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*   MEA (Ministry of External Affairs). 2004. Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, 'India's System of Controls over Exports of Strategic Goods and Technology', 1 August, accessed on 2 August 2007 from *http://mea.gov.in/disarmament/01da02.htm.*
*   Rice, Condoleezza. 2006. 'Our Opportunity with India', *The Washington Post*, 13 March: A15.
*   *UNSC (United Nations Security Council). 2004. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) on Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction [S/RES/1540 (2004)], adopted by the Security Council at its 4956th meeting on 28 April 2004, accessed fromhttp:// daccessdds.un .org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N04/328/43/PDF/N0432843.pdf (accessed on 25 March 2005).*
*   Waldman, Amy. 2004. 'Indians in Deal with Pakistanis for Peace Talks', *The New York Times*, 7 January, accessed from *http://query.nytimes.com/ gst/fullpage. html?res= 9D05EEDE10 31F93 4A35 752C0A9629C8B6* (accessed on 8 November 2007).
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     . 2007c. 'Benazir says Two Attackers in Deadly Homecoming Convoy', *Dawn*, 19 October, accessed from *http://www.dawn.com/2007/10/19/rss.htm* (accessed on 2 February 2008).
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Political Science Review

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Investment in the Infrastructure Sector by China, India and Japan in the South Asian Region: Drivers, Policies and Decision-Making Structures

Oinam Ghanashyam Khumancha[*]
Arun Vishwanathan[**]

Abstract

The twenty-first century has been described by many as the 'Asian Century' due to Asia's pre-eminent position in the world economy coupled with the fact that Asia accounts for more than half of the world's population. In order to fuel the continued growth of Asia and to fuel the Asian century, countries must have the requisite infrastructure to support their economic growth. However, developing such infrastructure requires a huge investment over the next few decades. According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) report on meeting Asia's infrastructure states that 'developing Asia will need to invest US\$26 trillion from 2016 to 2030, or \$1.7 trillion per year, if the region is to maintain its growth momentum, eradicate poverty, and respond to climate change (climate-adjusted estimate). Without climate change mitigation and adaptation costs, US\$22.6 trillion will be needed, or \$1.5 trillion per year (baseline estimate)'(Asian Development Bank 2017: vii). In this regard, the paper investigates role of China, India and Japan to develop infrastructure section in the South Asian Region.

Keywords: South Asian Region, Infrastructure Sector, Economic Development, Asian Century, China-India

Introduction

The twenty-first century has been described by many as the 'Asian Century' due to Asia's pre-eminent position in the world economy coupled with

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the fact that Asia accounts for more than half of the world's population (Jonathan Woetzel and Jeongmin Seong 2019). Geopolitical analyst Robert D. Kaplan gives more importance to the Indian Ocean Region and the South Asian region in particular describing it as the focal point of the 'Asian Century'(Robert D. Kaplan 2010).In order to fuel the continued growth of Asia and to fuel the Asian century, countries must have the requisite infrastructure to support their economic growthi. As David Alan Aschauer explains, infrastructure improves the quality of life and enhances economic output(David Alan Aschauer 1989).

However, developing such infrastructure requires a huge investment over the next few decades. According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) report on meeting Asia's infrastructure states that 'developing Asia will need to invest US$26 trillion from 2016 to 2030, or $1.7 trillion per year, if the region is to maintain its growth momentum, eradicate poverty, and respond to climate change (climate-adjusted estimate). Without climate change mitigation and adaptation costs, US$22.6 trillion will be needed, or $1.5 trillion per year (baseline estimate)'(Asian Development Bank 2017: vii).

Mr. Kohei Toyoda, Director for International Coordination, Trade Policy Bureau, Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) - quoting the Asian Development Bank (ADB)–estimates that Asia requires US$26 trillion worth of investment in the infrastructure sector during the period 2016 to 2030. In the region, only US$ 15.6 trillion worth of investment is made therefore creating a demand-supply gap of more than US$ 10.4 trillion or an average annual gap of about US$ 660 billion between the required investment and actual investment. The McKinsey Global Institute estimates that between 2016 and 2030, Asia would require an estimated investment of US$ 49.5 trillion into the infrastructure sector alone. As opposed to this requirement, about US$ 37.5 trillion can be invested therefore leaving a shortfall of US$ 12 trillion and an annual shortfall of about US$ 800 billion in infrastructure investment (Kohei Toyoda 2019).

Table 1: Infrastructure Investment Gap in Asia, 25 Developing Member Countries of ADB

Countries	Estimated Current Investment (2015)	Projected Values (2016-2020)	
		Future Annual Needs	Gap (%of GDP)
Total (25 Asian DMCs)	881	1,340	459 (2.4)
Total without PRC	195	503	308 (5.0)
PRC	686	837	151 (1.2)

Abbreviations: DMC-Developing Member Country (of Asian Development Bank), GDP-Gross Domestic Product, PRC= People's Republic of China. Notes: All figures in US $ billion in 2015 prices. Gap indicates actual

investment requirement vis a vis current investment (https://www.adb.org/sites/
default/files/publication/431261/swp057- financing-gap-asian-infrastructure.pdf)

Asian Development Bank (ADB) Working Paper No.57 suggests that
Developing Asian Countries need to invest around 8 percent of their GDP into the
infrastructure sector. However, most developing countries cannot invest such a
huge percentage of their GDP into the infrastructure sector. Table 2 highlights how
most countries in Asia, including the People's Republic of China, India, among
other developing economies, fall short of the ADB target of investing around 8
percent of their GDP into the infrastructure sector.

As Figure 1 shows, the People's Republic of China (PRC)invests around
6.8 percent of GDP, India is investing around 5.4, Bhutan approximately 6.6, Sri
Lanka around 4.1, Nepal about 2.6, Myanmar 2.5, while Pakistan is investing
around 2.4, and Bangladesh 1.8 percent of its GDP for development of
infrastructure (Ra and Li 2018: 4). As the ADB report states one of the reasons for
this shortfall is that the developing economies have multiple requirements for their
limited financial resources. The report estimates that the transportation sector
requires about US$ 600 billion per year, US$ 300 billion per year for the power
sector, while the Education sector outlay being about US$ 400 billion per year. In
addition to the multiple demands on limited finances, restrictions on debt
expansions, tax reform, and reallocation of fiscal spending further widen the gap
between the available funding and the actual investment required for expanding
infrastructure in the region. (Ra and Li 2018:5).

Figure 1: Required Investment and Current Investment by various countries (as % of Country's GDP)
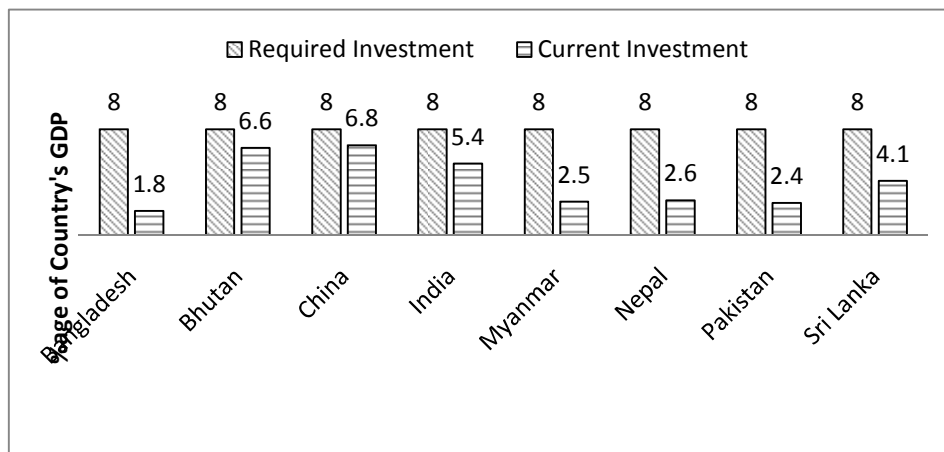
Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaking at the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank annual meet of 2008had highlighted this very real challenge for developing countries when he stated, 'As developing economies, we share similar challenges. One of them is to find resources for the provision of infrastructure'. Finding the resources required for building infrastructure is a significant challenge for developing states with developing economies especially given the large investment needed and multiple demands on their limited finances. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) feels that 'without a higher rate of investment, it would be harder for the long tail of developing economies to close the infrastructure gap or increase productivity'(AIIB 2020:9).In India about 354 projects face cost overruns with an average delay of 45 months. These projects, in turn, require additional funds to the tune of around INR 2.19 lakh crore (KPMG and PMI 2019: 11). In Pakistan, the situation is grimmer, with more than a thousand projects running into cost overruns and delays. Cost overruns and resultant overshooting of allocated budgeted funds is a familiar tale across many infrastructure projects in South Asia and major source of concern for authorities in the region.

Investment in the Infrastructure Sector by China, India and Japan in the South Asian region

In the recent past, China1, Japan, and India have been making large investments across Asia and mainly in South Asia, especially in the infrastructure sector. India has been investing through its Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC), by extending Lines of Credit (LoCs) providing grants. The Act East Policy,2 and Neigbourhood First Policy are important in New Delhi's efforts with the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region playing a pivotal role in tying up these overseas infrastructural projects to connecting India's North East region. China has been investing in foreign countries through its 'Go Global' policy and more recently through its 'One Belt One Road' now called the 'Belt and Road Initiative' which are part of China's 'Common Prosperity/ Development' policy. Japan has been supporting investments into the infrastructure sector through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Quality Infrastructure Initiative (QII), Official Development Assistance (ODA), and Free Open Indo-Pacific Region (FOIP) initiatives. India and Japan are also developing Asia-Africa Growth Corridor as an agency to invest in coastal countries of Asia and Africa, and also synergizing India's Act East policy and Japanese Quality Infrastructure Initiative.

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[1]   Here, China means the Peoples Republic of China at the main land excluding Republic of China (ROC) in Chinese Taipei.

[2]   Act East Policy was termed Look East Policy till 2014.

The growing push for investment in the infrastructure sector is more visible with the establishment of the China-led Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the BRICS-led New Development Bank (NDB); and rejuvenated activities of the Japan-led Asian Development Bank (ADB). These new institutions have essentially brought more financial muscle to support various countries or groups efforts to funding the ever growing infrastructure needs in Asia which were not being fully met by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). All these developments also point to the geo-political dynamics underpinning investment of infrastructure development in the region.

Table 2
Grants, Foreign Investment by Japan, China and India in South Asia1

Name of Country	Japan*			China ∞	India	
	Grants in US$ million (year)	Technical Cooperation (US$ million)	Loans (Number, ¥ Yen, US$)	Total Foreign Investment (US$ Billions)	Grants ® (% of India Total Grants)	Line of Credit/ Loans © (Number, US$ million)
Afghanistan	86.58-(2018) 116.46-(2019)	25.11- (2018) *15.04 - (2019)*	1 ¥ 0.7 billion $6.254 million (2018)/*0*	3.48-(2018)/*no changes*	9	0
Bangladesh	40.32-(2018) *54.86 - (2019)*	44.63- (2018) *106.40-(2019)*	118 ¥1546.4 billion $13.8 billion (2018) / *1.04 billion - (2019)*	26.61-(2018)/*28.85 - (2019)*	3	4 $7862-(2018)/*no changes*
Bhutan	16.43-(2018)/ *17.99-(2019)*	11.92-(2018)/ *9.59 - (2019)*	2 ¥5.8 billion $51 million (2018)/ *1.76 million - (2019)*	0/ *no changes*	61	0
Myanmar	135.96-(2018)/ *176.81-(2019)*	91.06-(2018)/ *80.24- (2019)*	94 ¥1136 billion $1.08 billion (2018)/ *496.57 million-(2019)*	8.21-(2018)/ *9.88- (2019)*	2	11 $678.90-(2018)/*53 9 - (2019)*
Nepal	28.25-(2018)/ *48.63-(2019)*	29.94-(2018)/ *17.45- (2019)*	13 ¥121.3 billion $1.08 billion (2018)/ *60.31 million-(2019)*	4.92-(2018)/ *2.93- (2019)*	5	4 $1650 - (2018)

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1   Table has been prepared by the authors from compiling information from multiple sources.

Pakistan	71.47-(2018)/ *57.75-(2019)*	20.99-(2018)/ *16.67- (2019)*	87 ¥817.5 billion $7.2 billion (2018)/ *- 208.95 million*(2019)	51.95 - (2018/ *64.97-(2019)*	0	0
Sri Lanka	26.28-(2018)/ *18.16-(2019)*	25.92-(2018)/ *12.32- (2019)*	133 ¥1086 billion $9.7 billion (2018)/*2.81 million* (2019)	15.47-(2018 / *14.82-(2019)*	7	10 $1215.88-(2018)/*14 29.5-(2019)*

Sources*: Data is available for all countries till 2018. Authors have updated till 2019 & 2020 wherever data is available. Annual Report Data Book.∞: American Enterprise Institute http://www.aei.org/china-global-investment-tracker/ Data as per on 29th October 2021.©: EXIM Bank of India https://www.eximbankindia.in/lines-of-credit-GOILOC.aspx.

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∞:   American Enterprise Institute http://www.aei.org/china-global-investment-tracker/

National Policies Guiding Overseas Infrastructure Investment

Peoples Republic of China

After the death of Mao Zedong, Peoples Republic of China (PRC) stopped supporting communist revolution in other countries. Deng Xiaoping's era showcased the development of 'Communism with Chinese characteristics' with movement towards market economy. In this period, China was not particularly keen to pursue overseas infrastructure investment. However, after 1999, China showed interest for overseas infrastructure investments which were broadly guided by the Chinese policy of Common Development/ Common Prosperity and more recently the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Chinese Policy of Common Development/Common Prosperity: This policy drives PRC from its founding days under Chairman Mao Zedong. Chinese statesmen like Deng Xiaoping had their own idea of Common Prosperity in 80s which Deng described in the following words,

> Common Prosperity is the process in which some people and regions are allowed to get rich and prosper first, which later in turn help other peoples and regions to prosper and developed, and this circle goes on till every people and regions got rich, prosper and developed(Yao 2021).

Current PRC President Xi Jinping also supports the policy of common prosperity. Han Wenxiu who is an officer in Chinese Central Financial and Economic Affairs Commission explains that the policy is not akin to "killing the rich to help the poor" but translates into, "those who get rich first should help those behind, but still hard work should be encouraged. Charity and donations should be encouraged through taxation policies and structure of wealth distribution should be improved; and but this charity or donation are not compulsory"(Crossley 2021).Authors like Hoo Tiang Boon and Charles Ardy argue that PRC's foreign policies towards small states or Belt and Road Initiative are based on the CCP's principle of 'common development'1where the economic resources are diverted to others to initiate the global development (connectivity's mechanisms, infrastructure buildings, Special Economic Zones) necessary to ensure one's own development (Hoo Tiang Boon and Charles Ardy 2017).

Go Global Policy/Going Global Strategy: China adopted this strategy in 1999, given its large foreign exchange reserves, thereby leveraging these reserves for better utilization in the international market and exercise influence over investment destination countries. In 2001, the policy was renamed as 'Go Global' by the Chinese Vice Premier Wu Bangguo at the Investment and Trade Fair in Xiamen City, Fujian Province(People's Daily 2001). It was initiated with the hope of projecting China as a global leader and to foster greater cooperation among countries. The policy carries the notions of investing resources to overseas, product diversification, improve qualities of products or projects, expand financial channels/markets, and promote brand values of Chinese companies. The 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI) and 'Capacitive Cooperation' are seen as a continuation of the Go Global Policy(China Policy 2017).

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): One of the direct descendent of the Go Global Policy is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which Chinese President Xi

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[1]   Read as common prosperity.

Jinping proposed in 2013. Its main purpose is inter-connectivity of transport which includes rails, roads, and ships and ports; information linkages as part of the Digital BRI which includes 5G and 6G networks, Chinese satellites and navigation capabilities, underwater cables, fiber optic internet cables across the world. This is in addition to investments to set up Special Economic Zones, investments in the energy sector like oil and gas pipelines, power stations of various kinds(China Policy 2017).

Capacitive Cooperation: The Chinese policy 'Capacity Cooperation' is also spawned off Beijing's 'Go Global' policy. The policy is promoted by both Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang, and aims to build partnerships between Chinese firms and other overseas firms as a means to improve quality and efficiency. The main focuses are on collaboration of integrated circuits, aerospace and aviation's, robotics, artificial intelligence, nuclear, high-speed rails, other major constructions, andfood security. This capacitive cooperation is scattered across the globe extending across Central America, South America and African countries(China Policy 2017).

Republic of India

Prior to the end of the Cold War and the move towards a unipolar world in the 1990s, India was more focused on other aspects of its foreign policy especially managing its relationship with the two superpowers and other important neighbouring countries. However, after 1990, India liberalised its economy and adopted a more interactive diplomacy with its surrounding countries in terms of trade and commerce, connectivity, cultural interactions, etc. with policies like Look East, working closely with the United Nations (UN) and other multilateral bodies. India stepped up its overseas infrastructure investment, like China did, in an attempt to become more proactive in regaining ground which India had lost to the Chinese in the region.

Act East Policy: The current Narendra Modi government's Act East Policy's genesis can be traced back to the 'Look East Policy', which started under the leadership of then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao and ran parallel to India's economic liberalisation, which began in 1991. The Look East Policy attempted to foster better economic and commercial ties, re-mending the old historic cultural and religious linkages, and deepen strategic and security cooperation with the Southeast Asian and Far East Asian region. Many observe this as part of India's initial 'strategic' steps to counter Chinese gains in the area. Under this policy, India has been part of the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

(BIMSTEC), and has participated in talks with the ASEAN+6, East Asia Summit, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, etc. Under this policy, India supports the UN's connectivity programs for an Asian Highway Network and Tran-Asian Railway(Chietigj Bajpaee 2007).

After the 2014 election, the newly elected Prime Minister Narendra Modi modified the 'Look East Policy' to 'Act East Policy'. The 'Act East Policy' is widely acknowledged by strategic experts and academics in as an Indian policy to counter growing Chinese influence in the region. According to the Ministry of External Affairs of India:

> The objective of Act East Policy is to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationship with countries in the Asia-Pacific region through continuous engagement at bilateral, regional and multilateral level there by providing enhanced connectivity to States of North Eastern Region including Arunachal Pradesh with other countries in our neighbourhood (Ministry of External Affairs 2015).

One of the important motivations behind the 'Look East' and 'Act East' policy is connecting India's North-East region with India's wider neighbourhood thereby providing better connectivity and access to markets for the entire region. It is with this wider objective in mind that the Indian government has invested in the neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Myanmar. These efforts compliment India's Act East Policy and Neighbourhood First Policy.

Neighbourhood First Policy: This policy was one of the first policies announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as soon as he was elected in 2014. As part of the policy, India sought to foster closer relations with its South Asian neighbours on trade and commerce, connectivity through various means, technology, research and development, education, environment and climate control, space program and defence security (Bhatnagar, Passi, and Observer Research Foundation 2016).This policy supported the existing multilateral efforts in the region and was complimentary to the Act East Policy. Professor Scott Lucas of University of Birmingham argues that India under Modi is focusing much on military and defence security elements of Neighbourhood First Policy which is confrontational rather than the collective approach focus on social elements(TRT 2021).

State of Japan/ Nihon-koku

Japan is first country among China and India to begin investing in overseas infrastructure projects after the end of the Second World War. Japan is also a member of the 'Development Assistance Committee' (DAC) of the

'Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development' (OECD) and is one of the largest overseas investors in the infrastructure sector. Japanese overseas infrastructure investment programs are guided by certain principles and policies which have evolved from time to meet Tokyo's changing investing needs.

New Growth Strategy: The Japanese 'New Growth Strategy' was launched in June 2010 giving emphasis on demand-led growth to foster a sound economy, healthy public finances, and a strong social security system. The strategy is comprised of seven growth engines and twenty-one strategic projects and outlines the following objectives for the national strategic projects:

'Make Japan a major player in export of infrastructure systems, strengthen the competitiveness of domestic firms by making Japanese standards global ones and increasing Japan's role as a content provider, and promote economic partnerships, particularly with Asian countries' (Randall S. Jones and Byungseo Yoo 2011).

The latest version of 'New Growth Strategy' purposed by Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) led by Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga focusses primarily on economic-security and geo-economics reflecting the great schism of neo-liberalism between the United States (US) and China(Japan times 2021).This policy has been described by some Japanese as being similar to Reiwa era's 'Fukoku Kyohei' strategy.[1]

Quality Infrastructure Investment (QII): Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced 'Partnership for Quality Infrastructure' on 21st May 2015 on the occasion of the 21stInternational Conference on the Future of Asia. Based on this partnership the Japanese Government endorsed the principle of 'Quality Infrastructure Investment' in association with other states, International organizations, and non-state-actors based on Public Private Partnership (PPP) model (MOFA 2015). On the basis of this QII, Japan's overseas infrastructure investment will focus on 'quality as well as quantity'. The Japanese policy has been enshrined in the following four pillars:

(1). Expansion and Acceleration of Assistance through the Full Mobilization of Japan's Economic Cooperation Tools", (2). Collaboration between Japan and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), (3). Measures to double the supply of funding with relatively high risk profiles by such means as the enhancement of

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[1] Fukoku Kyohei was strategy adopt in Meiji Era as part of Meiji Restoration to 'Enrich the Country, strengthen the Armed Forces' that makes Japan to an industrial power in colonial era.

the function of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation1 (JBIC), (4). Promoting Quality Infrastructure Investment as an international standard[2] (MOFA et al. 2015).

Free Open Indo-Pacific Region (FOIP): The policy of free and open Indo-Pacific region underlines the Japanese Government policy towards this region. Tokyo defines Free Open Indo Pacific Region (FOIP) as in the following words, *'international public goods though ensuring the rule-based international order attaching importance to ASEAN's centrality and unity, in order to bring stability and prosperity for every country as well as secure peace and prosperity in the region'*(MOFA 1 April 21). The three foundational principles of the policy are:

(1) Promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade, etc (2). Pursuit of economic prosperity (improving connectivity and strengthening economic partnership including EPA/FTAs and investment treaties) (3). Commitment for peace and stability (capacity building on maritime law enforcement, HA/DR cooperation, etc.).

Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) which is a major part of Japan's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) focuses on the promotion and establishment of rule of law and freedom of navigation as part of strengthening the FOIP agenda while making decisions about ODA as well as in pursuit of Japan's foreign relations with others state actors. The Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) which another major player in implementing Japan's ODA and JICA focuses on the second pillar of FOIP by *'providing support for international rule-making in the field of trade and individual projects that contribute to improving connectivity in the Indo-Pacific region'*(METI 2021). For Japan, currently the guiding principle of Japanese overseas infrastructure investment is FOIP which is also a guiding principle of Japan's Ministry of Defense. This shows the amalgamation of infrastructure development investment and geo-politics of Japan in the current era.

Drivers of Overseas Investment into the Infrastructure Sector

Security Drivers and Geopolitics: Security and geopolitics considerations are another important driver for all the three countries. China is trying to secure its routes of supply which drive its economy. In addition, the investment into the infrastructure abroad increases China's influence in these countries which is useful

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[1]   From the 3rd pillar the notions of PPP infrastructure model comes in.
[2]   The 4th pillar talks about Japan intention to lobby international bodies to adopt its standard.

for Beijing's effort to counter American sway over the region. Securing its energy supplies is an important geopolitical and national security objective for China especially given that large part of its supplies travel through chokepoints like the Malacca Strait. As a result, China has been making attempts to secure its energy supplies from alternative land routes. In this context, oil and gas pipelines from Myanmar are very crucial as Beijing is able to meet about 10 % of energy needs and cut the distance between source and destination of gas and oil by more than 4600 Kms (Topcu 2020).

Indian investment into its neighbouring nations like Myanmar and Bangladesh, provides India with the tools to secure their support for countering insurgent groups from the northeast who take shelter in these countries. In addition, as subsequent paragraphs will outline, there is twin motivations behind Indian investments in the region. Apart from assisting India's efforts in countering insurgent groups in the North Eastern part of India, they also help India follow through with its 'Act East' policy and economically integrate India's norther eastern region with the South East Asian countries

Though Japanese interests align with the American interest in many cases, Tokyo also views the investments into the region as an extra layer of security given the waning American interest in the region in recent times. Japan also views these investments as an effort to build up its support base on the international stage and in international organisations like the United Nations and its various agencies on issues of mutual/common interest.

*Economic Drivers:*One of the major factors which drive the investment by China, Japan and India into the infrastructure sector across Asia and the globe is the fact that these projects are instrumental in furthering their access to markets as well as much need raw materials or resources and sources of energy. An additional advantage for China is that it is able to utilise its vast foreign currency reserves for funding these projects and also utilise its state-owned enterprises for executing these projects.

*People's Republic of China:*The Belt and Road Initiative and other infrastructure investments across the region are important for China to be able to expand its influence and continue to support its economic growth by removing any possibilities or vulnerabilities for disruption of sources of energy and raw material in addition to ease of access to markets to sell its the products. Overseas investment into the infrastructure sector by building highways, railways lines, ports, and pipelines are meant to serve as arteries for China's continued economic rise. Similarly, ports in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan among

others are important in order to reduce dependency on the already congested Strait of Malacca and Strait of Singapore.

Continued economic growth is important for the Chinese state and the Communist Party given that it derives its legitimacy by ensuring high standards of living and economic growth that it has been able to deliver to a vast majority of the Chinese population. Investment in overseas infrastructure projects have an additional benefit that China is able to make use of its vast foreign currency reserves to fund the infrastructure projects across the globe which are in turn executed by Chinese firms, using Chinese technology and manpower in many cases.

Republic of India: As a developing country that almost skipped the production-based economy and directly went to services-based economy from agriculture-based economy; it is somewhat puzzling to find India investing in overseas infrastructure. Unlike both China and Japan, India doesn't have large currency reserves back up its spending in addition to the fact that there is a large domestic need for infrastructure that needs to be met.

However, investing in the infrastructure in foreign countries especially Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan Bangladesh is important for India given that the Indian mainland is connected to its North-eastern region through a just 20 kilometres wide corridor at Siliguri also known as the 'Chicken Neck'. This limits the connectivity and also the development of the region. India's infrastructure investment in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Myanmar are important in augmenting the connectivity and furthering the development of India's Northeast region. India's investments into infrastructure like ports, highways, railways, and river ways in these countries are also made with this goal in mind. In addition, the involvement of Indian companies and materials in such projects adds to the economic benefit of such projects.

State of Japan/ Nihon-koku: Investing in infrastructure projects abroad make sense for Japan for two reasons. Firstly, it allows Tokyo to utilise its large foreign currency reserves and second, it allows the Japanese economy which has been in long term recessing since the mid-1980s to engage in productive economic activity.

Current Status of Overseas Infrastructure projects in the South Asian region by China, Japan, and India between 2015-2022 (March)

This section provides an overview of the current status of Overseas Infrastructure Projects undertaken by China, Japan and India in the South Asian region, in general, and in particular in Myanmar, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. For giving focus to this section, the authors have narrowed down and focused only on

the transportation/connectivity and energy sectors and have focused on the period between 2015 to 2022.

Infrastructure Projects in Myanmar: In Myanmar, Japan and China are the leading infrastructure investors with four completed projects between 2015-2022. For Japan, Thilawa Port Expansion is an important project which was completed at cost of US$ 194 million (JICA 2018). In China's case, the Muse – Kyaukpyu Oil pipelines with project cost of US$ 1.5 billion (Yu 2021) is the most important project that has been completed in this time frame. On the other hand, India has been able to complete the Sittwe Port with an estimated cost of US$ 120 million (TimesofIndia 2011) and the Sitttwe seaport to Paletwa inland jetty river boat route (158 Km) and six Inland Water Transport crafts (Mizzima 2017) at total cost of US$ 150 million.

An analysis of the ongoing infrastructure projects in Myanmar shows that Japan is the leader in terms of the number of ongoing projects with seven (07) projects currently under development; Yangon-Mandalay railroad Line Improvement Project at a cost of US$ 2.7 billion (Swe 2020) and 1250 MW Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) fired Power Plant in Thilawa with project cost US$ 2 billion (Nitta and Tanaka 2020) are the two most important infrastructure projects being undertaken by Japan. The Chinese with five (05) ongoing projects is next in line. The major Chinese ongoing projects are Muse - Kyaukpyu speed railway (feasible study is at the last stage) with project cost of US$ 9 billion (Nan Lwin 2019) and Kyaukpyu Deep Sea Port with project cost of US$ 1.3 billion (ET Bureau 2021) are most important projects. In recent years, India has been catching up and currently is at par with China with 05 ongoing projects a part of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral highway at a cost of US$ 1 billion (ERIA 2020).

Infrastructure Projects in Bangladesh: In Bangladesh, during the 2015-2022 period (March), India has successfully one (01) projects, namely and the *Maitri Setu* (Friendship Bridge) with project cost of US$ 18 million (TheHindu 2021). With one (01) completed project each, Japan and China are also at same level. Japan has completed the Kanchpur 2nd, Meghna 2nd and Gumti 2nd bridges - a set of three bridges - with project cost of almost US$ 1 billion (thedailystar 2020). China has completed the Kalapara Power Station Phase 1 (Payra Thermal Power Station) of 1320MW at a cost of US$ 2 billion (DhakaTribune 2020).

Coming to the ongoing projects, Japan is leading with eleven (11) projects currently underway in Bangladesh. Prominent among them are the Matarbari Deep Sea Port and 1200 MW Matarbari Coal Power Station with a combined project cost of US$ 4.6 billion (ThedailyStar 2017). These two projects are the most

important projects Japan is currently working on in Bangladesh. India with ten (10) ongoing projects in second position in Bangladesh. The major among the Indian projects being, Maitree Super Thermal Power Project (1320 MW) with project cost of USD 1.6 billion (Financialexpress 2022) and the Agartala-Akhaura railway line at a cost of US$ 133.25 million (TOI 2022). Interestingly, in Bangladesh, though in the past, China has been involved in a major way in infrastructure developments in Bangaldesh, in the period under study, it is trailing both Japan and India purely in terms of number of ongoing projects. China is currently involving in eight (08) projects. It is a point to note that two of the projects though being carried out by Chinese companies, are in fact funded by India. These are the Mongla Port facilities upgradation and the Payra Deep Sea Port. The other important Chinese projects are the *Padma* bridge with project cost of USD 4 billion (RFA 2020), the Kalapara Power Station Phase 2 with project cost of USD 2 billion and the project to strengthen the country's power grid at a cost of USD 1.4 billion (BCPCL n.d.).

Infrastructure Projects in Sri Lanka: Japan and China are leading country in Sri Lanka with four (04) completed projects each. For Japan, the major projects are the Solar and Wind Power Prediction 8 points (JWA 2021) and the New Kelani Bridge with project cost of USD 207 million (JICA 2021). In China's case, the Moraghakanda Reservoir Headwork project being carried out a project cost of USD 370 million (Newsfirst 2018) and Priority Road Project II with project cost of USD 556 million are Beijing's main projects. India has completed only one (01) project in the time frame which is the Modernisation of Sri Lankan Railway with a project cost of USD 318 million (IANS 2019).

In Sri Lanka, Japan is currently carrying out four (04) projects which are the Colombo Light Rail Transit (LRT) Phase 1 with project cost of USD 2.2 billion (SLRF Staff 2019) and Bandaranaike International Airport Development Project Phase 2 with at a cost of USD 550 million (Airport Technology 2020). China is working on three (03) projects among which the Colombo Port Eastern Container Terminal is most important infrastructure project China is undertaking in Sri Lanka. This project has seen its fair share of limelight and diplomatic tug of war between India, China and Sri Lanka (Balachandran 2022). Currently, India is also carrying out (03) projects in Sri Lanka with the Kankesanthurai Port among the more important ones (dailynews 2021)

Table 3: Status of Infrastructure projects in Myanmar, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka carried out by India, China and Japan (Transportation, Connectivity and Energy Sectors) during the period 2015-2022 (March)

		India			China			Japan		
		Plan	*Ongoing*	*Completd*	*Plan*	*Ongoing*	*Complete*	*Plan*	*Ongoing*	*Completed*
Myanmar	*Energy related*	1 Sittwe-Gaya Gas Pipeline	1ThahtayChaung Hydropower Project	0	5 (Myitsone Hydropower Project, Upper Salween Hydropower Project, NongPha Hydropower Project, HatGyi Hydropower Project)	2 (Kyaukphyu Power Plant, Mee Lin Gyaing LNG)	4 (Muse – Kyaukpyu pipelines, Kyaukse gas-fired power plant (145MW), Thaton combined cycle power plant (118MW), and 230KV power transmission line connecting Myanmar's northern Kachin State and the country's backbone grid)	1 (Power Distribution Improvement Project in Yangon)	3 (National Power Transmission Network Development Project of two Phase; Sedawgyi Hydropower Plant Rehabilitation Project; 1250 MW Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) fired Power Plant in Thilawa)	1 (Balu Chaung 2 Hydropower plant (168 MW) Renovation project)

	Connectivity	Myanmar Total	Bangladesh — Energy related
	2 — India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral railway, Adani Yangon International Terminal (halt under US pressure)	3	**0**
	4 — India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral highway, Bairabi-Sairang-Hmawngbuchhuah railway, Paletwa-Cikha-India Highway Project, and Paletwa inland jetty to Zorinpui road route in Myanmar	5	**2** — Reliance Bangladesh LNG & Power Ltd. With JERA, MaitreeSuper Thermal Power Project,
	2 — Sittwe Port, Sitttwe seaport to Paletwa inland jetty river boat route	2	**0**
	0	5	**0**
	3 — Muse - Kyaukpyu speed railway,Muse - Kyaukpyu highway and Kyaukpyu Deep Sea Port	5	**2** — Bangladesh China Power Company Limited (Renewable) 500MW, Power Grid Strengthening Project, Barisal Coal Power plant 700MW,Power Grid Strengthening Project
	0	4	**1** — Kalapara Power Station Phase I,
	1 — Dawei Port	2	**1** — Payra Thermal Power Station, 1320MW
	4 — Rehabilitation of Vessel Traffic Navigation Aid in Yangon River, Bago River Bridge Construction project, Yangon Circular Railway Line Upgrading Project,Yangon-Mandalay railroad Line Improvement Project	7	**0** — (1200 MW Matarbari Power Station, JERA Reliance Partnership, JERA LNG Plant 718 MW (Matabari), JERA LNG Plant 2400 MW, Matabari, Moheskhali, Marubeni Corporation, Moheskhali 8320MW)
	3 — Upgrading Ferryboat in Yangon City, Dawbon Bridge, Thilawa Port Expansion	4	**0**

Connectivity	1 Conversion of the meter gauge into a dual gauge line from Parbatipur to Kaunia section, Akhaura-Sylhet dual gauge railway track project,	8 Construction of Dual Gauge line from Bogura to Sirajganj, Rehabilitation of the Kulaura-Shahbazpur Section, 3rd and 4th Dual Gauge Rail Lines on Dhaka-Tongi and Dual Gauge Double Line on Tongi-Joydebpur Section, Khulna-Mongla Port Rail Line Project, Payra Deep Sea Port, Mongla Port Facilities upgradation,Agartala-Akhaura railway line	1 MaitriSetu	2 Dhaka-Chattogram high-speed railway, Payra Deep Sea Port,	6 9th Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge, Kamaphuli Tunnel, 8th Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge over Kocha River,Mongla Port Facilities upgradation, Padma Bridge, Dhaka Elevated Expressway (PPP) 46.73 Km, Dhaka-Ashulia Elevated Expressway	0	1 (Dhaka Underground Substation Construction Project)	5 (Kalna Bridge, Dhaka metro rail Mass Rapid Transit, Terminal 3, Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Matarbari Deep Sea Port, Sylhet Osmani International Airport Expansion project.)	1 Kanchpur, Meghna 2nd and Gumti2nd bridges
Bangladesh Total	1	10	1	2	8	1	2	11	1

Sri Lanka								
Energy related								
3 Floating Storage Regasification unit of LPG (with Japan), Trincomalee (Upper and lower) tank farm, Sampur Solar Power Plant 50 MW	1 Greenfield Oil refinery in Hambantota,	0	1 Liquefied Natural Gas Power Plant	1 Broadlands Dam,	1 Moraghakanda Reservoir Headwork Project 25 MW And Kalu Ganga Project	1 Floating Storage Regasification unit of LPG (with India)	2 200 MW Mannar Wind Power Project, 200 MW Mannar Wind Power Project	1 Solar and wind power prediction, 8 points (5 solar points and 3 wind power point)
Connectivity								
2 Colombo Port (West Container Terminal), Jaffna-Mannar-Trincomalee-Dambulla Road	2 Kankesanthurai Port, Maho-Omanthai rail line,	1 Modernisation of Sri Lankan Railway	2 underground road network in Colombo's Port City, highway from Colombo to Kandy	2 Colombo Port eastern container terminal,Matara-Kataragama Railway Line Extension	3 Priority Road Project II (PRP2), Veyangoda-Ruwanwella (B-445) Road, Road B087 and B384,	0	2 Bandaranaike International Airport Development Project Phase 2, Colombo light rail transit (LRT) (PPP)	New Kelani Bridge, Major Bridges construction project of the National Road Network, Provincial Roads in Central and Sabaragamuwa
Sri Lanka Total 5	3	1	3	3	4	1	4	4

(**Sources**: Compiled by the authors from various source, websites, reports, news, documents etc)

Domestic decision-making structure for Overseas Infrastructure Investment by China, Japan and India

China's decision-making structure regulating Beijing's overseas investments and aid:

As a result of China's rapid economic growth after China opened up its economy in the 1970s, over time, China has built up a large foreign currency reserve. In 1999, China initiated the 'Go Global' policy, and began overseas infrastructure investments through various agencies. In the initial years, Beijing's

pursuit was disorganised with multiple Chinese agencies bidding against each other for the same project in many cases. To bring some order the Chinese central leadership developed the 'National Development and Reform Commission' (NDRC) in 2003. The NDRC is the pivot around which the Chinese decisions for overseas investments are made in consultation with the State Council and the Ministry of Commerce and Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs). The Figure 2 below depicts the various actors and the decision-making process in China especially related to Overseas investments in the infrastructure sector.

Figure 2: Chinese decision-making structure for overseas investment
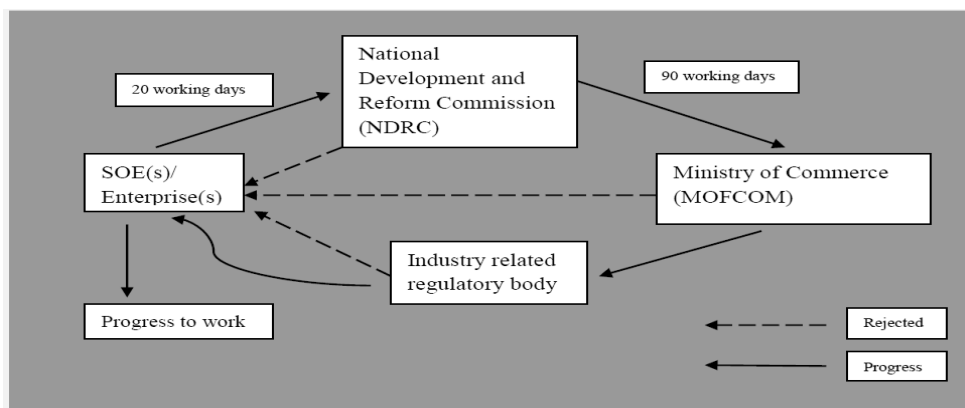
National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC): Overseas investments by a Chinese individual, legal entities or SOEs/Enterprises need to secure NDRC approval. These approvals are usually given in 20 working days if they fulfill the NDRC compliance, norms. NDRC norms are: (1) Compliance Chinese Laws and regulations; (2) Compliance with Industrial policies; (3) Non-violation of sovereignty, security and public interest of Chinese state and of international law; (4) General compliance with the overall economic and financial state planning and development; (5) Financial viability; and (6) Technical feasibility of Chinese overseas investment projects(Wolff 2011). Under the new rules of NDRC SOEs or Enterprises or MNCs who are investing in outside China in non-sensitive regions or sectors under US$ 300 million are not required to take prior permission from NDRC. However, they are required to send information regarding their investment to NDRC regularly(Clifford Chance 2018).

Approval by Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM): Those projected cleared by NDRC will be scrutiny by MOFCOM. And all kind of overseas investment by any legal entities needs gets MOFCOM approval which they usually issue within 90 workings days. The SOEs/enterprise needs to fulfill all condition of NDRC's

norms (which is re-checked by MOFCOM) in addition to following Chinese non-monopoly norms.

State Council's Industries related approval: In China, there are various industry-specific regulatory bodies. In the domain of financial-related investments, the China Bank Regulatory Commission (CBRC) and the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) have the authority to grant approvals. China Insurance Regulatory Commission (CIRC) regulatesinsurance related investments by Chinese companies in overseas markets. China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) gives approvals to security-related investment and investment of companies listed in Shenzhen stock exchanges. State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) require the approval of State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) in addition to other regulatory bodies(Clifford Chance 2018).

Japan's decision-making structure regulating overseas investments and aid:

Japan as a member of the "Development Assistance Committee" (DAC) of "Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development" (OECD) is one of the largest and longstanding overseas investors in the infrastructure and development domain. Japan is the third largest economy in the world and has the second largest currency reserve with US$ 1.2 trillion(Elvis Picardo 2021). Japan has a good influence in both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund with significant voting power. Japan is also the major driving force of the Asian Development Bank. This information shows the overseas investing/aid power of Japan and its potential in the future.

All the overseas investment of Japan is handled under the ODA (Official Development Assistance). Japan overseas investments have two sides firstly which is associated with its mercantilist nature and second, Tokyo's humanitarian and egalitarian nature of its aid and grants.

Figure 3: Japanese decision-making structure for overseas investment
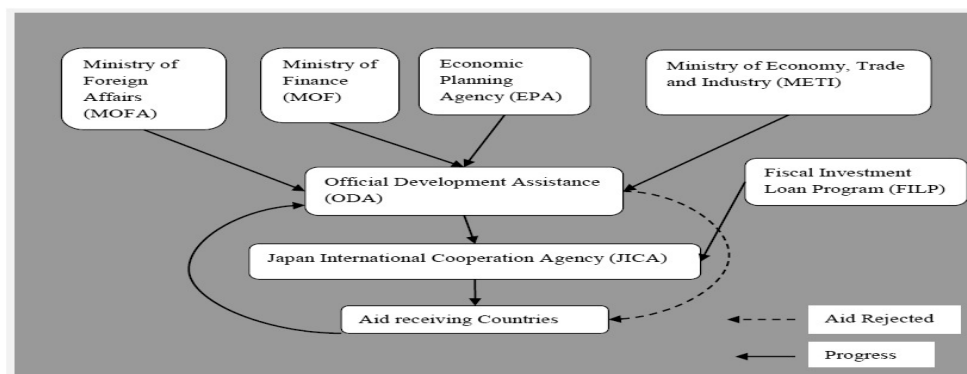
        Japanese ODA is based on the request of aid seeking nation. First, the aid seeking nation has to send a request to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan's nodal agency for Official Developmental Assistance (ODA). The Japanese ODA functions through a combination of four ministries with different agendas. The ministries are (a) Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), (b) Ministry of Finance (MOF), (c) Ministry of International Trade and Industries, and (d) Economic Planning Agency (EPA). The working committee of ODA will study the feasibility and merit of the requested aid at which point the request will either be rejected or approved. If the ODA working committee sees merit and considers the proposal feasible then the proposal is sent to the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). JICA draws half of the funds from these four ministries and the remaining half from the Fiscal Investment Loan Program (FILP). After gathering the required funds, JICA coordinates with the aid receiving nation for disbursal of funds and other formalities.

India's decision-making structure regulating overseas investments and aid:

        India co-founded the Global Network of Exim Banks and Development Finance Institution (G-NEXID) in 2006(Chanana 2009). In 2007, India helped in the creation of the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) under the United Nations' Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). DCF is a group of donors and recipient countries, trying to identify mutually accepted working terms(Chanana 2009). In 2012, India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) established the Development Partnership Administration (DPA) as India's nodal aid agency (Roychoudhury 2013). India's overseas cooperation has focused more on the development of human resources in the destination country and has had no conditions attached to the economic assistance (Ambassador Shyam Saran 2014).

Figure 4: India's decision-making structure for overseas investment
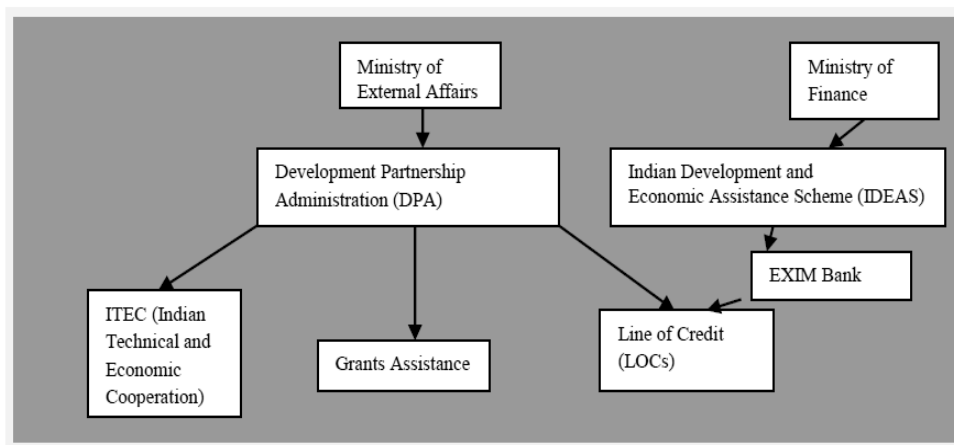
The DPA is the official agency for international development cooperation of India. It formulates, implements and evaluates India's overseas investment/aid programs. DPA also provides a facility to the coordination of trade and investment, transfer of technology, financing through credit and capacity building using technical and economic cooperation(Samuel and George 2016).

Indian Technical Economic Cooperation (ITEC) was the flagship program of India's overseas aid and was established in 1964. It focuses on the development of human capacity by giving capacity building training courses. India's grant assistance programs mainly focus on infrastructure development, health, and education sectors. Under the grant assistance program, India provides aid to the development of required infrastructure overseas through its small development projects. In addition, India also runs the lines of credits (LOCs) which allow borrowing countries to import goods and services and develop infrastructure of according to their requirements.

Conclusion:

It is interesting to note that just before the Covid-19 pandemic, China had signed 209 projects with various countries under BRI with a total worth of US$ 293 billion during 2019. During 2020 at the peak of the pandemic, China signed 63 new projects under BRI of worth US$ 47 billion (Refinitiv 2022). Therefore, it is clear that the pandemic did have an impact on the planning and execution of China's BRI projects. One change that has been noticed as a result of the pandemic is the Chinese thrust on Digital Silk Route and Health Silk Route. Japan also took steps to mitigate the impact of the worldwide pandemic with the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) launching the Comprehensive Economic Measures to Secure People's Lives and Livelihoods toward Relief and Hope on 8th December 2020 to help people to emerge out of the economic hardships they have been faced with as a result of the pandemic (JBIC 2021). However, India continues with its Development Partnership Administration (DPA); Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) positions reflects India's commitment for global peaceful co-existence(Atul K Thakur 2021).

Another important point to note is that till 2021, Russia is the largest benefactor of China's BRI worth US$ 269.7 billion through 117 projects of which 11 projects worth USD 20.8 billion were signed in 2020. It is therefore, clear that the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war will definitely impact Chinese investments but in the medium to long term could further cement the two countries bilateral relationship.

The data compiled and analyzed by the authors in the article and presented in Table 3 helps in arriving at a few conclusions and the countries priorities and successes and lacunae in their efforts at investments into the infrastructure sector in Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. First, it is very apparent that Bangladesh is a major focus of the three investing countries, namely India, China and Japan, in terms of investment in the infrastructure sector especially in the Energy sector and for improving connectivity. Second, as noted from the Table 3, India is lagging in timely completion of its infrastructure projects. In Myanmar, India has completed 2 projects between 2015-2022 as compared to 04 projects completed by Japan and China each. The same trend is noticed in the case of Indian projects in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The third trend that is noticed is that India has been focusing more of its resources on the connectivity and related projects vis-à-vis Energy related projects in the three countries. This could also be a function of the reality that China and Japan have the first mover advantage in the three countries given that they had invested in the energy sectors in Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka before India began focusing on the energy sector. Fourth, as the Table 3 and the above analysis clearly highlights, India has been making concerted efforts to expand its footprint, possibly in a bid to recover its lost space to China and Japan, by carrying out larger number of projects in the infrastructure sector. This trend is apparent from the large number of Indian projects that are currently underway, which is more or at par with the number of ongoing projects carried out by the Chinese and Japanese companies.

The article also points very clearly to the link between the investing countries' policies or core guiding principles and the investment choices they make. These principles and policies evolve with time and with changing interests and needs of investing countries. In case of China the policy of 'Common Prosperity' in addition to the policies such as 'Belt and Road Initiative' and 'Capacity Cooperation' are important road maps for Chinese investment decisions. The Chinese decisions are guided by twin motivations of balancing the growing American influence in the region, and its efforts to reduce its dependence on energy supplies from the maritime route which is currently flowing through maritime choke points like the Straits of Malacca and the Strait of Hormuz. India on the other hand is guided by its policies like 'Act East Policy' and 'Neighbourhood First Policy' which seeks to assist in the development and growth of neighbouring countries by way of greater connectivity. In addition, New Delhi is also motivated by augmenting connectivity to its North-East region, providing better access to the South East Asian markets and curbing support and shelter available to North East insurgent groups in Myanmar and Bangladesh. Japan on its

part currently guided by the principle of New Growth Strategyaid bypolicies like 'Quality Infrastructure Investment' and 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific'.

As most of the countries in South Asia are developing nations, there is a continuous effort on the part of the countries to expand and improve their infrastructure capabilities and capacities. This in turn requires large investments into the infrastructure sector, which is not possible through domestic resources and in turn requires external support, both in terms of funding and in some cases technical and knowhow to plan and complete the project successfully. As this article highlights, the investing countries like Japan, China and India too have their own drivers, interests, decision-making structures and priorities which range from meeting their economic needs to taking care of their security and geopolitical priorities which range from better access to markets to expanding their influence in the region to balancing the growing influence of other countries in the region.

Note-

1   The Cambridge dictionary defines the term infrastructure as 'the basic system and service, such as transport and power supplies, that a country or organization uses in order to work effectively'. Investopedia defines the term as 'the general term for basic physical systems of a business, region, or nation. Example of infrastructure includes transportation systems, communication networks, sewage, water, and electric systems. These systems tend to be capital intensive and high-cost investments, and are vital to a country's economic development and prosperity'. From the two basic definitions, it is clear that infrastructure is vital for a smooth functioning of a country as well as for development, physical in nature, which required huge capital to develop it.
        https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/infrastructure
        https://www.investopedia.com/terms/i/infrastructure.asp

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Identity Politics:
Identity and Fractions Among the Dalit Movement in Punjab

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Abstract

Dalit consciousness movement is not new in India. From the 19th-century reform movement to contemporary assertions in various socio-political and cultural aspects aims for the egalitarian society. However 'dalit' as a class is not homogenous and many societal identities not only create sub-class but also a multi-layered hierarchy within the category called 'dalit'. Ideological incoherency weakens the bond of togetherness. The present paper is an attempt to analyze the forms and manifestation of caste consciousness movement and fractions in these movements especially in the state of Punjab. Caste, religion, and ideology are the major groundings that are taken into consideration for analyzing the phenomenon.

Keywords: Consciousness, hierarchy, Identity, Varna, Race

Introduction

No understanding about Indian society can be considered complete without the consideration of caste and its construct on the different socio-cultural dimensions. Caste is considered as the structural unit of social stratification and as the system in itself. Caste is the unique ideology of exclusivist doctrine which puts its distinctive and continuous impact on Indian social, political, and cultural life. The caste system has formed the framework of social as well as the economic dimensions of the Indian people. It involves the division of people into a hierarchy of unequal social groups where basic rights and duties are allocated or mostly based on birth and are not subject to change.

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The caste system is believed to be derived its root from four hierarchically ranked classes called *Varnas* with various other socio-cultural and occupational factors. *Manusmiriti* produce a fourfold classification of the social order which another Hindu text *Bhagavat Gita* reiterates that decided on the basis of '*Guna*' (Instinct) and *karma* (deeds). *Guna* means different shades of texture or color & represents mental temper, named as *Sattva*, *Rajas,* and *Tamas*. *Sattva* is white, Rajas is red, and *Tamas* is black. These in a combination of various proportions constitute the group or class of people with temperamental differences. *Sattva* qualities include characteristics related to wisdom, intelligence, honesty, goodness (Datar 2012). *Rajas* include qualities such as passion, pride, and valor. *Tamas* is considered to acquire qualities that include dullness, lack of creativity, and other negative qualities. Individuals possess any of the dominant qualities in themselves; end up adopting the appropriate occupations.

The theoretical system postulated *varna* categories as ideals and explained away the reality of thousands of endogamous '*Jatis*' actually prevailing in the country as being the result of historical mixing of 'pure*'* varnas. *'Varna Shankara'* (hybrid varna)term used to denote those communities which do not fit in any of the four varnas. All those including foreigners, tribals, and nomads, who does not subscribe to the norms of the Hindu society were contagious and untouchables and were excluded from the main society ('*Prajanya*' or '*Antyaja*').(Singh 2010) This group of former untouchables or dalits i.e. downtrodden were considered either the lower section of the shudras or outside the Varna system altogether. A passage from scriptures such as Manusmiriti indicates that the Varna system was originally non-hereditary. The caste system was founded on the basis of purity and pollution, which is the main criterion for the determination of caste or sub-caste in the hierarchical order. The Brahman's claimed to be the purest group and placed at the top. However, after the communal award, this divide of *shudras* and untouchables vanished and broad categories of inhabitant, due to their socio-economic backwardness were placed in a legal category called 'scheduled caste'.

The word 'Dalit' generally used to refer to people who were once known as 'untouchables', 'Depressed classes' which in Sanskrit means "broken, ground down, downtrodden or oppressed". Dalits are considered as 'outcastes' falling outside the traditional four-fold Varna hierarchy. They compelled to live at the bottom of India's rigid social order known as the caste system. Their segregation is attributed to ritual impurity. A fifth group (*panchma*) or *avarna* (without *varna*) was created to perform tasks considered too menial or degrading to be performed by caste members and have been born with the stigma of 'untouchability' because of the extreme impurity and pollution connected with their traditional occupation.

They are considered impure and polluting and are therefore physically and socially excluded and isolated from the rest of society. The practice of caste-based exclusion and discrimination thus necessarily involves the failure of access and entitlement not only to economic rights but also to the civil political and cultural rights (Singh & Ziyauddin 2009).

The word 'Dalit' carries a very floating definition; however, the root can be traced from the reform movements of the nineteenth and twentieth century, which were targeted against the various kind of discrimination prevalent in the society. *Arya Samaj*, *Brahma Samaj, Jat-pat todakmandal,* etc. taking a cue from the core idea of liberalism tried to establish a reasoned based social order. Ambedkar furthered it by demanding special political and legal protection to the 'depressed class', while others like Gandhi see it as a threat to the larger Hindu identity and the nation. Communal award listed bunch of castes as scheduled castes seems to be an extension of the policy of divide and rule by a section of Indian leaders while another section seems it as recognition of distinct identity and furthering of interest of the marginalized section of the society. The bunching of these different socially excluded castes into a single identity was facilitated by the word 'dalit' and often in common parlance the word 'Dalit and scheduled caste seems to be interchangeable.

The demand for equality in this context seems to be identified and described into two broader viewpoints: One who define Dalits as original inhabitants of the country and consider '*Arya*' as an outsider race, with a focus on the plank that son of soil should get a due share as injustice was done with them from many generations. The second view roots their origin within the Hindu social order and tries to define injustice due to the notion of purity and pollutant and lower *guna*. The main point of difference between the two is that the former decry the Hindu way of life and try to carve out a distinct identity for the Dalits while the latter strives for reform within the social order and consider Dalits as an integral part of the Hindu social order.

This demand for equality, which includes the negations of various stereotypes associated with the caste identity termed as 'assertion' which manifested in various forms with the specificity of region and religion. Punjab, having the highest Dalit population percentage (31.90% of the total) has been an important center of Dalit conscious movement and henceforth assertion. The economic transformation and development definitely have an impact on the socio-economic structure of Punjab, but the scale of impact has still to be gauged. The economic prosperity along with the socio-religious reform impacted the conscious movement in assertive tone like;

- Rap/Pop songs with certain caste identity
- Stickers/hoarding/T-Shirts with the bold mentioning of the caste.
- Nameplates on the house with a bold mentioning of *'Soh'*
- Separate places of worship

However, this economic mobility is not inclusive to all caste categories, and even among the marginalized, segregation and compartmentalization, on the basis of caste prevails. The present paper focuses on this inter-caste differentiation and its impact on the dalit consciousness, which seems to be fragmented into two broader lines:

a.   Caste group and identity

b.   Understanding of caste and ideological course of Dalit movements.

The Multi-Layered Hierarchy

Notwithstanding the growing appeal of the term Dalit for self-description across caste communities and the continued use of the category scheduled castes by the state agencies and popular media, the internal differences among different communities continue to be as important as they would be (Jodhka & Avinash Kumar, 2007). The division into a number of the parallel stream is not only a product of economic mobility but due to various ascribed identities. The SCs of Punjab are graded on the logic of caste hierarchy that separates them. SCs are highly segmented on endogamous multi-caste layers with distinct social identities and varied economic levels. Inter-caste divisions among the SCs have led the formation of various caste-based social cleavage which push them further into a whirlpool of various protracted social conflicts resulting in fractures Dalit consolidation in contemporary Punjab. There are a total of thirty-seven castes placed under the category of Scheduled Castes in Punjab. However, a large majority of them can be clubbed into two or three clusters. The first cluster of Mazhabi Sikhs and the *balmikis/bhangis* constitute a total of 41.9 percent (30.75 and 11.15 % respectively) of the total scheduled castes population. Similarly, the second case cluster made up of Ad Dharma (15.74%) and Ravidass/Ramdasia Sikhs (25.85%) together constitutes another 41.59 percent. The remaining 33 caste groups constitute only 16.51 percent of the total scheduled caste population of Punjab (Jodhka & Avinash Kumar, 2007). Demographically they are also divided on different geographical reasons of the state. *Chamar* has a thick population in the Doaba region and the *Mazhabi* settled in the Malwa/Majha part of Punjab.

The *Mazhabi* and *Blamikis* together constitute *'Chura'* caste cluster. However, their religious affiliations are different. This caste community

worshipped *Balmiki* and follows the religion of Hinduism. However, they hold a low positioning in Hindu society. *Balmik*i temple having some feature of *Guru Granth Sahib* is the center point of their community. however, the last few years *Valmiki-Ambedkarite* identity has taken roots with many sections of the *Balmiki* community (Ronki, 2017,p.55) this gradual evolving identity with a slogan 'educate, agitate and organize' aimed for the spread of education and critical consciousness among *Balmiki*-comparatively a less educated schedule castes in Punjab. *Mazhabi* Sikhs are the single largest dalit community of the state. Historically, they are *Churas* who embraced Sikhism, they traced their religious affiliation from *Bhai Jaitaji*, who become popular with the name *Baba Jeewan Singh* after baptization by the 10th Sikh Guru Govind Singh. Among the *Mazhabis,Baba Jeewan Singh* is popular with the name '*Rangretta guru ka beta*' (Rangretta as guru's son). This affiliation with the Sikhism makes them more keen and enthusiastic towards their religion and their Gurudwara in the village. *Mazhabis* are concentrated in Ferozpur, Gurudaspur, Amritsar, Faridkaot, Mansa, and Bhatinda district of Punjab. Despite their highest numerical strength, they are the most deprived section among the SCs with the lowest literacy rate (42.30%).

The *Chamar* caste cluster consists of *Chamar* and *Adi-Dharmis* and the first includes Ravidassias –who have both affiliations with the Hindus and Sikhs but are more inclined towards Sikhism. There are a few cases of conversion to Christianity and Islam. However, the general inclination of the *Ravidassias* is towards the Sikhism as the *bani* (writings) of *Guru Ravidass* has been honored to be a part of Guru Granth Sahib.[1] However, this does not ensure equality of treatment. Dalit Sikhs do not receive equal treatment in the upper caste gurudwaras as reflected in the number of *gurumats* (resolutions) adopted by the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee from 1926-33 (Ronki, 2015). One section of Chamar follows Hinduism as their religion and claim themselves scion of *Chandravanshis* (for example weaver '*Julaha*').

Ad-Dharmis occupies a significant position among the Dalits of Punjab. The consciousness and assertion movement initiated by Mangoo Ram during the 1920s successfully mobilized a majority of *Chamars* of the Doaba region and played a significant role in transforming their social status and identity (Juergensmeyer, 1988). The *Ad-Dharm* movement followed the teachings of *Guru Ravidass* and in 1931 succeeded in registering themselves as a distinct religious community with a demography of 418, 789 members of the community but the movement dissipated soon after its grand success in 1931. However, *Ad-dharma*

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[1]   When 5th Sikh guru , Guru Arjun Dev compiled the Adi-Granth he added the bani of Guru Ravidass alongwith the other gurus and Sufi saint,.

was the only movement in northwestern India that aimed at securing a respectable place for the SCs through cultural transformation, spiritual regeneration, and political assertion rather than seeking patronage from above (Ronki, 2015). After a phase of the eclipse, the *Chamars* of the Doaba witnessed a new kind of resurgence under the aegis of *Dera Sachkhand Ballan*. This is a new center of the emancipation of the *Chamars* of the same Doaba region. Ad-Dharma movement started Hoshiarpur district and the *Dera* has its head center in the Jallandhar. The Dera emphasis on the freedom from vices and the campaign against the alcohol and narcotics soon culminated in a larger following across the caste community. The Deras became a common point for the followers of different religious practices *(Sikhism and Deras).*

Dalits in Punjab, as the aforementioned discussion suggests, do not constitute a homogenous class. The notion of assertion which seems to be directed against the caste system is not the actual case but the phenomenon of assertion itself based on the caste identity with distinct religious practices. Radha and Amar Sarkar (2016) in their study argued that caste politics in India is centered on politics of recognition and not with the politics of redistributive claims. Weiner (2001) predicts an increasing trend of social mobility for educated urban Dalits, the prospects for more numerous rural sections of dalit population with less education are less optimistic. Thus all the members of any one caste do not belong to the same class: caste and class are not interchangeable. Consequently, a politics of recognition does not, in and of itself entails a politics of redistribution.

Religion & Caste

Marenco (1976) broadly classified the marginalized communities of Punjab into two broader categories:

a.   Menial Castes-that includes Jhinjwar, Kahar, Machhi, Bahrupia, Batwal, and Balwala and

b.   Impure castes: comprises Labana, Banjara, Mahtam, Bawaria, Jogi-Rawal, Megha, Kanchan, Changer, Doms, Chamars, Dhanak, Mazhabis etc.

Interestingly most of these caste groups have intra-caste differences over the religious followings and practices, for example, Chura caste community who were traditionally involved in the practice of scavenging and weaving, in due course fragmented and divided into different religious lines. The Chura Sikhs, called Mazhabi after conversion[1], took *Pahul* [1]abstained from the use of tobacco,

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[1]   The majhabi became a separate caste in Sikhism, In 1881 census both Chura Sikhs and mazhabi sikhare listed.

wore long hair, and were generally strict in their observance of theirorthodox or Kesh Dhari Sikhism (Marceno 1976, p 249). Those who give up their job of scavenging and switched to leatherworking known as 'Rangretta' considered being higher than ordinary mazhabis. The Churas having faith in Islam, called Mussalis and Kutanas and were divided into two groups one who renounced the polluting nature of the job (like scavenging) and restricted themselves to pure food and observed Islam and there were those, who had not made such changes (Marceno 1976, p 250). Also, there were differences in occupation and social positioning with the change in the region. In the frontier towns of the North-western provinces as in Peshawar, the *Musalli* was a sweeper and grave digger. In the southwest part of Punjab, the *Kutanas* were Muslim sweeper who had settled on the bank of lower Indus and has given up scavenging and eating carrion. They had taken to making ropes and working in grass and heeds and some even cultivate the land.

This division among the Chura caste community into various subcaste groups either due to adaption of different religious practices or due to change in occupational status or both resultant into increasing layered hierarch among the scheduled caste. Caste endogamy was the way of life for Indian society and it was the first principle of division among the Dalit castes. None of them inter-married and any such instance could invite the wrath of the caste community, particularly the caste of the girl in a patriarchal society. Internal divisions among the untouchables became highly functional for the sustenance of the caste system (Judge 2012, p.266).

Ideology and Caste Consciousness Movement

Karl Mannheim (1936) reiterated the basic idea of Marx that ideas arise in the context of social existence: our political outlooks are conditioned by the concrete setting in which they arise. However, he did not reduce its importance as a political contrive and believed that social interest as they are shaped by them. Dalit assertion manifested itself in the socio-economic and political realm and has taken many different forms: the movement against the caste domination, political parties, protests literature a variety of grassroots assertions and more recently middle-class activism (Pai, 2013, XIIV). Overall the subordinate positioning in the social structure and related disadvantages, atrocities, and violence have been negated and a demand for equality (both in economic and social positioning) made through different manifestations. However, the scale and structure of oppression

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[1]   Pahul or Amrit Sanskar, is the name given in the Sikh tradition to the Baptism ceremony which is also known as the initiation ceremony into the Khalsa "brotherhood

are not homogenous in nature. The notion 'Dalit' itself emerges as an umbrella concept during the course of these movements to encompass the commonalities among the regional and structural plurality. Dalit collectivist, with similar histories of oppression, simultaneously seeks to overcome similar deprivations within a common social system but with differing visions of their own and society's future (Webster 1995).

The proponent of racial theory like Herbert Risley (1915) argued that 'the element of cultures and contact of races crystallized the castes in India. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, the popularity of the racial theory of the origin of the caste makes it believe that 'Dalits are the original inhabitant of the land and the dominant Aryan culture was imposed on aboriginals. Change in customs, migration, changes in traditional occupation, preservation of old tradition, enrolling oneself into the rank of Hinduism, and religious enthusiasms are the six main processes according to Risley. Dalit assertion has specific characteristics such as construction of Dalit identity and alternative ideology to Brahminism, which has challenged upper caste hegemony. Pai is of the view that during colonial period three ideological form emerged: Gandhian; Dravidian and, Ambedkarite.

The post-independence phase witnesses a politically driven conscious movement in its specificity. However, in the course of analysis of dalit consciousness movements, not much importance paid to the 'religious identity'. If we analyze the Gandhian perspective on caste, it can be easily be deduced that he believed in a reformist perspective of Hinduism in which the emphasis was on 'change of heart' especially of the upper castes. Gandhi embraces the Varna division of the society as a functional division and never considered it as evil. Gandhi's opposition to the separate electorate emanates from this belief. Gandhi's constant appeal to caste Hindus not practice untouchability indicates his awareness that one section of the society was treated unjustly by another; it was not a personal relationship but a group relationship. In spite of this division of society at an empirical level, Gandhi refused to concede separate political identity to untouchables through separate electorates. (Suhas Palshikar, 1996) said "As I have interpreted Varna Dharma, there is no bar in any shape or form to the highest mental development. The bar altogether normal is against the change of hereditary occupation for the sake of bettering one's material condition and thus setting up a system of unhealthy and ruinous competition" (Harijan 29-7-33, p8) It indicates that for Gandhi the unjust relations among the caste is just a deformity within the Hindu social order and for this, the negation of the religion is not just. The post-independence electoral politics sharpen and consolidated the caste differences

through the 'politicization of caste' and castification of politics' (Kothari,1972) and this gradually cornered the Gandhian notion of equality and its implacability.

The Adi-movement in the second decade of the twentieth century gains currency with the Risley(1915) racial theory of caste. There has been Adi Dravidian movement in Madras since at least 1918. The Adi Dravidian movement seems to have been the first to formulate the concept that the scheduled castes were the original inhabitants of India, and from there, apparently the idea spread and lent its name to the Ad. Dharm movement in what is now Uttar Pradesh (Juergensmeyer,1988, p24). The movement focused more ethnification of S.C identity than on following the path of Sanskritization to move up the caste hierarchy, as the case of caste Hindu movement. Jafferelot (2002,p.149). The Ad-Dharm movement aimed at sewing a distant identity for Dalits, independent of both the Hindu & Sikh religions. (Ronki, 2004, p.900), the untouchables have three powers: communal Pride (*quamiyat*), religion (*mazhab*), and organization (*majlis*) (Adi Dharm Report. p.3 and Juergensmeyer, 1988, p.46). In the 1931 census more than four lakhs untouchables in Punjab recorded themselves as Ad-dharmis, as a distinct religion separate from Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism (Ronki, 2004, p.901). Although Adi Dharmis in Punjab, under the leadership of Mangoo Ram, were able to register themselves as separate *quam*, it does not mean that they had entitled religion or of an orthodoxy. Many of the practices adopted by Adi-dharmis are in common with Sikhism, Hinduism, and Islam. However 'occasionally there is mention of God in a more formal sense (Jurgensmeyer, 1988, p.51). Ad Dharmis attached special significance to the colour red and 'requested the government to allow us to wear red colour'. (Ad Dharmi report p.15, Jurgensmeyer,1988, p.53). Such symbolism is more a form of assertion akin to the dominant upper caste (for example Rajput prefers to wear Red (as a willingness to shed blood on the behalf of the people)).

The Poona pact (1932) and Govt. of India act (1935) deliver to it a source of reservation and patronage but at the cost of returning into Hindu fold. Subsequently, it was renamed the Ravidass Mandal (1946), but thereafter its political representation dissipated among the Republican party of India, the Congress, and more recently the Bahujan Samajwadi Party(Gurharpal Singh, 2012, p.55). The contemporary caste assertion movements in Indian have one common icon-Dr B.R.Ambedkar as a symbol or an ideologue. Belongs to one of the downtrodden castes of Maharashtra, Ambedkar's writings shown a belief in the racial theory of the origin of caste and in his pioneering work- Annihilation of caste, he considered 'untouchables and 'Hindus' as two distinct social class. He vehemently criticizes the Hindu social order which he believes emanate from the

religion. 'Religion is the source of power is illustrated by the history of India where the priest holds sway over the common man often greater than a magistrate" (Ambedkar, 1936, p.12). Ambedkar was of the opinion that caste society in Indian can't be reformed without the reformation in religion and that's why in the later phase of his writing he denounced 'Hinduism'. He believes that religion, social status, and property are all are sources of power and authority, in which one has to control the liberty of another (Ambedkar, 1936, p.13). Ambedkar stand has some proximity with the Adi- movement and that's why a close affiliation is visible during the late 1920 s and early 30s. Ambedkar believes that a politics driven change can't be reformative in the long run and that why he argued that 'social democracy must precede to political democracy'.

The post-independence democratic politics in India witnessed a gradual decline in the acceptability of Gandhian techniques and the vacuum was much filled with the Ambedkar vision and ideals. The post-Ambedkarite ideology is best understood by examining the writings of Kashi Ram (Pai, 2013, p.21). Relying on the original inhabitant theory (Moolniwasis), Kanshi Ram argued 'Hinduism and Bhraminism-which is part of Hinduism-is, not a religion but a socio-cultural ideology that has divided the majority into innumerable caste groups and prevented them from the entering and achieving positions of power in all aspects of life, including politics (Pai,2002). Kashi ram visualizes two stages: first capturing power through mobilization and electoral victory against the Brahmins, and in the second phase the revolution would penetrate deeper into society, transforming it (Pai, 2002). The shift in policy of BSP from *Bahujan* to *Sarvjan* led a shift from revolution to consociational positioning, which has created fragmentation in the Dalit identity especially in Uttar Pradesh. The recent emergence of the Chandrasekhar Raavan, with a more radical positioning on caste identity, dents the BSP base in the western Uttar Pradesh. Also, writers and social activists like Chandrabhan argued that the policy of liberalization and globalization has loosened the shackles of primordial identities like caste and he favours the educational mobility for a higher social status.

The afore discussed three ideological groundings of dalit conscious movements have certain eclectical offshoots with its regional specificity and variations. A national-level organization with the countrywide reach and affiliations and ideological unanimity is not visible and that's why the role of ideology in the phenomenon of assertions of Dalits is like braided streams, having the same source of origin.

Conclusion:

Indian socio-political functioning for a long period of time is based on the belief that varna classification on the basis functionality (which culminated in to caste) is still a determining factor. However, their broader categorization grossly overlooked the intra group hierarchy and differentiation which often creates 'group within a group'. The interplay of economic, religious and cultural factors further led the creation of new caste identities and henceforth. The very argument that socio-economic marginalization led schedule castes in their demand for equality (both in term of equality of status and distribution) behaves as a class. However, evidences suggest that Dalit do not constitute a homogenous group. Religion had been an important factor in creation of intra-caste differentiation. All major religion in India, visualize an egalitarian human society. Hinduism in its Brahmanical construct placed a substantial chunk of population on margins. Islam, in India also gets casti-fied due to its adoption of different caste group and the maintenance of the hierarchical nature of social order. Similar is the story for Sikhism. The state of Punjab witnessed the influence of all the major religion of the land and this definitely affects the caste structure in Punjab. The intersection of caste and religion resultant in to division of an existing caste group in to number of sub castes with new nomenclature, occupation and cultural practices. The welfarist intervention of the state and economic development further aggravated the difference among the marginalized caste.

Ideologically also, Dalit conscious movements are braided in to number of streams. The debate of original inhabitant and imposition of Aryan culture gradually faded away, as a majority of scheduled caste adopted dominant religious practices (may be of Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam or Buddhism) and gradually diffuse with the larger culture. This diffusion (with a demand for reforms) is an indication of the status quo. The dominant theory of ethnicity is having less contemporary relevance and refutation of the dominant construct of religion along with the caste, led the creation of new religion based caste identity (as happened with Ad-Dharmis and Balmikis).It also negates the core premise of Ambedkar where he treated 'depressed class and 'Hindu' as two distinct societal entities. Also, there is complete absence of Gandhian method of reform, the kind of leadership and vision for society as a whole. The *sui-genre* nature of change always work for the maintenance of existing system and can't be seen from the perspective of reform, especially in the context.

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Transformation of Reservation in India: A Study in the Light of Punctuated Equilibrium Approach

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Abstract

Human practice of caste can hardly be detached from the lives of Indian society. Socially constructed dominant groups began to control the existing power within the restricted geographical area. Unjustified act of assertiveness by certain sections in a confined space constituted disparities among the prevailing communities. Governments across the globe have adopted different models to eradicate the problem of social constructed discrimination. The paper will analyze the growth of affirmative policies in India in light of Punctuated Equilibrium Approach (PEA). The article argues on continuation of privilege to the progressed sections among the beneficiaries. It tries to highlight the rise in demand to include certain castes across the states. The study considers reservation policies as a whole not to a single caste or category alone.

Keywords: Punctuated Equilibrium, Reservation, India, Caste, and EWS.

Introduction

Human practice of caste can hardly be detached from the lives of Indian society. The custom was deep-seated in the culture and it relies on individual's birth that can never be modified during his lifetime. Caste facilitated for evolution of an enclave of homogeneous association of stratum within the territory. Union of akin communities segregated themselves from mingling with other associations regarding one's superiority over others. Socially constructed dominant groups began to control the existing power within the restricted geographical area. Unjustified act of assertiveness by certain sections in a confined space constituted disparities among the prevailing communities.

Castes that secured a commanding position in the social structure began to influence the existing political, economic and cultural aspects. Prejudice was an accepted norm among the influential groups that deprived the inferior sections of coalescing with them. The castes that didn't draw mainstream social recognition

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are known as 'weaker sections' or 'marginalized groups' or 'depressed castes'. Non-inclusive castes though dwelling within the confined society are inaccessible to basic privileges like education, employment, political access and social dignity.

State took the onus of instituting distributive justice among the castes residing in the territory. Public policies were framed to establish positive discrimination to uplift the deprived sections of society. The favorable discrimination to establish social justice is known as *Reservation* that tries to achieve inclusive growth in a liberal democratic society. Alternatively, the term Affirmative Action is put to practice in United States, to refer to policies that seek to uplift historically persecuted communities (US Justice Dept, 2020). The paper will analyze the growth of affirmative policies in India in light of Punctuated Equilibrium Approach (PEA). The article argues on continuation of privilege to the progressed sections among the beneficiaries. It tries to highlight the rise in demand to include certain castes across the states. The study considers reservation policies as a whole not to a single caste or category alone.

Biological approach was employed to assess the progressive affirmative action is to deduce that major policies will be formulated occasionally and have a larger impact on society. The concept delineates that predominant schemes are not often, but episodic. It also assists in analyzing drastic shifts from one policy to another in complex Indian society. Besides, the approach helps to understand policy formulation in disruptive dynamics.

Punctuated Equilibrium Approach

The origins of Punctuated Equilibrium Approach (PEA) can be traced to the evolutionary biological sciences. It was introduced by Palaeontogists Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge in 1977.According to Oxford Learner's dictionary, the word Punctuate means to *Interrupt something at intervals* and *Equilibrium* is a *State of balance* or *Stasis.* Gould and Eldredge postulated that species once appeared in fossil record will become stable (Gould & Eldredge, 1977). Though minor genetic characteristics features appear on the fossil, its impact is negligible. Stablefossils will face interruptions by internal forces combined with the external environment. The process will bring drastic revision in them. Ultimately, before undergoing greater shifts, fossil will maintain equilibrium.

American policy analysts Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones adopted this biological concept to policy agenda. They evaluated the federal policies in the light of PEA. Policy appraisal over a decade made them posit that public policies in USA will maintain equilibrium before undergoing drastic shifts. Baumgartner and Jones authored the book *Agendas and Instability in American Politics* in the year 1993. This publication deliberates on how public policies were being formulated in the federal government and dominant policies were unlikely for frequent legislation (Baumgartner & Jones, 2009). The policies will maintain stability between the intervals of legislation.

Welfare measures are enacted by the state for the socio-economic development of its citizens. Periodic demand from the public, necessity of the existing situation, party manifesto and owed election promises and international agreements are a few grounds of legislation to be mentioned.PEA seeks to explain *political processes are generally characterized by stability and incrementalism, but occasionally they produce large scale departures from the past* (True, Jones & Baumgartner, 2006). Public insistence expedites a compulsion for the state to formulate policies altering the existing ones. For example, reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Economically Weaker Sections (2019) are considerable shifts from the existing situations.

Baumgartner and Jones adopted the terminology punctuated equilibrium as*it evokes the images of stability interrupted by major alterations to a system* (Givel, 2010). In a democracy, with several persuasive agents, maintaining balance in the system is quite challenging to the government. Agents will try to bargain with the state that policies be formulated in their favour. If the public policy attainted stability for a longer period, the following conclusions can be drawn.

- Policymakers were intended that existing schemes be unchanged,

- Public accustomed with the implementation of the policy,

- Demands for modification or repeal even if raised, were submerged by force and

- Programme execution causes less harm to a larger public.

Stability of a policy for a longer period doesn't mean that counter demands never came up. Though raised, they might be unheard of by the rulers. A policy legislated on a specific community is often unwelcome by others who are at a disadvantage of not enjoying the benefits. It generates a sense of unjustness among them that motivates them to demand similar assistance from the state. Little attention to their appeal will invite friction between the policymakers and the community.

Why reservation system was compared with PEA

Policies have a considerable impact on the society and are byproducts of deliberations and consensus of formulators. No political system features continuous discussion over all issues that confront it (True, Jones & Baumgartner, 2006).Policymakers are satisfied in mollifying certain castes where demand rosed ignoring larger interests of the society. Reservation is a sensitive issue, where a part of a whole has to be given to specially designated castes that deprive the others of exercising equal opportunities. Since independence, appeal from several castes has grown manifold to incorporate them into affirmative policy.

No other welfare measures have an indelible antecedent of what reservation has in India. The roots of affirmative action can be traced to the pre-

independence era. British raj as well as princely states, saw the lower castes appeal for state assistance in government jobs, education and accessibility to public space. Then rulers began to enact development schemes in favour of marginalized sections. The motive of uplifting the traditionally depressed castes to make the unequal, equal is still prevalent. Enactment of relaxation schemes is not so often, yet occasional legislation has witnessed drastic shifts from existing situations.

With a rationale to construct an egalitarian society, independent India began enacting laws for the development of traditionally depressed castes. Though intended for a limited period, public demand compelled the legislature to extend time and again. Others gathered awareness of the benefits involved and claimed their right to derive relaxation from the state on the grounds of backwardness. The practice that began before independence is surviving till today. Legislation on this is not quite often, but stable. Few states made a futile attempt to bring minorities into the affirmative policies. This initiative achieved a partial success.

Protracted practice of reservation and substantial clout on the caste-ridden Indian society formed a basis to compare affirmative action with PEA. Similar features of frequent enactment at intervals, generating fallouts among the castes that didn't comprise and invariable extension of cumulative statues make to juxtapose with this approach. Analogous to reservation, PEA has the aspects of periods of consistency followed by rapid change when law was enacted.

Ideal for a democracy is to have consensus for policy formulation. Policymakers often are satisfied in bringing slight modifications to the existing ones. A policy that benefits the general public gains unanimous support from the citizens. Forexample, railway fare concession to senior citizens and relaxation to special people in transport, etc. Caste being sensitive is unlikely to procure consensus among other groups. Latter will counter mobilize to demand similar legislation from the whole that is implausibly infinite.

Lack of unanimity among several castes will by passincrementalism in policy formulation. Ingenious welfare measures are adopted that suit the situation. PEA states that incremental policy formulation will be discarded during initial years, but practiced at a longer duration. Akin feature is that affirmative action will be the base with new castes being incorporated in various categories. The definition of backwardness has been widened. Earlier it spread to social, cultural and political. Recently economic backwardness enshrined in Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 36-51) became ground for affirmative policy legislation.An analysis on the enactment of reservation policies is extremely apposite to PEA.

Genesis of Reservation in India

Injustice suffered among the inferior castes in Indian society was compensated through welfare measures. Policies were enacted by allocating a fixed number of seats/positions in public institutions. Appropriation of quota to the disadvantaged sections is a compensation paid for their past ordeal of social exclusion. Besides establishing social justice, inclusive growth, preserving self

dignity and emancipation became the objectives of development schemes. Ensuring equal opportunity through reservation was carried with positive discrimination favouring disadvantaged sections of the society.Since its inception, caste became the basis for forming a hierarchy of high and low castes. Hence, legislations were formulated with caste as a ground for reservation. Gender, religion and domicile in some states were not unknown as bases for enacting welfare measures.

Positive or deliberate discrimination in favour of the downtrodden began even before Indian independence. In 1891, demand for reservation was made in the Princely State of Travancore. The eligible natives claimed a stake in government jobs where non-natives are occupying the positions. The first government order initiating for government relaxation was issued by another Princely State of Kolhapur in the year 1902. Chhatrapati Sahu Maharaj, Maharaja of Kolhapur in present day Maharashtra took initiative in enacting 50% of reservation in government jobs for backward classes in the state (Yadav, 2010). The existing distinctions of scheduled communities were unknown, then to the rulers. The motive of state-led relaxation to the backward sections is to eliminate poverty. Concepts like social inclusion, inclusive growth and egalitarianism are post- independence developments.

Madras Presidency under British Raj enacted a communal government order in the year 1908. The rationale is to reserve a share of administrative posts on a caste basis. The order though initiated reservation, is considered more as apportion of services to various classes in the society. The order states reservation as 44% to non-brahmins and 16% each to Brahmins, Muslims and Anglo-Indian/Christians. It extended 8% reservation to SC's in 1921 (Yadav, 2010).The aforementioned were the early instances of government relaxations to the marginalized communities in pre-independent India. It is a coincidence that the southern part of India witnessed depressed castes agitations and their leaders emerging for rescue. Jyotirao Phule, Narayana Guru, Periyar and B.R. Ambedkar emancipated these sections.

When the constitution was being framed, the original draft has provisions for a reservation to religious minorities i.e, Muslims in legislature and services (Bajpai, 2008). Direct action day followed by communal riots, mass exodus of Muslims to newly formed territory and minor population in a Hindu majority state are reasons for their inclusion in reservation. Framers opined that religion based reservation was considered to be harmful in future to the nascent state. Also, the drafting committee chairman convinced the members that the constitution must give attention to the depressed classes who suffered torment in the entire Indian history. The final draft dropped Muslims and inserted marginalized castes (SC & ST). Latter was positively discriminated against in reserving constituencies and public services.

Constitutional furtherance of Dalit communities has hardly gone unnoticed by the other backward communities. The consciousness of backwardness among middle castes gained momentum in Tamil Nadu.These castes comprise

predominantly peasants, cultivators, artisans, weavers, etc. Justice Party, in early 1920s drew considerable attention of non-brahmins against upper castes. Party began to bargain with the British government in political and administrative allocation. Though attained moderate success, the constitutional non-inclusion(referred as general term) in extending welfare measures caused discontent among OBC's.

Backward Classes constitute approximately 30% of the Indian population. A clear distinction of what constitutes OBC's is not visible in society. When the constitution came to force, the state faced difficulties in legislating welfare measures favouring them. Appeals thronged from several quarters of these classesfor development schemes just like what was given to Dalits. Then central government immediately constituted the first Backward Classes Commission (BCC) in 1953. It is popularly known as Kaka Kalelkar Commission, named after its chairman.

Commission's report is concerned about the socially and educationally backward castes in the Hindu society. Adequate recommendations were suggested by the commission for the progress of OBC's. These castes have to wait for another two decades for second commission and just below four decades to enjoy the benefits of reservation. Government implemented the recommendations of the commission on SC & ST's and overlooked the suggestions on OBC's. Failure to draw objective tests and proper classification of OBC's was the prominent reason to why Kalekar's recommendations were not implemented (GoI, 1980). Though failed to satisfy the middle castes, the commission drew substantial attention of unifying non-brahmin castes. These castes proved vital in determining electoral results both at the centre and states in future.

At the central level, 1953-1990 interval is considered to be equilibrium for reservation. By 1965, the centre expressed unwillingness to draw a pan Indian OBC list, but allowed the states to draw their own (Lok Sabha debates Vol 48, series 3, 1965, as cited in Singh, 1983). Though OBC's are granted minor appeasements in the states, a formidable shift is invisible. Many states began to constitute BCC's[1] to implement preferential treatment to the intermediate castes by late 1970's. Andhra Pradesh (1970), Bihar (1978), and Karnataka (1977) began to treat the middle castes with preference.

The list of castes included (or excluded) in the OBC list varied from time to time. Modifications, amendments and extensions of privileges were a usual feature. Castes that won't come under the twice born castes, SC and ST groups began to mount pressure on the state governments to include them under OBC

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[1]   Preferential treatment was in a phased manner than as a whole. Bihar first provided post-metric scholarships in 1951, later extended to other areas. Andhra Pradesh initially constructed residential colonies for families and hostels for students.

category. Instates like Rajasthan, no middle caste[1]falls in unreserved quota. A pan Indian OBC reservation is yet to legislate until 1990. Developments in states didn't affect the central government and its subsequent rulers were reluctant to extend reservation to the intermediate castes.

Janata government on 20th December 1978 constituted second BCC headed by former Bihar Chief Minister Bindheshwari Prasad Mandal. It was popularly referredafter its chairman's name as Mandal Commission, has submitted its report in 1980. While submitting the report, the government at the centre was not the same that constituted the commission. The recommendations have to wait for another decade to be implemented at the all India level. Regarding the OBC reservation, the duration of four decades was a stasis period. Minor changes occurred in states accommodating the OBC's in preferential treatment. A gamut of social, political and economic changes is yet to come.

Years of turmoil

1989-1992 were considered as the years of turmoil in both external and internal aspects. Disintegration of India's favourable trade partner at that time USSR and escalation of global prices due to Gulf war are considered as external facets of turmoil. A tumultuous situation existed within the nation in political, social and religious spheres. Political instability and subsequent change of central leadership, Rathyatra by L.K Advani and invoking the Hindutva ideology, subsequent demolition of the Mosque in 1992 and the implementation of Mandal commission recommendations.

None of the previous legislation on affirmative action has generated much controversy over what 1990 OBC reservation has done. Post 1980, successive Prime Ministers under congress rule gave little attention to implementing the commission's recommendations. It was left to the National Front Government by Prime Minister V.P. Singh to table the recommendations in the parliament in August 1990. When the commission submitted its report, the Hindu and non-Hindu OBC population constitute nearly 52% (43.7%+8.4%) of the total population. To garner the intermediate castes favour, then government announced to execute 27% of reservation to the OBC's in education, public services, technical and professional institutions under centre and states. The commission recommended 22.5% quota reserved for SC and ST according to their population. The 27% reservation for OBC was provided against 52% of their population because of legal obligation under Article 15(4) and Article 16(4) to restrict affirmative action below 50% (GOI, 1980). Special treatment for socially and educationally backward castes under OBC has polarized the unified Indian society. Human Rights activist, Balagopal commented, The entire forward caste Hindu community has suddenly become a solid rock. Fundamentalists and seculars, Marxists and Gandhians, urban and rural, have all been united as nothing else

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[1]   Only caste which is a considered intermediate caste is Kayastha, comes under open category.

would have united them (Mandal, 2019).Demands are made to the central government for their inclusion by the other castes, which were omitted in the OBC list. The events that occurred aftermath of implementing OBC reservation witnessed self immolations, bandhs, hartals and hunger strikes by the students. Universities became centre to organize protests. Upper castes criticized the government initiative that, caste became priority at the cost of merit.Prime Minister has drawn hostility by the very castes which admired him. Futileappeals were lodged in the apex court against the 27% reservation. Even successive central government under P.V. Narasimha Rao brought 10% reservation for the upper castes on economic backwardness. But Supreme Court struck down in the Indra Sawhney case, 1992 stating that caste be the basis for reservation instead of economic criteria.

Affirmative action extended to intermediate castes has drawn considerable controversy across the nation. Successive years in Indian politics paved way for political parties to lure castes by promising them to include under the OBC category or broadening the facilities to garner votes. Even forward castes (excluding twiceborn) began demanding to add them under OBC quota or else took up violence as an alternative to accommodate them. Recently, Kapu (Andhra Pradesh), Jats (Haryana), Maratha (Maharashtra) and Patidar (Gujarat) are some of the castes who demanded and took up extreme actions in their respective states.

If a system is not at equilibrium, even minor shifts in inputs may lead to dramatic changes in outputs (Baumgartner & Jones, 2009). The duration from 1993-2019 is considered to be a combination of imbalance and stasis. Imbalance as affirmative action never attained stability and got extended to various spheres within the same communities. Successive governments have extended facilities in favour of SC and ST categories. 77th (1995) and 81st (2000) Constitutional Amendments were legislated that provide reservation in promotion and carry forward of reserved promotion posts respectively for these communities. The constitutional 82nd Amendment has gone further to relax the qualifying marks in any examination under the state to these castes. Hence, the process of reservation was never a completed one. A period of less than three decades was tranquil as no major enactment has resulted in drastic shifts from the existing situations. Though series of amendments broadened the affirmative action to the already benefited categories, it was justified as compensation for the injustice done to the castes. The government was prudent in avoiding wrongdoings so as not to acknowledge them as invalid by the judiciary. Though petitions were appealed against the enactments in the court, it hardly caused any alterations in the legislation.

Economically Weaker Sections

National Democratic Alliance led by BJP, was about to complete its first five years in office at the centre in 2019. Modi government initiated long pending reservation issue of upper castes based on economic backwardness. With an eye on forthcoming elections in April-May 2019, centre enacted 103rd Constitutional Amendment Act. The legislation ensures 10% preferential treatment for EWSin

public services and educational institutions for those who are not covered under existing reserved categories of OBC, SC and ST's (MoLJ, 2019). The reservation crossed the 50% cap set by the apex court in Indra Sahwney case. India. Though the fight for reservation is not over yet, latest amendment covers the entire Indian population under various quotas, except the economically well off.

The aforementioned legislation has hardly gone unchallenged in the court. The arguments against the 103rd CAA is that it crosses the ceiling of 50% reservation, economic status shall not be the sole criteria to be considered, existing reserved categories cannot be excluded in this act and finally the 10% reservation in education is extended to both public aided and private institutions (Supreme Court Observer, 2019). At present, the act is being implemented across the nation and the judiciary is yet to deliver its verdict on the arguments.

Juxtaposing the PEA as a theory to the practice of reservation, there exists a period of inertness systematically between major legislations. What causes drastic shifts post stasis is still unclear to the policy scientists. *Punctuations are the direct result of the increased pressure in the system, but the micro foundations and critical components of the process that produces such punctuations have remained unclear*(Eissler, Russell & Jones, 2016). Disruptive dynamics thatbesieges the policymakers will hinder identifying the legitimate cause for punctuation.

Positive Discrimination: An issue of bellicose in Indian society

Constituent framers truly believed to uplift the weaker sections through social legislation and never predicted to polarize the Indian society. Positive intention of the constitution has become a bone of contention among several castes to claim similar status. Under the pretext of conveying their backward status to the government, caste groups apply coercive methods and resort to violence. Anumber of castes being admitted under reservation have grown up even after 70 years of its implementation.

Practice of fair treatment to accommodate the unequal among equals became bellicose among the castes. Legal sanction of benefits in education and public services attracted the castes to contend for government favour. To gain public support, political parties promoted one caste to another to claim reservation at different times. Appeasement of relaxations has boosted political mobilization. An internal exclusion was created among the beneficiaries as some castes/groups are unable to enjoy the benefits awarded. There raised a demand for sub-categorization among OBC's and SC's. There emerged a new wave of demands to include a few social classes already under reservation in a more beneficial position. For example, a caste under OBC claims to be placed either under SC or ST, as the latter is advantageous than the former. Even the forward castes, traditionally excluded under preferential treatment began to bargain relaxations with the government. Castes claiming for reservation picked up rampage only to prove that government will indulge through violence.

The reason to solicit favours from the state is the amount of social, economic and cultural backwardness among the castes. Social groups believed that mistreatment experienced since ages have kept them aloof from mainstream life. Exclusion resulted in depriving human dignity, social justice and equality. Years of segregation that kept them detached from society shall be compensated only by fair and preferential treatment.

Conclusion

Reservation as social legislation is a continuous process but occurs in intervals. There might be minor amendments and drastic changes as well. How long the practice of preferential treatment will continue is left to the policymakers. With EWS legislation, a majority of Indian public were brought under the preferential treatment. The objective of providing relaxation is to minimize the societal inequalities and ensure human dignity and social justice. Hope,a pragmatic government will maintain a fine balance of ensuring social justice through law making within a diversified Indian society.

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Dimensions of Good Governance in Pandemic

Ruchika S Rathi [*]

Abstract

Everyone is aware of what happens when a novel coronavirus with a diameter of just a few nanometers hits the world. It seems that developed countries with world-class health-care services, good management, and well-equipped resources are all defaulters. One of the most devastating pandemics in human history is currently sweeping the globe. The situation deteriorated all over the world. And countries with world-class health-care infrastructure would not be able to protect their people from the coronavirus. The deadly virus has infected millions of people and killed lakhs. Even after almost every country in the world has taken precautionary steps, it appears that human science, knowledge, and advancement have failed in the face of this novel virus. This pandemic brings with it a new set of challenges. Although the planet has been hit by a variety of pandemics in recent decades, the situation has worsened this time. Despite the medical achievement of developing a Covid-19 vaccine, the situation is not improving. The primary responsibility of the government is to take constructive actions. Precautionary measures such as hand washing, wearing a mask, and maintaining a two-meter distance are required. Apart from that, the pandemic brings the world economy to a halt. Is it time to rewrite a new world order in which health and a balanced lifestyle take precedence as the most fundamental requirement of living conditions? Are lockdown and isolation adequate in and of themselves? Is it possible to solve this pandemic with the tools of good governance? What are the dimensions of good governance in terms of preventing a pandemic in the country?

Keywords: Covid-19, Governance, Politics, India

Introduction

Coronavirus was discovered and spread over the world, causing havoc. In November, 2019, we had heard the first case. Based on information, it was first tied to a live seafood market in Wuhan, China. According to sources, the virus

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was leaked from Wuhan's research lab. The world soon learned that this lethal virus had wrecked devastation in China. The news relates to corona virus terrified the natives around the world. The World Health Organization declared a global pandemic on March 11, 2020, due to an outbreak of a novel coronavirus (Covid-19). This statement sets the entire planet ablaze. Almost every country in the globe has imposed a rigorous lockdown in order to protect themselves from the virus. This is not the end of the epidemic; however, every three months, the virus's second and third waves wreak devastation on the world's affected nations. A pandemic strikes once in every 100 years, causing international alarm. It has a historical base. In the last two decades, several pandemics have struck the world, including the SARS virus (2003), a novel influenza virus H1N1 (swine flu), and a new coronavirus known as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) transmitted to humans by camels in Saudi Arabia (2012). The previous pandemics were not as fatal as Covid-19.

Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, is an influenza virus that has swept the globe. Each country's top government has taken steps to combat the pandemic. As information about the pandemic's complexity became more widely available, every country's primary response was to adopt preventative measures. To reduce the intensity of pandemics, several measures have been taken. The principles of excellent governance, without a doubt, play an important role in reducing the intensity of the pandemic. By writing this article, I try to demonstrate how new meanings of rule have arisen around the world, and how citizens are now actively participating in government actions. The high severity of the Covid-19 outbreak in India, as well as the government's response to such dangerous conditions. Good governance and its measures demonstrate their utility in dealing with the challenges of Covid-19.

Meaning of Governance

Governance has been defined as the use of power and authority by those who are in government to provide good and services to the people to uphold the common good and fulfil the aspiration and need of common man. Governance is concern with the power, strategies, policies; plan and project that aim at improving the quality of life. People's consent, legitimacy, and accountability are the foundations of good governance. Governance is not the same as government in its purest form, however. Any institution's governance is one of its most distinguishing features. Depending on culture, geography, political and administrative traditions, and economic condition, each nation's path to good governance is unique. According to the concept, government-citizen relationships are of high quality. Both the central and state governments are concerned about ensuring responsive, accountable and transparent administration at all levels, as well as decentralisation and people-friendly administration.

Good Governance Concept and World Focus

"*Good Governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development*" as quoted by former general secretary of UNO Kofi Annan.[1]

For the rest of the world, it's not a new term. Good governance is a tool that has been used for centuries in countries with liberal democratic governments. Public Administration's new generation deserves credit for introducing the concept of good governance globally. There was a general dissatisfaction with administration and institutions after World War II that led to the idea of a revival of the modern administrative system. The New Public Administration (NPA) concept is introduced by the young scholars of public administration. In addition to relevance, NPA is based on five principles: social equity, relevance, values, change, and a client-oriented focus. Freeing the government from the tyranny of politics is essential to achieving qualitative change. By adhering to the same philosophy, the New Public Administration concept maintains the foundation of good governance.

To describe the need for institutional reform and a better and more efficient public sector, the term 'Governance' was first used in the 1989 World Bank study "Sub-Saharan Africa-from Crisis to Sustainable Growth." Publication "Governance and Development" (1992)[2] expanded on this concept. In this publication, governance was defined as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. (World bank1992, page 1)

If we go through the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are officially known as "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," and a successor to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),the desired target can only be achieve on the basis of strong political institutions and dimensions of good governance. Especially for the SDG 16 ("Promote just societies that are both peaceful and inclusive") at all levels, effective, accountable and inclusive institutions are required. In addition to the performance-based notion of good governance, these requirements suggest democratic standards. Justice, stability, and protection of citizens' human rights and civil liberties are the cornerstones of good governance. According UNO, eight parameters are used to measure good governance: participation, rule of law; transparency; responsiveness; consensus-oriented equity and inclusion; efficacy and accountability. Good governance relies on the civil society, public representatives, and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) to address the needs

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[1]   Kofi A. Annan of Ghana, the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations, served from 1997 to 2006 .

[2]   Gisselquist Rachel, (2012.02.09),What Does "Good Governance" Mean ? ,Editioral of Untied Nations University https://unu.edu/publications/articles/what-does-good-governance-mean.html

of the public. Along with initiating policies, people are paying attention to how the government handles public issues in the twenty-first century. The representative form of government is found in almost every country. For the welfare of their subjects, representatives make policies. They hold public servants accountable for ensuring that these projects are implemented correctly.

Good Governance and India

India's glorious past sheds light on state administration. It was the king's or ruler's duty to ensure that the people were well-governed, as dictated by the dharma. Rule of law or code of conduct, Raj dharma was superior to the ruler's will. So even in the great epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana - which are often cited - the rulers follow the principles of good governance. Kautilya's Arthashastra focuses on the role and responsibilities of the King. Arthashastra deals extensively with statecraft and state administration, both of which have a great deal of relevance in modern times. A person's material well-being is defined as "Artha" while "Shastra" outlines how the state's administration should operate in the people's interests. Kautilya's policy emphasises protection, welfare, and prosperity, as well as the message of universal brotherhood and tolerance that India has sent to the world throughout history. Modern interpretations of the Bhagavad Gita's numerous cues for good governance, leadership, duty, and self-realization have been made.

The Independence movement was based on nationalist, democratic and secular ideals. For India, Gandhi advocated "Ram Rajya" based on the principles of good governance, which meant India would be transformed into a welfare state where the poor and downtrodden would be provided for and their progress would be facilitated through indigenous industries. Directive Principle of State policy, sixth and seventh schedule of Indian Constitution ,73rd and 74th constitution amendment acts changes the trends by providing the constitutional status to grass roots level democracy and by bringing some significant changes in it including reservation of seats for women, as well as scheduled castes and tribes. Special provisions have been made in the Indian Constitution after independence to ensure justice, liberty and equality as well as to empower the weaker sections of society such as women, youths and the poor, scheduled castes, and tribes. The past decades studies in India has shown that good governance aims to increase social and economic opportunities, eliminate poverty and provide efficient services at the grassroots level. Every citizen must be empowered and have the right to be informed, to express their views, which must be heard and considered, and to participate in various decision-making processes in order for good governance to function effectively.

Dimensions of Good Governance in India

Over the past two decades, India has made a number of attempts to improve its governance and government. There have been a number of articles and books published on this subject (Godbole 2014; Laxmikanth 2011).

Government departments must improve their efficiency and effectiveness under PM Narendra Modi's "minimum government, maximum governance" slogan. According to this approach, the government should be smaller and more efficient. This annual event was established in 2014 to commemorate the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Good Governance Day (Susashan Divas) was established in India in 2014 to promote government accountability. The Good Governance Index was launched to coincide with Good Governance Day on December 25, 2019.

This includes Proactive Governance and timely implementation, Passport Seva Kendras and online Income Tax Returns among other e-government parameters. This would usher in an era of "cooperative federalism" through the National Institute for Transforming India (NITI). Because of the government transparency and accountability created by Make in India, government officials are held to higher standards.There are many new policies, such as MGNREGA, the Prime Minister's Jan Dhan Yojana, GST tax collection, the Right to Education Act, the National Rural Employment Guarantee programme and the National rural health mission, as well as the Right to Food Act that have been developed as a result of working on the concept of "good government." Increased communication between rulers and ruled through Public Interest Litigation (PIL), e-filing of complaints on a particular department's website, and Right to Information (RTI) improves government proficiency.

Covid-19 and Indian Measures

The news of the coronavirus, a dreadful disease, begins the year 2020. Medical emergency is declared worldwide due to a condition that occurs. This contagious disease has infected most of the world's developed nations. Health-care facilities in Western and European countries are not up to the task of stemming the rising death rate. India was not one of the top countries in terms of medical services at that time. Due to the depressing news coming from Europe, India needs more time to reflect. Indian history sees the first ever nationwide lockdown. The Indian government imposed a three-week lockdown after numerous press reports revealed that the country lacked adequate patient beds, ICU units, and ventilators in hospitals. Medical facilities in rural areas are lacking. Health care frontline workers make up a smaller percentage of the population than other occupations. Furthermore, the government had to deal with many different challenges. Firstly, India has the second-largest population in the world after China. For more than half of the population, housing, sanitation, clean water and health care facilities are insufficient or non-existent. It is the people's ignorance, bewilderment, scepticism, and incomprehension that impede government work. There are no words to describe how difficult it is to get people to understand concepts such as home isolation and health and hygiene.

In this case, the Indian government's actions are laudable. Later, the rest of the world adopted a similar strategy to combat the pandemic outbreak. In India,

the National Disaster Management Act 2005[1] has been revised. "Social Protection and Social Insurance; Employment and Unemployment" is taken from the National Priorities List because disaster management is not included in the concurrent list. The government's priority of time was to raise public awareness about health, sanitation, and natural processes to improve immunity through yoga or exercises, and clarify the definition and usefulness of lockdown.

Indian Positive measures During Pandemic

For the pandemic's eradication, government officials devised a strategy. Just keep in mind the ideals of good governance, which call for elected officials to debate how to best represent the public interest.

Front-line personnel, including doctors, nurses, healthcare workers, sanitation workers, police officers, and volunteers, have been the government's most effective weapon. State governments take initiatives based on the parameters of good governance - responsiveness; consensus-oriented equity. On their own, state governments have taken steps to improve the situation. They have implemented what is known as a "Dharavi model[2]," which involves tracking, testing, and treating people in accordance with a system. The resources are using to increase the optimality. The 5Ts were initiated by the government of the Union Territory of Delhi. Five-step strategy to stop the spread of coronavirus in the nation's capital includes testing, tracing (people who had contact with a patient), treatment, teamwork, and tracking and monitoring. It's also a win-win for other states that decide to take similar measures. This is a pattern that the Korean and Singaporean governments have adopted for their own governments. Testing and tracing are more important to the central government. The same thing happened with testing, which went from 100 tests per day to over 2 lakh per day. There are a number of different guidelines, advisories and treatment protocols that the Center has developed, shared and issued.

According to The Washington Post, the media is the fourth pillar in democracy and a key component of good governance. Public knowledge is created by the media (electronic or digital). The media's first and most important duty is to be honest and broadcast truthful news in order to eliminate public biases. Many slogans are used to create awareness among the public..

a)   "Corona se Darna Nahi, savthaani hi bacchav hai"

b)   Jab tak dawai nahi, tab tak dhilai nahi

Many camps were held to educate people about the benefits of social distancing, masking, and hand-washing .The government's economic beneficiaries were also highlighted in the media. Because of the sudden lockout, the media has

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[1]   An Act to provide for the effective management of disasters and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. Be it enacted by Parliament in the Fifty-sixth Year of the Republic of India

[2]   Dharavi India's Largest Slum Area

focused on the accurate portrayal of migrant workers and the problems they face. As a result of media attention, questions of government accountability have been raised. It's a question that the media asks as well. The media increase the public's awareness.

For the administration to keep track of the community's spread, they issue directions on a regular basis. Economic benefits are distributed to all sectors of society after government officials learnof the lockdown's economic impact on all sectors of society. Extension of the deadline for filing the FY 2019-20 income tax return until December, 31 and then until February 20, 2021 are among the financial steps. The announcement of comprehensive relief packages by Prime Minister Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan is another benefit. The Anna Yojana (Food Scheme)is involved. As much as 5 kg of wheat and rice as well as 1 kg of pulses are given to the weaker section for the first three months of its life. We'll use the Public Distribution Scheme to make this available to the public. The Jan Dhan account also benefited women. For three months, women living in poverty will be provided with free LPG cylinders. People living in rural areas who are struggling to make ends meet can count on these economic benefits.

Prime Minister Modiji has adopted and embraced the slogan "Atmanirbhar Bharat," which means "an independent India." Atmanirbhar (self-sufficiency) has been well received as a result of the Prime Minister's clarion call. Several initiatives were promoted as part of this project. Many different types of products are now being manufactured in the country, which will increase the flow of money and income. It promote

As soon as the lockdown is lifted, the entire educational system is converted to digital format.. Schools and universities receive timely guidance from the Ministry of Human Resources and Development (MHRD) regarding classes and courses. In all parts of the country, students received a high-quality education and had access to modern technologies and business opportunities. Online mode has been activated for everyone. Several technological innovations are being introduced in this era of covid. Online portals that deal with education or medicine benefit the public.

India's scientists have revealed the creation of a vaccine to increase immunity, which is a significant accomplishment. It is only possible because of government support. Prime Minister Modiji has declared the commencement of the world's largest vaccination drive to safeguard citizens and enhance population immunity. It was the responsibility of the government to ensure that everyone was vaccinated by 2021.

The administration is emphasising the importance of vaccination programme coverage. As a result, the government has broken down the entire campaign into multiple phrases. In the first phrase, front-line military and elderly citizens over the age of 60 were given priority. The 45-year-olds will be covered in the next phase. The immunization will then be available to all adults in the

country. Since The immunizations will then be available to all adults in the country. Since January 16, the Indian government has distributed around 160 crore doses of Covid -19. According to statistics, 90% of the eligible population has received the first dose, with 60% receiving all three doses. Between the ages of 15 and 18, the federal government began immunizing teenagers. When was first adopted, the central government began immunizing teens aged 15 to 18. Around 3.5 crore young adults in these age groups received the first treatment between January 3 and January 26. As time progressed, the Corona virus took on a variety of other forms. The government has created provisions for booster dosages for front-line fighters and senior citizens to battle the new coronavirus strain.

The administration is always working to alleviate the epidemic crisis. The effective immunisation drive was the government's top goal at the time. The Indian government has issued orders for free vaccination for all citizens.

Conclusion

This is the first time in the twenty-first century when the entire planet is confronted with a pandemic issue that is generating a pitiful condition. The notion and idea of good governance is aware of all the stages to take in the process.In the event of a pandemic, the idea and concept of good governance knows exactly what to do. The entire infrastructure is actively working to remedy concerns under competent leadership. In India, pharmaceutical supplies and health-care facilities were formerly scarce. The administration continues to focus on the growing medical facility throughout and after the lockdown. Make greater attempts to obtain indigenous PPE equipment and swap sample collection methods. One of the most alarming tasks of government is to ensure that all people have access to efficient and effective medical care .The matter is completely under control. Despite its vast population, India's mortality rate is lower than that of other countries, which is a good element. India's government places a strong emphasis on.The Indian government places a high priority on developing and strengthening digital infrastructure. Aside from that, throughout the first and second waves of covid, the role and functions of administration were expanded. Administrators carry out a variety of humanitarian activities, such as cremations of unknown individuals, providing support to labourers, and educating the public about vaccinations. These are the positive indicators of Good Governance to curb out from the pandemic situation.

Each side features a head and a tail. In addition to the government's numerous beneficial initiatives, the post-covid era's economic and social consequences are significantly more harmful. This led in the loss of millions of jobs as well as a hazardous issue. Patience and faith in the government are essential. Today ,only due to number of steps of administrators and government the Indian Economy is recovering from the pandemic situation.

The new framework must be built on a recognition of the importance of and commitment to promoting more robust, legitimate, and inclusive national and

local institutions, as well as more inclusive involvement in public processes. To enable transformative and sustainable growth, it must overcome institutional and governance obstacles. It must promote the identification and support of options and activities that strengthen empowered societies' collaborative capacities in finding peaceful, effective, and long-term solutions to global, national, and local development concerns

As can be seen from the preceding discussion, good governance is an ideal that is difficult to accomplish in its entirety. Few countries and societies have come close to establishing complete good governance. To ensure long-term human development, however, steps must be done to realise this objective. As a result, many developing countries are attempting to attain good governance and acceptance of proven governance concepts in order to accomplish the necessary long-term economic growth and development. Effective governance institutions and systems that respond to public needs supply essential services and encourage inclusive growth, while inclusive political processes guarantee citizens have the ability to hold public authorities accountable. Furthermore, excellent governance produces a society devoid of violence, fear, and crime, as well as tranquil and secure communities that give the stability needed to sustain development initiatives.

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Political Parties and COVID-19: Perceptions and Actions

Rahul Chaudhary [*]

Abstract

The corona virus disease popularly known as the COVID-19 is an acute respiratory contagious disease, which have severely affected the political, social and economic systems of nearly all the countries of the world. Nearly all the nations are facing the challenge of minimizing the losses caused by this crisis in every aspect of the social life. It is mainly the political system which bears the responsibility of minimizing the losses and finally eliminating this disease because all the policy decisions are taken by it. Within the political system, whether it is liberal democratic or communitarian, the political parties plays an important role in the decision making process. The political parties not only influence the political life but also the social as well as economic spheres of the society. Hence, the present paper seeks to examine and understand the role and significance of the political parties during the current COVID pandemic. The study tries to analyze and scrutinize the constructive as well as destructive character of parties, in combating or spreading the corona virus, in the democratic as well as communist systems. The political parties often divide people on the ideological lines in different aspects of the life, so during COVID, were they able to bring people together to fight against this pandemic, as an united community, or they have further accentuated the ideological gap, even on this issue of existence.

> **Keywords**: Political party, corona virus, Pandemic, Epidemic, Power, Political System.

Pandemic: History, Definition and Issues

The COVID-19 is regarded as the most catastrophic event of the present century, which has killed & infected millions of people, all over the globe. It has

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been declared as pandemic by the World Health Organization. In general sense, the term pandemic can be defined as an epidemic on a large scale, surpassing international boundaries, affecting and killing masses on a wide scale. It is important to understand that not all diseases can be categorized as pandemic, though they may be prevalent on a large scale in the world. For a disease to be categorized as pandemic, it is important that it must be infectious or contagious in nature because then only it can affect a large population in a very short period of time.

The term pandemic is of later origin but the incidents of infectious disease can be traced back to ancient history of human civilization. The cases of pandemic can be traced in the human history since 430 to 426 B.C. when there was plague of Athens and its more recent threatening examples in contemporary history can be seen in the form of Spanish flu in 1918-19 and lately in the form of Swine flu in 2009-10. The most lethal epidemic recorded in the human history was the 'Black Death', which took place in 14th century and killed millions of people, mainly in Afro-Eurasian region. These pandemic outbreaks have infected and killed large number of people.

The immediate cause of the transmission of the current pandemic, COVID-19, among the humans has been contested till date, though it is clear that it started from the Wuhan city in China. But the long term reasons for the pandemic have been identified, which may also lead to frequent recurrences of such pandemic in the future. According to a report "era of Pandemics" prepared by IPBES in collaboration with UN - the climate change, destruction of bio-diversity, rising consumerism and increasing human population will lead to more such pandemics in the future. Hence, it is important for the global society and the governments around the world to take immediate steps to resolve or find solution to these issues in order to prevent the recurrence of such deadly pandemics.

The pandemic as a disease brings about great upheaval in the social, economic and political systems of a nation. It is not only dangerous for the lives of the people but it also, completely shatters the established social, economic and political norms of the society. As we have experienced that the present COVID pandemic have not only isolated the different societies but have also adversely affected the economies of nearly all the countries of the world. In the social sphere, we have seen cooperation and coordination among the people but also, at the same time, we have experienced apathy, social disorder and increase in the crimes. In the economic sphere also, large scale unemployment, rise in poverty, price rise, decrease in production etc. have adversely affected the economies, especially of the third world nations. The International Monetary Fund estimated nearly four percent shrink in the world economy in 2020.

The political system, being part of the social system, is also greatly affected by the pandemic outcomes. The political systems around the world have been fighting hard to save the lives of their citizens. The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the nature of the political systems- whether liberal-democratic or communists- as these systems have to take decisions against the natural rights of the people, like the freedom of movement and expression etc. The political systems were faced with the dilemma that, if they put the people under quarantine, then the economic aspect of societal life would suffer, and if they guarantee the people, the freedom of movement, then the contagious virus would spread, infecting and killing large number of people. So, the political systems had to perform the delicate task of saving the lives of the people, on the one hand, and at the same time, ensuring growth in the economic sphere, so as to avoid recession and greater economic troubles. In this decision making, done by the political systems, the political parties play an important role. It is the political parties, who give direction to the political system of a nation. Thus, to understand the working of political systems, during the present pandemic, it is necessary to examine the role of the political parties.

Political Party: Concept, Definition & Functions

In almost all the nations of the world, the political parties are essential for the smooth working of the political system. The political parties are vital for capturing the state power and hence, they exercise great influence on the political system, once they capture the power. It is in human nature, that we align ourselves with people either on ideological ground or because of common economic interests and come together to achieve the shared goals. This is how, slowly, the parties take shape and when they try to compete for achieving political values, they become political parties. The political party plays a significant role in every aspect of the political system- contesting for elections, forming the public opinion, making government, disbursing government policies among people, taking back peoples' response to the government etc.

In Political Science, a major issue regarding the concepts is that there is no universally agreed definition of these concepts. Yet on the basis of the definition given by different political theorists and on the basis of the practical manifestation of these concepts, certain implications can be drawn, which helps to understand them. The political party can be defined as group of people, who are agreed on certain principles and work in the national interest (Burke: Thoughts on the Causes of Present Discontent, p. 16). On the other hand there are some political theorists who emphasis on the notion that political parties are mainly aimed at capturing the state power by forming government (Neumann: Modern Political Parties, p.396).

On the basis of the definition given by the political theorists and broad working of political parties, a general definition of political party can be developed. Thus, in general sense, a political party can be defined as an organization of people, who share certain common ideology on important international, national and regional issues and work in larger interest of the society. These people formulate certain plans or programs to propagate and influence the community, at large. Finally, they use constitutional means to achieve their aims and participate in the struggle for power to form the government. Here, it is important to detach political party from the pressure groups because this paper is confined to the role of the political party. A pressure group is smaller in size and its interests are always confined to a particular section of the society whereas a political party can have a pan-national presence and it focus on the larger interest of the society. A pressure group do not directly participate in the politics and may sometime use extra-constitutional measures to achieve its aims, but a political party ensures active participation in the politics and is always confined to the use of constitutional means to achieve its objectives. Thus, from this distinction it is clear that the political parties have a more direct and influential role in the political system.

In different political systems of the world, different kinds of party system exist. Broadly speaking, there exists One-party System, where only one party exists or where mainly one party always form the government, as exists in China. Then there is Bi-party system in which the power rotates between the two main parties, though there may exists other parties as well. The finest example of bi-party system is Britain. Finally, there is multi-party system, in which there exists large number of political parties and they compete in the struggle for power. Here the example of Brazil, Germany and India can be given. Though the party system may vary in different nations but mainly the role and significance of parties remains important, for the proper functioning of their political system.

In the present day political systems, the following main functions are performed by the political parties, in their regular or day-to-day functioning-

Strive for Power: One of the major tasks of political parties is to capture power. They struggle to form the government. They, through the process of interest aggregation, try to build public opinion in their favour, so that they can attain authority. In the liberal-democratic systems this struggle for power is a continuous process, whereas in the communist or totalitarian systems, there is always the dominance of a single party and no resistance is allowed against the authority of that party.

Protector of political values, processes and institutions: The political parties defend the political values, processes and institutions established by the constitution or conventions. They, at the national level, provide coherence to the policies and processes, so that the government moves ahead on the path of development.

Political Recruitment: The political parties functions to widen the reach of their political principles and ideology. They in order to reach out to larger portions of the society, carries out the function of enrollment. This process of political recruitment, on the one hand, enables them to strengthen their organization and it, on the other hand, also prepares future trained leadership for the nation.

Political Socialization and Secularization: The political parties spread political values and principles among the people. They have different ideologies or set of principles, which they try to inculcate among the people and thereby try to create a well informed and awakened electorate. They perform the function of the diffusion of political culture in the society. In a liberal-democratic system, the parties use different means like media, unions, debates, demonstrations etc. to influence and educate the people.

Feedback contributor and evaluator: The political parties act as a link between the people and the government. They take the government policies among the people and provide feedback to the government. When in opposition, the political parties evaluate the performance of the government and highlight the defects in governance, to the people. In this way, through feedback and evaluation, they keep a constant check on the working of the government and provide direction to the government.

Social change and development: The political parties bring about new ideas, deal with the local issues and raise them on the national level. According to their ideology, they seek to make changes in the society. They set goal for the society and tries to achieve them through constitutional means, in this way they become agent of development. In a democratic nation, they play an important role in bringing about transformation in the society, according to the demands of the people. On the other hand, in a totalitarian state, without giving consideration to peoples' will, the party in power tries to bring about changes, as per its ideology.

Political Modernization: The political parties play an important role in the emergence of new political conventions and practices, especially in the developing nations, and thereby execute the job of bringing about political modernization. They act as an agency for political socialization, political awakening and uniting

the people for advancing the notion of national integration. The political parties try to give new dimensions, values and culture to the political institutions and thereby make them adaptable to the demands of the changing times.

Social Welfare functions: The political parties also perform 'non-political' functions, which are meant for the welfare of the people. The political parties work for the abolition of social and economic evils like untouchability, poverty, begar, illiteracy etc. They also perform public service during national emergencies or during natural calamities like providing food and other basic necessities during famine, floods or pandemic situation. Thus, the political parties also contribute in the social welfare functions for the sake of humanity.

Therefore, the above mentioned functions prove that the political parties are significant not only to the political sphere but also to the social and economic spheres of a society. Not only in a democratic structure but also in the totalitarian system the political parties provide direction to the political as well as to the entire social organization. In developing and under-developed states they act as an agent of social development and political modernization. Thus, the political parties play an important role in the day-to-day functioning of the political system, in fact, in both normal as well as extraordinary situations; their functioning determines the stability of the existing government.

The present corona pandemic is also one such extraordinary situation, which has challenged the functioning as well as stability of the social, economic and political systems of almost all the nations of the world. The political parties are directly connected to the people and as a result they act as carrier of the grievances of the people to the government. They, by providing the feedback or by criticizing the government, plays a significant role in the decision making process. So, if theoretically seen, during this pandemic period they have an important task to perform, that is, in influencing the government for swift decision making, spreading social awareness, protecting the social, economic and political rights of the people, acting as broker of new ideas and so on. The nature and role of political parties is different in different form of political systems, like in a liberal democratic system, the functions of a political party will differ from that in the case of a communist regime. Especially, in the developing or the third world nations the political parties play a significant role in the political system of that nation. In such nations, the political parties act as an important agent in bringing about progressive changes in political culture, in the process of political socialization, political modernization and political development. The political parties essentially provide different alternatives to the people, which is very necessary for the smooth and continuous function of the political system.

The corona pandemic has adversely affected the political, social and economic systems of almost all the countries of the world. No political system, whether it is liberal democratic, communist or the developing, has been immune to it. The different regimes have responded to this pandemic in their own ways, depending on their understanding of the situation, on the advice of their scientific community, on the basis of their economic and social capacity, on the basis of the political discourse going on within their system and so on. The political parties set the political discourse within the political system and in this way they have an important role to play during the present COVID crisis.

During the corona situation, the political parties have played different roles in different countries, depending on the nature of the political system in which they are operating, on the basis of their ideology, influenced by democratic rights of the people, on the basis of their own social obligations, democratic values, economic constraints, nationalism and national interest concerns and environmental concerns. These factors have influenced the policies and actions of the political parties during the corona crises.

Demand for social insurance and security: The political parties in order to win elections and increase their social base started demanding for social insurance, social security and social welfare programs during the corona pandemic. These arrangements are the need of the hour as different societies, in various nations, are facing higher unemployment rates, loss of jobs, closure of businesses etc. due to the COVID pandemic. These programs have been demanded by the political parties in the liberal democratic systems like the United States, UK etc. as well as in the communist countries like China. Influenced by the insistence of the political parties, the democratic as well as the communist regimes, have announced these packages to preserve the social and economic stability of their respective societies. A noticeable feature here is that, this has again led to the rise of social welfare state during the neo-liberal times of rolling back the state. But, whether this trend will continue in the future, will be a serious concern for the poor people, especially in the developing or the third world countries, as the long term effects of this pandemic will be greatly felt by this section of the society.

Demand for protecting the natural rights of the people: The citizens in different countries of the world enjoy the natural rights relating to freedom of movement, freedom of expression, freedom of access to knowledge etc. but these natural rights were severely affected during the corona crises. The governments, in different nations, imposed restrictions on these natural rights in order to save the lives of the people from corona virus. These restrictions were imposed in the name of guarantying the right to life. However, several populist political parties and

conspiracy theorists opposed these restrictions imposed in the name of protecting the lives of people. The political parties like Alternative for Germany (Germany), Reform UK (UK), National Rally (France), Forza Italia (Italy) etc. have demanded fewer restrictions in order to control the COVID pandemic. The Republican Party and its supporters in the US have favored lesser restrictions, as a means to curb the corona menace. In India, as well, the main opposition parties like the Indian National Congress have opposed the manner in which the lockdown was suddenly imposed, without taking into consideration the basic needs of the people or without any broader discussion within the political circles. In the Communist countries like China, the Chinese Communist party has supported the decisions and the actions of the government, in this regard.

Political ideology and the Corona crises: The divide among the political parties, on the ideological lines, have also been evident during the corona pandemic. The right- wing populist parties in most of the western countries believed that there should have been lesser restrictions on citizen activities during COVID crises, as compared to the liberals or the leftist parties. In the developing countries, like India, the liberal and the leftist parties have accused the government of following the policies, during the corona situation, that are beneficial to the rich capitalist class of the society. The ideological struggle, for supremacy, among the liberal democratic and communist regimes can also be seen, during this pandemic, as the communist regimes, led by communist parties, claimed to have dealt in better way, the challenges that have aroused due to COVID pandemic. On the other hand, majority of the people in democratic regimes believes that their political system is better in combating corona consequences.

Demand for upholding the sovereignty of institutions, democratic values and freedom of press: The corona pandemic has provided enough opportunity to the political parties, ruling different countries, to consolidate their command over political authority. The ruling parties, in many democratic nations, have controlled the functioning of important institutions and have put a check on the independent functioning of the press, if the press is indulged in criticizing the COVID management policies of the government. According to the Freedom House, the universal decline in democratic values has further accelerated during the corona pandemic. The press, during the covid times, has become more politicized and divided among the party lines, as can be seen in countries like US, India etc. The main opposition parties in the democratic regimes, especially in the Eastern and Central Europe and in the developing nations, have called for independent functioning of the democratic institutions and the press as well, in order to preserve or retain the democratic system.

The Corona vaccination drive and the political parties: The only way, known to different countries of the world, to curb the COVID menace, is through vaccination. The political parties, belonging to different ideologies, have supported the vaccination drive in order to reduce the risk against corona virus. However, in this regard as well, supporters of some political parties or citizens of some political regimes have shown opposition to getting being vaccinated. Mainly, the supporters of the Republican Party in the US and of the Conservative parties in different countries of the world have protested against the COVID vaccination drive. Similarly, the people residing in the authoritarian regimes have shown distrust towards the governments' vaccination program.

The Environmental concerns, COVID-19 and Political Parties: The parties supporting green politics, that is, which emphasis on environmental issues, social justice and non-violence, have attributed the present pandemic to the changing environment as well as lifestyles of the people. During the corona lockdown, reduction in the pollution levels were observed around the world. The work from home culture was encouraged, which has lead to less consumption of the depleting resources. Further, the governments had to ensure minimum wages and extend social security benefits to the least advantaged section of the society, thereby, working in the direction of social justice. The Green parties like the Green Party, UK has highlighted the fact that, if during emergencies we can work for furthering the cause of environment and social justice, then we could also continue these policies during the normal times, to make the world a better place to live in.

The Racial and Religious discrimination during COVID-19 and the Political Parties: During the corona crises, the incidents of racial/religious discrimination and discrimination against the marginalized sections were witnessed in many countries of the world. Even the governments, popular political leaders, media houses were using the minorities or racial/religious groups as scapegoats, accusing them for the spread of corona virus, in a particular society. Reports of racial discrimination against the people of East Asian appearances (especially Chinese) have been observed from many developed political systems including the US, UK, Italy, Australia etc. In India also, the Muslims were, at the earlier stage, accused of spreading the corona virus, as an event of religious gathering in New Delhi was linked to spread of COVID-19. The populist-conservative leaders and political parties, somewhat, encouraged these trends whereas, on the other hand, the liberal and leftist political parties, mainly, criticized these trends and persuaded the people on the line that only a united society can effectively deal with such pandemic situation.

The political parties have also performed an important function of diffusing the social awareness about the ways and means to deal with the corona virus threat. The reach of the political party, within the society, is much farther than the reach of the government and as a result they have encouraged the people to adopt COVID appropriate behavior for their own safety as well as for preventing the spread of virus in the society. The volunteers of political parties have contributed constructively by providing basic necessities to the poor people, especially in the third world nations. The criticism made by the opposition political parties has encouraged/forced the ruling party to take adequate decisions in the social and economic spheres for the benefit of the vulnerable section of the society. Though the democratic process of election was hampered in many countries, due to this pandemic but still the political parties encouraged adoption of new methods to hold elections, which have contributed to Political Modernization, as can be seen in the case of elections held in the Republic of South Korea.

Thus, on the basis of above discussion, it can be concluded that the political parties have contributed in a variety of ways to deal with the COVID pandemic. On the basis of historical evidences, it has been observed that during the times of emergency or crises like war, the political parties in a country comes on a common platform to deal with the situation. In such situations, the political parties very seldom resort to criticizing the government because the government works, more or less, on a common minimum agenda, decided by the main political parties. However, during the COVID pandemic a new trend was seen in this regard. In many countries, it was observed that during the peak months of the spread of corona virus, the opposition parties mostly remained silent on the government efforts and as soon as the peak was over, these parties criticized the government for the policies it adopted to deal with the situation. The political parties play an important role in keeping the political system alive and vigilant to deal with different kinds of situation, which aroused due to corona crises. It has been well scrutinized that no political system can exist in the absence of parties …….*Parties are the main institutions through which the responsibility of the rulers is enforced. If parties are unable to perform this function, then other institutions, whose purposes are similar, will likewise fail* (Brown: New Directions in Comparative Politics, p. 24).

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Book Review
Sekhar Brahma, Religion of the Boros and their Socio-Cultural
Transition A Historical Perspective, Published by DVS Publishers,
Guwahati, 2006 and 2nd Reprint in 2011

Varshali Brahma [*]

The book is the author's work on the Bodo tribal society of Northeastern India. He tried to trace from the historical aspects of the social transition of the Boros and how the religion is being responsible for the social mobilization in the Boro society. He contributed this work to understand the aspect of the history of social development from the tradition to modernity of the Boros of Assam. This book the *Boros*are known to be one of the composite parts of the Assam, who forms a major tribal community. The "Bodo" word was first given by the Hodgson. According to Suniti kr. Chatterjee , mentioned that the "Bodos spread all over the valley of Brahmaputra river as well as East Bengal forming a solid block in eastern India and they form one of the main bases of the present day population". The Boros also known as Bodo is one of the earliest settlers and major communities of Assam who belongs to Indo- Mongoloid ethnic group of the Tibeto- Burman language family.

The Bodos they have their own language and literature, the Bodo women wear their traditional attire called as dokhna and sadri. They follow their culture, tradition, customs and belief. Their traditional religion is Bathou (the supreme God of Bodo). With the coming of the people into the fold of mainstream Hinduism, and the arrival of Christian Missionaries, some section of the Boro community got converted into Christianity. Hence, therefore with an upward mobility which has been taken place has been the result of the different religions in the society. The Boros at present call themselves as Hindu and follow some Hindu customs and rituals. Though historical, this book, in fact described into the different religious

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cults which came into the existence and social reaction towards the presence of the new religions. The author analyzed systematically and the study shows that the development process is the main cause of religious movement, ethnic crisis, social mobility are all inter connected to each other and the roots were linked with the Brahma Dharma movement (in early 20th century, a new religious movement led by Kalicharan Mech, latter known as Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma took a place in Boro society) and the spread of Christianity during the early part of the twentieth century.

Every study of the human society has to be done with the study of Culture. All the aspect of the society has the presence of the cultural form of transmission. Which include the literature, science, technology, philosophy, religion, music, art. Religion has played an important role in the changing their social status, pattern, economic, way of thinking, standard of living and it has led to achieving the higher education, and modernization of the Bodo society. The socio-cultural mobilization which has been emanated from religious movement during the beginning of the twentieth century, has made a new and different social behaviour among the community. It has been observed that the Bodos has added new ideas, rituals, and behaviour among the new religious cults. The difference between different religions or sects have never create any unhealthy situation among the Boro society, rather they have developed the Boros to look upward toward the development. Religion plays a dominant role in their family. The socio-religious movement of the early twentieth not only made them conscious about the own culture and their identity, but with the emergence of the integral part of whole Indian Culture. Keeping all the political differences with the mainstream political issues, the Bodos are adopting the Indianness socially and culturally following it. Though the Bodos, regarded themselves as traditional society, but today they are willing to accept the bond of unity and sentiment with the other communities like religion beliefs, seasonal festival, respect of scriptures etc.

The book is neatly divided into seven chapters the first chapter's deals with the introduction on the Bodo historical background. The second chapter is devoted to the Bathou religion and the traditional Boro society, continuity and change, the changes in the society and different organization are being motivated by the religion and it being a major system of the belief and an agent of value enforcement and action. The third chapter traces the impact of Christianity among the Boros, the Christian missionaries made a great contribution towards the creation of Bodo language and the development and growth in the years. The fourth chapter is all about the religious movement, the process of conversion to different sects of Hinduism. The fifth chapter talks about the survey of the growth and development of Boro language and literature, the progress of the Brahma

movement and the process of development in the field of education alongside with the Brahma religion by Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma was followed by the effort to revive the Boro culture and literature for the overall need of education. The sixth chapter traces the changing patterns in the Boro society, the progress in the new areas of exploration and the development of science and technology has touched the Bodo society and it has brought tremendous changes in the social, economic, political and cultural aspects. The Boro society has tried to keep the pace and has learnt to live with every coming situation and the last chapter contains a summary of the book.

The book encompasses an excellent attempts on the tracing of the nature and historical process of socio-cultural transition of the Boro society of Assam, an in- depth account of their on the basis of the national perspective. Whereas the socio-cultural mobility, has been emanated from different religious movement from the beginning of twentieth century, which has brought many new multiple social behaviour among the community. The new religious cults have added new behaviour, rituals, and ideas, among the followers of those cults among Boros. They have helped the Boro society, to have a different and secular outlook towards the development of their society, though today the Bodo society has regarded themselves united with the other communities in many other aspects such as belief, practice, and seasonal festival has come in for special mention. The author goes in detail to highlight the several dimensions like the change in the Bodo society, process of Hinduization, conversion to Christianity, impact of modern education and the birth of different social organization of the Boros. Today, the Boros are not only concerned about having their own identity but they have the desire to have the national identity. This is one of the scholarly book. The author's treatment of the working on the religion and socio-cultural transition is historical and the studies were made on to understand the Bodo society which is the real strength of this interesting book. The book is written in flawless English and the methodology is quite remarkable and highly commendable. The author has done a wonderful research and which has been observed in this book. All in all, this is an excellent written work and it is a must for every reader to read this book who are interested in the Bodo society and culture. It provides an excellent insights into the religion, culture and society.

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