construction contracts for the GERD (Zola, A., 2023). This brings Chinese engineering expertise to the project (Klaassen, 2021). China's primary interest in the region is economic. It has significant investments in infrastructure projects in all three countries and seeks to maintain good relations with all parties. China has encouraged the parties to resolve their differences through dialogue and consultation.

While China's direct influence on the GERD negotiations is limited, its economic clout and close ties with the involved countries give it potential leverage. China generally maintains a policy of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs. In other words, we can say that China has adopted a more hands-off approach to the GERD, emphasizing its bilateral relations with the involved countries. It has refrained from taking a strong public stance on the issue (Verhoeven, H., 2021). However, supporting the GERD aligns with their goal of promoting African development and infrastructure projects. China maintains diplomatic relations with both Ethiopia and Egypt.

While supporting the GERD, they have also encouraged dialogue and a peaceful resolution to the water-sharing dispute. China's involvement in the GERD project has shifted the supremacy undercurrents in the Nile Basin. It challenges Egypt's historical dominance over Nile water and offers Ethiopia more leverage in negotiations. Egypt has expressed concerns about the potential impact of the GERD on its water flow and security. This has created some tension between Egypt and China (Verhoeven, H., 2021).

The United States and China's differing positions on the GERD reflect their distinct interests and approaches to international relations. The U.S.'s active involvement and pressure tactics contrast with China's more hands-off, bilateral approach (Khorrami, N., 2021).

The future trajectory of the GERD negotiations and the broader implications for regional stability will likely be influenced by the evolving positions of these two global powers. A cooperative approach between the U.S. and China, focusing on shared interests and mutual respect for the sovereignty of the involved countries,

could potentially facilitate a peaceful and sustainable resolution to the GERD dispute. However, continued divergence in their approaches could complicate the negotiations and exacerbate existing tensions in the Nile Basin(Khorrami, N., 2021).

To mitigate the tension, a benefit-sharing approach has been proposed. This approach aims to sustain the Nile ecosystem, promote regional peace, increase water flow, and decrease unnecessary expenses through modest intraregional cooperation. The resolution of the Nile Basin conflict relies on identifying the potential of the basin and adopting integrated cooperative frameworks. Such frameworks should be developed by the technocrats of riparian states and international experts to manage the shared water resources effectively (Hailu, A.S., 2022).

CONCLUSION

Managing transboundary rivers like the Nile is difficult, especially with weak or non-existent river basin institutions. To ensure the GERD benefits all riparian countries and supports regional prosperity, it is essential to prioritize equitable water-sharing, transparent communication, and regional collaboration. Ongoing negotiations should focus on a cooperative approach that includes joint infrastructure projects, knowledge sharing, and drought preparedness rather than just addressing the GERD. The negotiations should aim for a comprehensive framework for sustainable Nile water management, considering climate change and population growth. The GERD dispute, if resolved successfully, could become a model for future transboundary water cooperation in the Nile Basin and beyond.

FUNDING :

The authors received no financial support for this“research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

COMPETING INTEREST :

The author declare no competing interests.

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Understanding Reverse Migration in India: Implications and Emerging Challenges in Odisha.

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ABSTRACT

Reverse migration impacts the demographic, socio-cultural and political structure of the society as migration in India is not unidirectional. There is a desire of return migration among the first generation. During the lockdown there was a trend of urban-to-rural migrants returning home, facing challenges including the gendered characteristics of return migrants having a different implications on the society including power dynamics, obstructing traditional roles, social insecurity and stigmatization thereby altering household gender dynamics and constraining women's empowerment. The lack of prevalence of proper socio-legal protection measures adds to their vulnerability where Odisha is not an exception. In Odisha, networks (kinship, caste, community ties) may constrain or facilitate reverse migration. Giving it a sociological dimension, it can cover segmented assimilation of gendered perspective on capability framework of women and impact of enhanced social capital affecting reverse migration. There are few implications of the return migrants on the local space in Odisha for instance, the cultural adjustment of the returnees on one side to the challenges of the local migrants to accept the returnees and expecting them to merge with the local socio-cultural demands. The present study in this context, utilizes descriptive & explanatory research designs, with a sample size of 100 out of which 50 were migrant laborers belonging to the unorganized sectors whereas 50 were engaged in jobs & services in the cities belonging to the organized sectors and conducted in Bargarh district which lies in the Western border of Odisha. The study is conducted on a purposive sample of migrants who

returned during the national lockdown to their home state of Odisha. The focus is on the push & pull factors responsible for reverse migration in western Odisha in Bargarh district and also to study the changed lifestyle of the reverse migrants. Few findings of the study show the reasons of return migration is mostly found to be harassment at work place for the respondents followed by unable to cope with urban lifestyle and family concerns and only 4 out of the respondents have been benefited by several govt. schemes in the migrated place compared to others. Women returnees are able to cope up with the society after their reverse migration whereas men are facing difficulties to cope up with the social life. The study highlights the employment avenues, education,

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Received	Reviewed	Accepted	Published
12-July-2025	27-Sept.-2025	22-Oct.-2025	01-Dec.-2025

Volume	Issue	December	ISSN
No. 7	No. 2	2025	2583-1852(P), 2584-0878(O)

How to Cite this Article: Mahapatra, Manosmita. Meher, Ritesh Ranjan; Understanding Reverse Migration in India: Implications and Emerging Challenges in Odisha. THE THIRD VOICE: REALITY AND VISION. 2025. Vol No-7. Issue No-2. December. Pp: 114-120, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19412077>.

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Quick Response Code:



Available online at :
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DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19412077>
Article No - TVRV00103

health facilities, utilization governmental schemes and the challenges of the return migrants.

Keywords : Return migration, push and pull factor, social capital, women migrants.

INTRODUCTION :

The socio-cultural vulnerability of reverse migration has often been neglected in India. Due to unemployment, poor living conditions, and health reasons, people often return to their place of origin, a process known as reverse migration. It became a visible phenomenon during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rural-to-urban migration is an important component of the urbanisation process, helping to explain people's movement within a particular area in response to changes in economic, political, and cultural factors (Singh, 1998). Income remittances contribute to absolute income (Stark and Taylor, 1991), providing an optimistic livelihood strategy (Rajan & Zachariah, 2022), and also reflect a desire for occupational status and social distance (Fan & Stark, 2011). The Research and Information System for Developing Countries reports that approximately 65 million interstate migrant workers are in India. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha are the major origin states, whereas Delhi, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu are the most important destination states preferred by migrant workers (Kamal, 2018). Job loss, fear of the coronavirus spreading, and lack of access to basic services were important drivers of reverse migration across the country (Mineketan Behera, 2020). The factors that largely contribute to reverse internal migration are regional discrimination, marriage, large family size, death of parents, the need to look after elderly parents, expensive education, recession, higher cost of living, cultural conflict and social rejection at times (in the new places), among others (Mohapatra and Jha, 2019). This COVID-19-triggered reverse migration which is the second-largest mass migration where there was a displacement of 14 million people (Inamdar & Thusoo, 2020).

The legal framework for migrants is inadequate. Internal migration causes stress for those moving from villages to cities, as they lose familiarity, language (including dialects), attitudes, values, social structures, and support networks, leading to cultural bereavement. This often results in conflicts with the multicultural environment in cities (Bhugra et al, 2014) and exposes regional discrimination at local elections, where politicians

tend to favour "locals" over outsiders (Bhavnani & Lacina, 2019). Increasing intolerance, economic disparities between countries, and climate change threats have worsened the situation. Returning migrant laborers have faced caste-based discrimination at quarantine centers (Asma Khan & H. Arokkiaraj, 2021), with low-income migrant workers suffering the most in this difficult context (Pandey, 2021).

Pant and Yadav (2025) found that the main reasons for reverse migration were government-implemented lockdowns, large job losses, shortages of food and health supplies, housing problems, fear of COVID-19 infection, and sudden homesickness generated by COVID-19. There were also challenges for government institutions, NGOs, and social groups in the state to facilitate efficient health services, housing, and food, and to create livelihood opportunities in villages that have experienced significant reverse migration.

A study conducted by Allard et al. (2022) shows that women fare worse, driven by both lower rates of remigration and lower rates of labour market re-entry, both within and outside home villages. Some women leave the labour force entirely, but most unemployed women report having sought or being available for work. In short, pandemic-induced labour market displacement has far-reaching, long-term consequences for migrant workers, especially women. Moreover, Filiz Kunuroglu (2016) again describes that the attitudes of majority members upon return have been noted as an important factor in the re-adaptation period leading remigrants to be able to 'feel at home' or 'not feeling belonged to the home country' after return and the differences in urban and rural cost of life lead the poor in urban areas to be financially burdened. The lower cost of living in rural areas is a motivating factor, as it encourages individuals to seek a better quality of life, such as better housing or more children (Kanai, 2016). Some returns migrations are even forced migration. On the contrary, Chakraborty and Mandal (2017) suggest that return migrants bring back accumulated human, social and financial capital, which can enable them to start their own businesses upon return, and benefit their village of origin. High savings brought back migration to positively influence the choice of becoming an entrepreneur after return. There are some losses of social networks for the people who migrate, but this loss of social networks for return migrants is compensated by the accumulation of human and physical capital.

TRENDS OF RETURN MIGRATION IN ODISHA

More than 5.43 lakh migrants have returned to Odisha to date during the COVID-19 pandemic, where it is observed that 1.75 million people migrated from Odisha to other states in 2023 due to distress. The sudden influx of return migrants demanded the attention of the local government owing to the immediate challenges of food, shelter, public health, securing livelihoods, sanitation, and social security in the unorganised sector. It became a burden for the local government to create income-generating opportunities through various schemes. The situation is worse in economically disadvantaged states, including Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha, which recorded heightened registrations under various governmental employment initiatives (Chauhan, 2020). A study on migrant workers, titled "Perception of returnee migrants on COVID-19 and its impact on social and migratory status," was carried out by the Centre of Excellence Regional Development and Tribal Studies at Sambalpur University. It revealed that 71% of return migrants from four districts in Western Odisha stated they would not migrate again if they had stable employment opportunities in Odisha. Another study by Parida (2015) on MGNREGS, rural employment, and distress migration in Odisha examined 400 households in Mayurbhanj and Jajpur districts. It found that while MGNREGS provided jobs, especially for landless and socially backward (SC/ST) households, there was a lack of inter-industry linkages within rural regions through this programme. Such linkages could create economic multipliers, offering sustainable rural employment and income to marginalized groups. Similarly, Swain & Padhi (2020) investigated economic activities for returning migrant workers, indicating that returnees in Odisha could be integrated into local economies through skill mapping and leveraging existing skills. This research helped policymakers in Odisha shift focus from transfer payments toward creating capital assets

Hence, migration & reverse migration has a great impacts on the socio-economic & political structure of the nation, it also results in the demographic change within the country. Both migration & reverse migration results in the fluctuations in the lifestyles of the migrated people. Both happen due to economic differences among the states & lack of proper policies for employment opportunities in several states of the country. Odisha is a state which is always known for its poverty & economic unrest. Especially the Western part

of the state is far away from the mainstream of development resulting in extreme poverty. Most of the people are willing to go outside in search of works as not much employment opportunities are available.

in this region. Lakhs of people are migrating to other states to work a labor force in different construction sites & factories. The era of COVID pandemic saw a large flow of human capital from other states to this region where Bargarh was a crucial district. The state government of Odisha identified 11 districts as migration prone during that period in which Bargarh ranks second. Hence Bargarh becomes a prominent area for the dwelling of the reverse migrants. Here reverse migrants belonging to 6 blocks of the district have been studied. The study becomes significant in this context.

METHODOLOGY

Taking descriptive & explanatory research designs, the study is conducted in Bargarh district which lies in the Western border of Odisha adjacent to Chhattisgarh is one of the prominent districts of the state with maximum return migrants. Bargarh district consists of 2 Sub-Divisions i.e. Bargarh & Padampur which are further divided into 6 Blocks each. Here the areas taken for the concerned study are 3 Blocks from Bargarh sub-division namely Bargarh, Barpali & Bhatli and 3 Blocks from Padampur sub-division namely Rajborasambar, Paikmal & Jharbandh. No matter this district has a great significance in the culture & tradition of Western Odisha, people are moving to other places due to lack of good opportunities. The objective of the study is to focus on the the push & pull factors responsible for reverse migration in western Odisha in Bargarh district and secondly, to study the changed lifestyle of the reverse migrants. The total sample size for the study was 100, of which 50 were migrant labourers in the unorganised sector, and 50 were employed in jobs and services in the organised sector. Out of the 50 migrant labourers, the sample consists of 25 males and 25 females. The remainder is further divided into segments. Out of the remaining 50 respondents, 30 were engaged in government services, of which 15 men and 15 women were studied. Out of the rest 20 respondents; 10 (5 men & 5 women) used to work in the corporate sector whereas 10 (5 men & 5 women) used to work in other private organizations. The study utilizes purposive sampling as those people who have experienced reverse migration during the lockdown were only taken as respondents. The sample includes laborers from low skill and semi-skilled categories.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data were collected from 100 respondents who had migrated from various parts of the country to the Bargarh district, where they originally belong, and had returned for several reasons. Many of them have come back under certain circumstance while many of them have returned back by their own choice. Some of them are compelled to go back while some of them find better opportunity if they come back to their native places. Every migrant has a different reason & a different story behind his/ her reverse migrant. Both the men & women are taken into consideration while conducting the study where the women have separate reasons for coming back. Most of them have migrated just to stay with their husbands and have come back to again cooperate in the household works. All the reasons of migrations & reverse migrations are thoroughly studied in this paper and are analyzed based on the information gathered from them. The socio-economic distribution of respondent’s shows that majority of respondents belong to the middle age group. All are Hindus and 22 people out of the 100 respondents taken into consideration for the study belong to the general category. Also 29 from the OBC category, 33 SCs & 16 STs have been studied in this paper. As both men & women contribute in the economy of the nation and both of them have great importance in migration, 50 men & 50 women have been studied in this so that the gender perspective can be studied. Time spent in the migrated place of the respondents shows 10 reverse migrants amongst my respondents have spent less than 5 years at their migrated place; 8 have spent 5-10 years, 12 have stayed there for nearly 11-15 years; 8 have lived for 16-20 years, 18 people for 20-25 years, 16 respondents for 25-30 years and 28 people have spent more than 30 years after they had migrated to another place. The duration of time spend after migration reveals 63 respondents out of 100 taken, have stayed less than 5 years in their respective native villages after their reverse migration whereas 31 have been living for 5-10 years & 6migrants have been staying for 11-15 years after coming back from the migrated place.

In relation to period of duration spent in migrated place, 28 percent of respondents have spent more than 30 year followed by 18 percent for more than 20 years. However minimum is 10 years. With regard to duration of time spent after reverse migration, 63 respondents out of 100 taken, have stayed less than 5 years in their respective native villages after their reverse migration whereas 31 have been living for 5-10 years & six

migrants have been staying for 11-15 years after coming back from the migrated place. The people who have migrated are seen to have many reasons where majority are found to have unemployment as reason followed by transfer in job, better employment opportunity and health and education facilities. Saheb , 2025 has studied on how communities are rebuild in the context of employment sustainability. However, the reasons of return migration is mostly found to be harassment at work place for the respondents followed by unable to cope with urban lifestyle and family concerns. The respondents in their migrated place had occupation of laborer followed by Government and private job. After reverse migration they were again found to enroll in laborer occupation followed by one fourth of the respondents engaged in agriculture, business and enterprises. Recent studies also discusses the challenges of the post COVID economy reintegration and redirection of human capital of labouramong reverse migrants (Khan and Arokkiaraj, 2021)

Challenges and implications in Odisha: With regard to the satisfaction level among the reverse migrants with their life after they have come back to their villages. Out of the 100 reverse migrants 18 are highly satisfied after they have come back whereas 14 are somehow satisfied with the changes coming in their lives and 38 people do not have a clear cut opinion so far as the satisfaction level is concerned. There are various challenges that are faced by the respondent at the migrated place which includes sanitation problem and poverty with slum life in most of the cases followed by insecurity (42%) and discrimination (36%). However, challenges faced by the respondents in reverse migration were mostly change in lifestyle, lack of urban facilities followed by lack of healthcare and education.

Table 1. Shows the distribution of respondents on the opinion of challenges after reverse migration.

Indicators of challenges	High	Average	Low	Total
Unemployment	16	10	06	32
Lack of Urban facilities	08	36	18	62
Poverty	22	07	13	42
Lack of Healthcare & Education	22	27	09	58
Change in Lifestyle	42	24	18	84
Others	04	05	03	12

Source: Field survey

Studies conducted by(Khan and Arokkiaraj, 2021) reveals similar results of migrants experiencing stigmatization, hostility and discrimination which relates to social security and social mobility challenges. The reverse migration has brought some benefits with it. Out of the 100 respondents, 28 told that they got better employment opportunities while 29 saw growth in their annual income after reverse migration. In a study by Saheb (2025) shows how reverse migration can revitalize rural communities by generating long-term employment opportunities where rural communities can harness the potential of returning migrants in post pandemic. It has led to the growth of local industry and encouraged entrepreneurship. Also 87 people are happy to be capable of living in their own culture & enjoying their original lifestyle. But on the contrary, only 4 people say that they have got better educational & health care facilities after coming back to their native places as their villages are adjacent to the towns and the places where they used to live before were distant from the urban bodies. Also 8 people are experiencing better lifestyle after coming back to their native places. Moreover, 92 reverse migrants are happy to be living with their own family. Besides all these, 12 people have got different other benefits & advantages after coming back from the big cities.

Table 2. Shows the distribution of respondents on the opinion of benefits after reverse migration.

Indicators of advantages	No. of respondents	Percentage
Better Employment	28	28
Increase in Income	29	29
Living in own culture & lifestyle	87	86
Better Education & health facilities	04	04
Better lifestyle	08	08
Able to live with own family	92	92
Others	12	12
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey

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Source: Field survey

The occupations of almost all the reverse migrants have changed after they have come back from the big cities. Also the retired personnel are getting less income as they are no more receiving their complete salary and are getting pensions only which are again half of the salary they used to get during their service tenure. Many of the returnees are also found to be unemployed as they have lost their jobs during the lockdown and are struggling a lot right now. These people contribute to the lowering of the income. Out of the 100 respondents it is seen the annual income of 29 respondents have increased whereas the same of 71

respondents have been lessened. On the other hand many people have found better employment opportunities where they are earning more than before. However, only 4 out of the respondents have been benefited by several govt. schemes in the migrated place whereas the rest haven't been benefited. This shows how the migrants have been neglected at the migrated place and how they are facing problems. On the other hand, 81 out of my 100 respondents have been benefited by several government schemes after they have come back to their respective native places. Only 19 respondents have not got any government benefits. The coping strategy in reverse migration depicts 62 people are able to cope up with the society after their reverse migration while 34 are facing difficulties to cope up with the social life they are experiencing in the villages. But gradually they are trying to adapt the rural lifestyle as they have been habituated with the urban lifestyle for many years.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the factors that prompt rural residents to migrate to urban areas and subsequently return to their villages. Many people are moving to cities in search of employment, better education and healthcare facilities, an upgraded lifestyle, and other reasons. However, several factors compel them to return to their origins. A significant change in their socioeconomic and cultural lives is evident after they return to their homes. This leads to a number of troubles faced by them while living with their near & dear ones. Also, reverse migration could destroy India's tribal communities, largely concentrated in ten states and in the North-Eastern region. Several steps can be taken by the government and private bodies to address the issue and provide a permanent solution. On the other hand we can also find the people who reverse back intentionally are definitely happier than before. Because they have either got better opportunity or they have grown their own startups & have been service providers instead of service holders. Although the study has incorporated a gender dimension into the analysis of return-migration experiences, future research could include a caste or class analysis of these experiences.

The paper suggests few solutions and recommendations to mitigate the challenges of reverse migration in Odisha. As the entire life style is changing with different place, language, constant traveling, food habits & the social life of different places, all these happen due to concentration of corporate & industries in the big cities and non-availability of good employment

opportunities in rural areas. This can be overcome if employment opportunities can be diversified and become available in the rural areas and small towns. Also people need to change their mindset of running behind whatever job they get and should try to look for other employment opportunities. The governments should also inspire people and provide adequate facilities to them to become entrepreneurs and contribute towards the growth of the economy. When people lose their jobs in a large numbers like it happened in 2020, the governments should be keen on providing alternatives to those people who suffered the most, because such incidents make poor people even poorer and leads to the distance between the rich & the poor affecting the smooth progress of the nation. Such efforts are taken by the Government of Odisha where it has launched the OIMS portal so entrepreneurs can apply online for incentives under policies for IT/Electronics, data centres, BPO, semiconductor manufacturing etc, PM Vishwakarma scheme for traditional artisans, Swayam Scheme (Odisha Swayam Yojana) for setting up micro / small enterprises suited to local skills and Odisha Startup Growth Fund (OSGF) etc. Hence steps should be taken from all the stakeholders like the government, private partners, NGOs, Corporate giants & finally the people to overcome this issue.

FUNDING :

The authors received no financial support for this "research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

COMPETING INTEREST :

The authors declare no competing interests.

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Artificial Intelligence in Human Resource Management: Implications for Multidiversity and Inclusive Workforce Practice

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ABSTRACT

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Human Resource Management (HRM) is transforming organizational decision-making and workforce practices. At the same time, organizations face increasing expectations to promote multidiversity and inclusion in the workplace. While AI-enabled HR systems promise efficiency, objectivity, and data-driven insights, they also raise concerns regarding algorithmic bias, transparency, and fairness. This article critically examines the implications of AI in HRM for multidiversity and inclusive workforce practice. Drawing on socio-technical systems theory, institutional theory, and organizational justice theory, the article develops a conceptual framework explaining how AI-enabled HR processes can either enhance or undermine inclusion outcomes. The analysis explores AI applications across key HR functions—recruitment and selection, performance management, learning and development, and employee engagement—and highlights associated risks and opportunities for diverse employee groups. The article further discusses managerial and governance mechanisms necessary to ensure responsible and inclusive AI adoption in HRM. By integrating diversity and inclusion considerations into the discourse on AI-enabled HRM, this study contributes to theory and practice by offering a structured foundation for future research and guiding organizations toward ethically grounded, inclusive workforce strategies.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, human resource management, multidiversity, inclusion, algorithmic bias, ethical HRM

INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a defining feature of contemporary organizational transformation, reshaping how decisions are made, work is organized, and employees are managed. Within Human Resource Management (HRM), AI technologies are increasingly deployed to automate administrative tasks, support strategic decision-making, and enhance workforce analytics. Applications such as algorithmic recruitment, predictive performance analytics, chatbots, and personalized learning platforms are now commonplace in many organizations (Marler & Boudreau, 2017).

ACCESS THIS ARTICLE ONLINE	
Quick Response Code: 	Available online at : thirdvoice.voiceforvoiceless.in DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19412121 Article No - TVRV00104

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Received	Reviewed	Accepted	Published
18-July-2025	27-Sept.-2025	22-Oct.-2025	01-Dec.-2025
Volume	Issue	December	ISSN
No. 6	No. 2	2025	2583-1852(P), 2584-0878(O)
How to Cite this Article: Bhola, Bandita; Artificial Intelligence in Human Resource Management: Implications for Multidiversity and Inclusive Workforce Practice. THE THIRD VOICE REALITY AND VISION. 2025. Vol No-7. Issue No-2. December. Pp:121-124, DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19412121 .			

Parallel to these technological developments, organizations are under mounting pressure from governments, stakeholders, and society to foster multidiversity and inclusion within the workforce. Multidiversity refers to the recognition of multiple, intersecting dimensions of difference, including but not limited to gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, neurodiversity, and socio-economic background (Roberson, 2019). Inclusion extends beyond representation to encompass fairness, belonging, voice, and equitable access to opportunities (Shore et al., 2018).

The convergence of AI adoption and diversity management presents a critical paradox. On one hand, AI systems are often promoted as tools for reducing human bias and increasing objectivity in HR decision-making. On the other hand, growing evidence suggests that AI systems may reproduce or amplify existing inequalities when trained on biased data or deployed without adequate oversight (O’Neil, 2016). As HR decisions directly affect individuals’ careers, identities, and economic security, the implications of AI for inclusive workforce practice warrant rigorous scholarly attention.

Despite a growing body of research on AI in HRM, limited attention has been paid to its implications for multidiversity and inclusion from a theoretical and integrative perspective. This article addresses this gap by developing a conceptual framework that links AI-enabled HRM practices to inclusive workforce outcomes. Specifically, the article seeks to:

conceptualize AI applications in HRM through a diversity and inclusion lens;

propose a theory-driven framework explaining how AI influences inclusive outcomes;

analyze key HR applications of AI and their implications for multidiversity; and

identify managerial and governance mechanisms necessary for responsible AI-enabled HRM.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

AI in HRM encompasses a range of technologies capable of simulating human cognitive functions such as learning, reasoning, and pattern recognition (Russell & Norvig, 2021). In organizational contexts, AI systems are used to automate repetitive

tasks, augment managerial decision-making, and generate predictive insights about workforce behavior.

Scholars distinguish between automation-oriented, augmentation-oriented, and decision-oriented AI applications in HRM (Jarrahi, 2018). While automation-oriented AI focuses on efficiency, decision-oriented systems have greater implications for fairness and inclusion because they directly influence hiring, promotion, and termination outcomes. Consequently, AI adoption in HRM raises unique ethical and social concerns compared to other functional domains.

MULTIDIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE PRACTICE

Traditional diversity research focused primarily on demographic representation. More recent scholarship emphasizes multidiversity and intersectionality, recognizing that individuals experience organizational systems differently based on overlapping identities (Roberson, 2019). Inclusive workforce practice aims to ensure that organizational policies, cultures, and practices enable full participation for all employees.

From an HRM perspective, inclusion is closely linked to perceptions of organizational justice, fairness, and respect. Empirical studies show that inclusive HR practices are associated with higher employee engagement, innovation, and organizational performance (Shore et al., 2018). However, inclusion is difficult to institutionalize and may be undermined by opaque or unaccountable technological systems.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

This article draws on three theoretical perspectives to examine AI-enabled inclusive HRM.

First, *socio-technical systems theory* emphasizes that technological outcomes are shaped by interactions between technical systems and social structures. AI systems embedded in HRM reflect organizational values, power relations, and design choices rather than neutral technological logic (Trist & Bamforth, 1951).

Second, *institutional theory* suggests that organizations adopt AI-driven HR practices in response to normative and competitive pressures. While such pressures encourage efficiency and innovation, they may

also lead to symbolic adoption of AI without adequate consideration of diversity and inclusion (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Third, *organizational justice theory* highlights the importance of fairness perceptions in shaping employee reactions to HR decisions. AI-mediated decisions influence procedural and distributive justice perceptions, particularly when decision logic is opaque or unchallengeable (Colquitt et al., 2013).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: A THEORY OF CHANGE

Building on these perspectives, the article proposes a theory of change linking AI-enabled HRM to inclusive workforce outcomes. The framework conceptualizes AI as an input that interacts with organizational policies, ethical principles, and governance structures. These inputs shape AI-supported HR processes, which are mediated by transparency, human oversight, and employee participation. Inclusive outcomes—such as equitable representation, reduced bias, and enhanced belonging—are contingent upon these mediating factors rather than AI adoption alone.

AI APPLICATIONS IN HRM AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MULTIDIVERSITY

Recruitment and Selection

AI-driven recruitment tools are widely used for resume screening, candidate ranking, and interview analysis. These systems may enhance inclusion by expanding talent pools and focusing on skills rather than credentials. However, studies demonstrate that algorithmic recruitment can reproduce historical discrimination if training data reflect biased hiring practices (Bogen & Rieke, 2018).

Intersectional biases are particularly problematic when AI systems disadvantage candidates at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities. Inclusive recruitment therefore requires continuous auditing, diverse training datasets, and human review of algorithmic decisions.

Performance Management

AI-enabled performance management systems rely on continuous data collection and predictive analytics. While these systems may reduce evaluator bias, they risk privileging measurable outputs over relational or contextual contributions. Employees engaged in caregiving, accommodation, or diversity-

related labor may be disadvantaged if such work is not captured by performance metrics.

Learning and Development

AI-powered learning platforms support personalized and adaptive training pathways. These technologies can enhance inclusion by addressing diverse learning needs and improving access to development opportunities. However, algorithmic assumptions about career trajectories may reinforce dominant norms if not aligned with inclusive talent strategies.

Employee Engagement and Well-being

AI tools used for sentiment analysis and well-being monitoring can identify disengagement or burnout trends among diverse employee groups. Nevertheless, concerns regarding surveillance, consent, and data privacy disproportionately affect marginalized employees, necessitating clear ethical boundaries.

MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

Ethical and Legal Governance

Responsible AI use in HRM requires alignment with ethical principles such as fairness, transparency, explainability, and accountability. Legal frameworks related to equal employment opportunity and data protection impose obligations on organizations to prevent discrimination and protect employee rights.

Role of HR Leaders

HR leaders must develop AI literacy and act as ethical stewards of technology. This includes collaborating with data scientists, embedding inclusion criteria into system design, and ensuring that AI complements rather than replaces human judgment.

Participatory Design and Continuous Evaluation

Inclusive AI adoption benefits from participatory design approaches that involve diverse stakeholders. Ongoing audits and feedback mechanisms are essential to identify unintended consequences and adapt systems over time.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This article highlights the dual role of AI as both an enabler and a risk factor for inclusive workforce practice. While AI offers tools for identifying and

addressing inequities, its effectiveness depends on organizational intent, governance, and ethical commitment.

Future research should empirically examine how AI-enabled HRM affects diverse employee groups across contexts, explore cross-cultural differences in algorithmic fairness perceptions, and develop standardized metrics for inclusive AI performance.

CONCLUSION

AI is reshaping HRM in ways that profoundly affect workforce diversity and inclusion. This article argues that AI does not inherently promote or hinder inclusion; rather, outcomes depend on how technologies are designed, governed, and integrated into HR practices. By adopting a theory-driven and ethically grounded approach, organizations can leverage AI to support multidiversity while safeguarding fairness, dignity, and trust. Inclusive AI-enabled HRM is therefore not only a strategic imperative but also a social and moral responsibility.

FUNDING

The authors received no financial support for this research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

COMPETING INTEREST

The author declare no competing interests.

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S. Jaishankar, Why Bharat Matters

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ABSTRACT

The book is an insightful and a cogent examination of Bharat's increasing global prominence and the crafting of its foreign policy is explained in the book titled Why Bharat Matters: Dr. S. Jaishankar. It is a book in which the turn to a more realistic mode of thought that is characterized by interest post 2014 rather than a past idealism is evident. The book is a compilation of eleven interconnected essays, where each essay explains the countries position in the world in a simple manner. Using diplomacy, world politics, history, philosophy, and his own life, he gives a powerful and clear vision of India that is not afraid to secure its position in the world among many great countries in these essays. Even cross-cultural amalgamation of civilizational wisdom is present in this book: The philosophy of statecraft of the period of The Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Arthashastra of Kautilya with the present day statecraft within the frame of Bharat, both ancient and modern, a world powerhouse. It can be the way India treats China, it can be a reconsideration of past decisions, it can be the changing of the security paradigm, but always with the understanding that the foreign policy will be beneficial to the Indian people in a concrete way. It is an artwork that brings to focus developing trust and duties of India to establish a more inclusive and equal world order. It is a wise and strategic vision of the new relationship of India with the rest of the world and a reflection on how Indian foreign policy has become more proactive, realistic and nationalist today than it was yesterday as being reactive and idealistically minded. It represents the shift in the previous decades when India saw the world mostly through the prism of the postulates of sovereignty and freedom and the equality of countries into the situation where India views the world through the prism of its own interests, values, and vision of the multipolar and equitable international order.

Key word: *Bharat Matters, Global Prominence, Countries Position, Statecraft, International Order, Indian People*

The book is an insightful and a cogent examination of Bharat's increasing global prominence and the crafting of its foreign policy is explained in the book titled Why Bharat Matters: Dr. S. Jaishankar. It is a book in which the turn to a more realistic mode of thought that is characterized by interest post 2014 rather than a past idealism is evident. The book is a compilation of eleven interconnected essays, where each essay

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Received	Reviewed	Accepted	Published
02-July-2025	27-Sept.-2025	22-Oct.-2025	01-Dec.-2025

Volume	Issue	December	ISSN
No. 7	No. 2	2025	2583-1852(P), 2584-0878(O)

How to Cite this Article : Kashyap, Deepak Kumar. S. Jaishankar, Why Bharat Matters. THE THIRD VOICE: REALITY AND VISION. 2025. Vol No-7. Issue No-2. December. Pp: 125-128, DOI:<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19412165>

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DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19412165>
Article No - TVRV00105

explains the countries position in the world in a simple manner. Using diplomacy, world politics, history, philosophy, and his own life, he gives a powerful and clear vision of India that is not afraid to secure its position in the world among many great countries in these essays. Even cross-cultural amalgamation of civilizational wisdom is present in this book: The philosophy of statecraft of the period of The Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Arthashastra of Kautilya with the present day statecraft within the frame of Bharat, both ancient and modern, a world powerhouse. It can be the way India treats China, it can be a reconsideration of past decisions, it can be the changing of the security paradigm, but always with the understanding that the foreign policy will be beneficial to the Indian people in a concrete way. It is an artwork that brings to focus developing trust and duties of India to establish a more inclusive and equal world order. It is a wise and strategic vision of the new relationship of India with the rest of the world and a reflection on how Indian foreign policy has become more proactive, realistic and nationalist today than it was yesterday as being reactive and idealistically minded. It represents the shift in the previous decades when India saw the world mostly through the prism of the postulates of sovereignty and freedom and the equality of countries into the situation where India views the world through the prism of its own interests, values, and vision of the multipolar and equitable international order.

The foreign policy of India under the leadership of PM Modi has changed its idealist and symbolic nature of diplomacy to a practical interest based policy with strategic clarity. This is reflected in five major world tendencies of globalization, power redistribution, multipolarity, technological revolution and increased geopolitical rivalry. India has assumed a prudent policy of engagement not only with major powers such as the US, China, Russia, Japan and the EU, but also to regional neighbors and the Global South. Foreign policy is no longer viewed as an object alien to the civilizational ethos within India; ideals such as Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam are being intertwined with pragmatism and hardheaded strategic thinking to establish a confident and self-assertive global image. Diplomacy

is not an abstract notion as it was before, it is now actually being fulfilled through operations such as the Vande Bharat Mission and Operation Kaveri that brought back home country nationals into the country: So also is the use of military deterrence (Balakot and Uri) to indicate that the defence relationship between India and the world super powers is as strategic as possible. Foreign policy has ceased to be merely the question of international prestige, indeed the main objectives of security, opportunity and national honor in all Indians. It is equally an indication of the new status of India in the global system where its ability to get its own way is manifested in the abrogation of 370 and its presidency in such forums as G20, etc. Concerning Indian diplomacy it has also responded to the weaknesses of globalization. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed how overdependent on global supply chains has been, and challenging relations with China. It has been translated into national fortitude and tactical self-sufficiency expressed in endeavors such as Aatma Nirbhar Bharat via the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). Act East and SAGAR announce the growing regional implications of the Indo-Pacific; strategic affiliation with the West Asian states and growing connectivity initiatives project a future-focused foreign policy with strong national roots perceived as the key prelude to an effective integration into the world. The other source of Indian foreign policy is its multi-vector diplomacy. India is not only creating new global constituencies, but also deepening relationships with old friends. It is already positively contributing to forums such as BRICS and BIMSTEC not to become just like any bloc but to develop bridges and inclusive global management. This country has the predisposition to become a leader and a partner on common values and address maritime security, infrastructure stability and technological strength of the Indo-Pacific and its role in restoring QUAD alongside the US, Japan and Australia. Similarly, the China policy towards India has also transformed to the metamorphosis into idealism in the historical past to the realism with reference to certain past incidences such as the Galwan clash, the diplomacy has also changed to idealism with the understanding of mutual respect, sensitivity and interests. After all, the rise of India as a global superpower is being packaged in the visual of Bharat -

a civilizational power with ancient writ and global strategic imagination. India does not interact with the world on the basis of episodic response to crisis, but rather on the basis of breakthroughs in science like Chandrayaan-3 or in humanitarian matters like Vaccine Maitri. Nowadays India is not only trying to win the position in the world but actually making an impact on the world with its culture, democratic principles and freedom of choice. Because of the change in the character of international relation and the transference to national security concerns and international objective this has been succeeded by more realistic and forceful pattern of behaviour in international relations.

Further, the illustration of the applicability of foreign policy to the common people is the most important contribution towards this book. Showing some of the realities behind certain of these events, such as the Vande Bharat Mission and Indian response to external threat, the author opens our eyes to the power of diplomacy to shape our daily lives in terms of security, possibilities, and national pride. In addition, the book also places significant emphasis on foreign policy which is congruent with the civilizational identity, and long-run national objectives. It is supposed to represent India as a growing power, but also as a responsible player in the world, a multi-polar India with an inclusive approach to development and cooperation. Though this book is a powerful and authoritative overview of the history of foreign policy in India, it has its weaknesses. Much of the book talks about the achievements and reforms already attained by the present government, and does not talk about what the earlier governments did or the problems that they had. Although much of their policy including Look East or strategic autonomy may have roots in earlier policies, they viewed Turbulent transition as their beginning. Another shortcoming is the shocking and complete absence of critical interaction with other views, and other ways of thinking about foreign policy. The book sweeps under the carpet the flack that India has faced regarding its handling of contentious topics like the border row with China, the blowback on the international stage regarding the abrogation of Article 370 or problems in balancing its relations with the US and Russia under the pressure of global conflict. This

book is also more generally thematic than policy analysis. This is less burdensome to read, but it will not satisfy the reader who has gone to the trouble of reading detailed case-studies, diplomatic history or filler-tales.

Though it is a book about the culture of India and is therefore more elaborated, it still appears an account of the role of India in the world which is too idealistic when we simply do not mention the domestic problem which gives it the wrong image in the outer world. India has become a confident member of the world community, balancing relations with the major powers as well as enhancing regional connections and expanding international contacts. Through the book we have a clue about gaining prominence across the world in organisations such as the G20 and QUAD, India trying to help the rest of the world and how the country is of strong stance on issues relating to national security and economic realise independence. It also associates these actions to the long and rich Indian culture history. The book ends with a bold vision of India in the decades to come and the world-beating superpower it will be by 2030 - one built on subtle diplomacy, alliances, and development across the board. It carries a medium paradigm of custom and innovation to a compound and multipolar world that prize might, duty and the old custom Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam which proclaim faith and cooperation with the similarities of the world as the postulates of world leadership. The book attempts to bust the Western dominated mindsets, supports the idea of strategic independence and consequently the Indians right to take decisions without Western influence in light of their interests and provides a realistic interest-based take on issues in world politics. But this book demonstrates an Indian way and demonstrates global role of India in the global level. Furthermore, this book also highlights the role of India can potentially fulfill in the international scene absorbing the civilizational values of an epic such as Mahabharata and examining the decision Krishna's choice makes when confronted with a dilemma such as the tariff proposed by Trump. In short, this book offers the goals of India on a grander scale, it contains the worldview, and it has the solutions to the problems of the world written in the ethos of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.

FUNDING :

The authors received no financial support for this“research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

COMPETING INTEREST :

The author declare no competing interests.

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THE THIRD VOICE: REALITY AND VISION

ISSN-2583-1852 (P)
ISSN-2584-0878 (O)

VOL. NO.-7

ISSUE NO.-2

DECEMBER 2025

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The Third Voice Reality and Vision is the official journal of the Centre for Third Voice Studies is published half yearly. All the members of the association are entitled to receive a free copy of the journal. The subscription rates for others are as follows:

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