
***Survival Strategies of Minorities in South Asia
From Inclusion and Exclusion toward Cohabitation***

Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (KAKEN) (C) 2018-2020

Japan Society for the Promotion of Science

「南アジアにおけるマイノリティの生存戦略—包摂と排除から共棲へ—」(18K1182)

(Principal Investigator: Takako INOUE)



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Preface

The present collection of papers is an outcome of the three-year research project “Survival Strategies of Minorities in South Asia: From Inclusion and Exclusion toward Cohabitation,” conducted from 2018 to 2020 under a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (C), Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.

The research project was planned and developed by a research group from the Institute for Oriental Studies of Daito Bunka University. This research group, consisting of scholars majoring in the area studies of South Asian countries, was formed in 2014. The volume of research papers *Social Transformation and Cultural Change in South India: From the Perspectives of the Socio-Economic Periphery*, edited by Takashi Shinoda, Takako Inoue, and Toshihiko Suda, was published in 2017 by the Institute of Oriental Studies of Daito Bunka University as a result of an international conference organized by this research group. The members have been continuing to work together since; besides holding quarterly regular meetings, we have been presenting our research papers at academic conferences, contributing papers to academic journals, and even expanding our perspectives and range by inviting scholars from the other institutions.

With the spread of the new coronavirus infection (COVID-19) since early 2020, the last year of this research project, the members were forced to adopt a work-from-home policy. This situation has prevented us from conducting complementary field surveys in South Asia; the success of this present project is highly dependent on how much materials we can collect from field surveys. As a result, we had to complete our project papers on the basis of the analysis of materials that had been collected up to early 2020.

While we submit the present collection of papers as a result of the limited period of the Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research, our research group continues to exist as a part of the Institute for Oriental Studies of Daito Bunka University. We hope that everything affected by COVID-19 gets back to normal and that we can continue to pursue our field surveys.

Acknowledgments

For this collection of papers, we are indebted to Emeritus Professor Hiroji Kataoka of Daito Bunka University, Dr. Kenta Funahashi of Ryukoku University, and Dr. Jun Obi,

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Takako Inoue
Principal Investigator,
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Introduction

Takako INOUE

1. Minorities of South Asia in the Globalizing World

Since the economic liberalization of the 1990s, South Asian societies are seeing the values of upper-caste Hindu intellectuals, represented by Hindu nationalism, become increasingly dominant, together with the winners of the neoliberal economy, and those capable of negotiating with representatives of multinational enterprises in the globalizing world. In the meantime, double and triple oppressed minorities in terms of caste, religion, gender, and ethnicity, such as Dalit Christians, and rural Muslim women, have few options to improve their lives under the unequal conditions sown by the widening economic and social divides.

For instance, the last three decades have seen India's religious minorities, including Muslims and Christians, face more serious problems and difficulties than before. In addition to the anti-Muslim violence that spread throughout the country in the 1990s, since the Ayodhya dispute and the destruction of the Babri Masjid during a political rally on 6 December 1992, anti-Christian violence has also significantly increased since the Bharatiya Janata Party came into political power in 1998. Due to this spread of religious exclusiveness, both rural villagers and city slum dwellers, consisting primarily of migrants who left their native villages, have faced many difficulties in their daily life, ranging from a lack of help, cooperation, and communication, as well as an inaccessible secure safety net that should have been provided by the government. Thus, the lives of minorities have been endangered by political parties and their followers.

This research project explores the voices and activities of South Asian minorities through extensive fieldwork focusing on their living and intimate spheres, as well as by examining the comparatively little material available about them. We also shed light on their survival strategies by focusing on their daily practices, and their way of protecting their lives.

The habitation space of these minorities can be analyzed through applying the

concept of “political society” of the governed, as defined by Chatterjee (2004): a political arena or space for the underprivileged groups whose living condition is explained as marginalization. The minorities regard themselves as subjects rather than citizens in a society characterized by the disparity between a “civil society” in its narrow sense, defined to be related to the political, rights-based citizenship, and a “political society” of the governed, characterized by their precarious habitation. The governed may be creating their own spatial areas no longer confined to margins or peripheries, which is an entrance into the larger political arena beyond social and cultural borders. Hence, the governed can raise their own voice, and therefore they will no longer be subalterns.

Additionally, we should also consider the concept of “public sphere” redefined by Frazer (1990). She claimed that marginalized groups form their own public spheres, which she called “subaltern counter-public” or “counter-publics”. Practically, one common universal public sphere imagined in an ideal civil society does not exist, but there are several counter-publics that form against hegemonic dominance. The governed struggling against the sovereign in Chatterjee’s political society can be characterized as counter-publics or subaltern public spheres. However, I would like to posit that the subaltern public sphere in India today may not always be characterized by “counter,” but sometimes rather by “defensive,” in that subaltern publics continuously struggle to defend their peaceful life against daily precarity (Inoue 2017: 56-57).

In this research project, we would like to propose the concept of “cohabitation” as an alternative theoretical framework, instead of using conventional terms such as “inclusion and exclusion” of the governed, from the viewpoint of “top-down reform” of the imagined ideal civil-society from above. Further, we envision the possibility of cohabitation in their living and intimate spheres from the viewpoint of the substantial political society or counter- publics.

2. Concept of Cohabitation

To explore how minorities in South Asia are struggling to improve conditions in their space of habitation by reducing precarity, we first evaluate the concept of cohabitation augured by Butler (2012). In her argument on the public sphere, Butler explains that all

habitation is always cohabitation and always fragile; further, she argues that we must actively seek to preserve “the non-chosen character of inclusive and plural cohabitation” (Butler et al. 2011: 84). Thus, the term “cohabitation” necessarily leads our attention to the space of their habitation. Further, she suggests that certain ethical obligations emerge in situations of antagonistic and unchosen modes of cohabitation: “those forms of cohabitation characterized by equality and minimized precarity become the goal to be achieved by any struggle against subjugation and exploitation but also that the goals start to be achieved in the practices of alliance that assemble across distances to achieve those very goals” (Butler 2012: 150).

Though Butler proposed this ethical and theoretical framework in relation to Palestinian society, it can be beneficial in considering the social situation of minorities living under the political pressure of homogenizing ideology, namely Hindutva or Hindu nationalism in India. According to Butler’s suggestion, we cannot choose with whom to cohabit the earth, and it is impossible to live together without being involved with each other; thus, we should form alliances, instead of maintaining antagonistic relations and keeping distances between “us” and “others” in the space we have to cohabit. However, how can any mutually beneficial and effective alliance be expected in diversified societies like South Asian countries? We should pay attention to how we can share the physical and symbolic space that we cohabit, and should also recognize that others who reside next door can retain the right to secure their own space in which their culture can be preserved and enjoyed. Hence, a balanced way to realize “cohabitation without precarity” is necessary not only through acts of alliance, but also through acknowledging the need for the retention of separate spaces.

At the same time, considering Butler’s views of the fragility of cohabitation, it is also important to take into account the remarks and criticism of her ethics of cohabitation in the field of feminist geography. Feminist geographers have increasingly focused on the political, economic, and cultural situations of the living and intimate spaces of habitation mapping out in global geopolitics recently (Barabantseva, Mhurchú, and Peterson 2019; Dixon 2015; Donovan, Courtney and Moss 2018; Pain and Staeheli 2014; Smith 2020; Staeheli, Kofman, and Peake 2004). It is quite natural for them to take Butler’s theoretical framework into consideration, since cohabitation is always an intimate affair that is at the

same time “global” (Harker 2014). Examining ethics of cohabitation as a means of thinking intimate geopolitics, Harker critiques that cohabitation-as-ethical-relation fails to map neatly onto cohabitation-as-spatial-practice in instances of geopolitical violence: ethics of cohabitation function in non-democratic contexts, the tension increases between chosen and unchosen cohabitations, and therefore cohabitation turns into a mean of ethno-national violence.

However, Butler’s cohabitation can still be useful in examining spatial issues of minorities’ habitation. Considering the above criticism by feminist geographers, the concept of cohabitation should be modified to apply to spatial practices in intimate spheres. Butler’s cohabitation as ethical obligation of minimizing precarity sounds rather severe and aggressive. Instead, we propose the term “gentle cohabitation,” which often appears to describe affectionate feelings among family members, particularly the mother-child relationship. Since the family is the core of daily human relations in an intimate sphere, our concept of gentle cohabitation can be effective in explaining the expectation to overcome conflicts and antagonism by focusing on common problems, rather than differences and opposing issues. The word “gentle” suggests a more flexible way of cohabitation based on sympathy. At the practical level, one seeks to make the other recognize one’s own spatial practices by consideration, negotiating with each other for the improvement of daily life, and formulating reasonable and convincing strategies to cohabit in an intimate sphere.

3. Case Studies

The present collection consists of six papers, each focusing on a different case study of minority practice in South Asia.

Shinoda focuses on the transformation of food habits in modern India from the perspectives of (1) the material basis for cooking, (2) food consumption patterns and regulations on eating, and (3) meal patterns. The paper examines trends all over India, and conducts a regional case study of Gujarat Vidyapith students. He explores how the diversity of food items and food culture among social groups has tended to decrease over the past 10 years, in particular by revealing the massive shift from non-vegetarian

consumption to vegetarianism among the Backward Classes. These changes in food culture have been closely related to the reorganization of identities in terms of region, social group, and economic class affected by globalization, Sanskritization, and various political and religious movements.

Next, Suda focuses on female overseas workers from rural Bangladesh. Due to the globalization of the labor market and increasing demand for labor from abroad, the number of female overseas workers have increased in the 2000s. Suda reveals their experiences and perceptions through intensive fieldwork in the Comilla district. The benefits of overseas employment are generally greater than the costs, leading poor women to seek overseas employment opportunities as an escape from poverty and to improve their life. Some of the problems faced however, are overwork, lower pay than promised, employer abuse, and family problems caused by their long absence. Suda suggests that the government of Bangladesh, host countries, and other organizations, should take steps to minimize the problems and costs for female overseas workers.

Suzuki focuses on the situation of urban Balmikis, known as the sweeper caste in Delhi. Since 2010, the privatization of the government sanitation department has accelerated, causing insecurity and the fear of future unemployment for those employed there. Suzuki explores the ways in which Delhi's Balmikis have tried to secure their livelihood entitlements. As a means of appealing to the government and civil society about such problems, their collective grassroots activism includes public interest litigation, and workers' strikes on the street. By examining how awareness of rights and entitlements is formed and manifested, she analyzes different aspects of exclusivity and collaboration within Dalit movements.

This is followed by Masuki's focus on the dry latrines of the colonial period, and the campaigns for the liberation of sweepers and scavengers. Their untouchability was gradually substantialized not just by their uniforms and brooms, but also by their daily use of the designated lanes and streets to collect and carry waste. After independence, there were campaigns for the liberation of scavengers by the demolition of dry toilets, as well as through litigation. Masuki discusses how the scavengers' labor has played a role in both their identity formation, and in their everyday experience of untouchability-based social marginalization. Furthermore, both the movements and academics have discussed

this matter in terms of technology used in the toilet system, casteism, and modern notions of sanitation and human rights.

Another Dalit group examined in this collection is the Paraiyars. Inoue explores how the Paraiyattam, a traditional group dance accompanied on the *parai* drum has become a paradoxical symbol within the traditional arts supported by the upper castes, and the religio-political practices of the Paraiyars, one of the Dalit communities. Although the Paraiyattam was once an indispensable part of the Hindu funeral ceremony and associated with pollution, today its performance is regarded as a positive practice that expresses Dalit liberation in Tamil Nadu. Inoue discusses how the Paraiyattam is affiliated with diverse political and religious groups, including Dalit liberation theology of the Church of South India, Dalit political parties in Tamil Nadu, and militant Maoist organizations, while at the same time functioning as a safety valve for the upper castes, who utilize it as an “excuse” for their political concern for Dalits.

Lastly, Ishida examines novels written by the first Muslim modern writer, Rāhī Māsūm Razā, who wrote his literary works not only in Urdu, the national language of Pakistan, and considered to be the common language for South Asian Muslims, but also in Hindi, India’s official language. Rāhī, as a Muslim who chose to remain in India after the Partition of India in 1947, kept thinking of the reasons he remained in India, and expressed his thoughts in his literary works. By examining Rāhī’s novels written in Hindi, Ishida explores how we should understand his thoughts. Regardless of religion, Ishida suggests that the main reason Rāhī remained in India after Independence was his attachment to his homeland, which comprises nature, life, culture, history, and so on; in other words, the undivided India before Independence.

“Unity in diversity” is a long-standing slogan of Independent India, which its founding fathers referred to as an ideal essential to national consolidation and progress. India’s diversity is tremendously obvious and visible. In contrast, the invisible unity enforced by political parties composed of Hindu nationalists are a cause of tension, antagonism, and conflict among diverse groups, characterized in particular by caste hierarchy and religious beliefs in recent years. The ideal unity imagined by the founding fathers should be repeatedly inquired into, and a substantial way of peaceful and gentle cohabitation should be developed, so as not to damage the spatial practices of minority

groups.

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1

The Transformation of Food Habits in Modern India

Takashi SHINODA

1. Introduction

This paper aims to analyze the transformation of food habits in modern India from the perspectives of (1) the material basis for cooking, (2) food consumption patterns and regulations on eating, and (3) meal patterns (change in the composition of Uchishoku: home cooking, Gaishoku: eating out, and Nakashoku: home meal replacement (HMR)). The paper examines trends all over India and conducts a regional case study of Gujarat Vidyapith students.

2. Material Basis for Cooking (Kitchen and Chulha)

Besides food expenditure data, the India Human Development Survey (IHDS)¹ also compiles data on kitchens and furnaces, which are indispensable for cooking. These constitute the basic materials for cooking, and we find great differences in the type of these facilities between religious and social groups and between urban and rural areas.

(1) Kitchen

According to the IHDS, as shown in **Table 1**, only 55% of households surveyed had an independent kitchen. Around 20% of households cooked “outdoors,” and the other 25% in the “living area”. “Living area” refers to a residential space other than kitchen. In metropolitan areas, the proportion of households with an independent kitchen was high, while in rural areas, especially in less developed villages, households with independent

¹ The India Human Development Survey (IHDS) is a nationally representative, multi-topic survey of 41,554 households in 1503 villages and 971 urban neighborhoods across India. The first round of interviews was completed in 2004-5. A second round of IHDS re-interviewed most of these households in 2011-12 (N = 42,152). IHDS has been jointly organized by researchers from the University of Maryland and the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), New Delhi. Survey data are publicly available through ICPSR (From Homepage of IHDS, “Home,” <http://ihds.info/>, accessed on 20/09/2016).

“kitchens” made up only 42%. By religion and social group, the proportion of households with an “independent kitchen” was high among “Three religions” (Sikhs, Jains, and Christians), “Brahman,” and “Advanced Castes”. while the corresponding percentage was small among “Adivasi” and “Dalit” households.

Table 1: Distribution of households by the location of kitchen, urban-rural divisions, and religious/social groups (2011/12; %)

Division	Sub-division	Cooking place			Total
		Outdoor	Independent kitchen	Living area in a house	
Urban/rural	Metropolitan area	5.9%	73.4%	20.7%	100.0%
	Other urban area	10.0%	70.8%	19.2%	100.0%
	Developed village	23.6%	53.7%	22.7%	100.0%
	Less developed village	26.3%	42.2%	31.5%	100.0%
	Total	20.0%	54.9%	25.1%	100.0%
Religious/social groups	Brahmin	10.3%	69.6%	20.1%	100.0%
	Advanced castes	13.0%	67.4%	19.5%	100.0%
	OBC	21.7%	53.9%	24.4%	100.0%
	Dalit	25.5%	46.2%	28.3%	100.0%
	Adivasi	14.7%	45.9%	39.4%	100.0%
	Islam	24.2%	51.3%	24.5%	100.0%
	The three religions	5.4%	88.6%	6.0%	100.0%
	Total	20.0%	54.9%	25.1%	100.0%

Source: Prepared by the author from the India Human Development Survey unit level data for 2011/12

(2) Furnaces

Next, let us examine the distribution of furnaces. As shown in **Table 2**, the type of furnace is divided into (1) outdoor ovens, (2) traditional furnaces (chulha), (3) improved furnaces (chulha with chimney), and (4) others (kerosene range, gas stove, etc.). A typical outdoor oven is made up of only three stones, one stone on the back and two stones on the side, with the fuel placed in the space between the stones; the smoke is dispersed in the air. A traditional furnace (chulha) is made of soil or clay produced by the user or craftworker in an independent kitchen or other living space in the house. The size varies from small ones with only one cooking oven to large ones with several cooking ovens. Normally, chulhas are fixed in place, but portable types are sometimes used.

In addition, a bucket-type oven (angithi) that can be easily carried is also used as a main or auxiliary furnace. Since traditional furnaces are not equipped with facilities to

manage smoke, it can fill the air when the furnace is used inside the house. Improved furnaces with chimneys can handle smoke to some extent. Since smoke is harmful not only to the cook but to all people living in the house, campaigns to promote improved furnaces are being conducted throughout India. Another type of furnace is a cooking range (stove or range) that uses fossil fuels such as kerosene and gas without using biomass fuel.

Table 2: Distribution of households by the type of furnace, urban-rural divisions, and religion/social groups (2011/12; %)

Division	Sub-division	Type of furnace				total
		Outdoor	Chulha	Chulha with chimney	Others (kerosene/gas)	
Urban/rural	Metropolitan area	1.9%	6.0%	1.1%	91.1%	100.0%
	Other urban area	9.8%	16.2%	4.4%	69.6%	100.0%
	Developed village	21.9%	44.3%	8.8%	25.0%	100.0%
	Less developed village	22.0%	60.3%	8.3%	9.4%	100.0%
	Total		17.5%	40.8%	6.9%	34.8%	100.0%
Religious/social groups	Brahmin	6.6%	37.1%	3.4%	52.9%	100.0%
	Advanced castes	11.9%	28.4%	5.7%	54.0%	100.0%
	OBC	18.5%	40.1%	7.6%	33.8%	100.0%
	Dalit	21.4%	47.6%	7.0%	24.1%	100.0%
	Adivasi	24.2%	53.2%	6.9%	15.7%	100.0%
	Islam	16.2%	44.3%	7.6%	31.9%	100.0%
	The three religions	7.7%	15.0%	8.7%	68.6%	100.0%
	Total		17.5%	40.8%	6.9%	34.7%	100.0%

Source: Prepared by the author from the India Human Development Survey unit level data for 2011/12

The difference in the distribution of furnace by type is very great between urban and rural areas. Biomass fuels are mainly used in rural areas, while fossil fuels constitute a main fuel source in urban areas. The type of furnace corresponds to the type of fuel. Thus, “other ovens” that depend on fossil fuels predominate in metropolitan areas (91% of households) and urban areas (70% of households), while biomass-fueled furnaces (three-stone, chulha, and improved chulha) make up an overwhelming proportion in rural areas. Notably, fossil fuels have begun to spread even in rural areas, particularly in developing villages, which are more sensitive to new movements such as urbanization, modernization, and globalization.

By religion and social group, the ratio of households using “other ovens” is as high as 69% among the Three Religions, followed by Advanced Caste and Brahmin in that order. Contrariwise, the ratio of households using “other ovens” is extremely small among the Adivasi because a majority of them reside in rural areas. The type of furnace is strongly correlated with their urbanization rate, household income, and asset levels. Accordingly, the socially and economically advanced groups tend to show higher urban population ratios and, accordingly, higher proportions of “other ovens”.

The type of furnace is also closely related to the posture of cooking and eating. In the case of outdoor ovens, traditional ovens, and improved furnaces, all cooking processes (adjustment of fire, preparation of ingredients, and cooking) are basically performed in a sitting posture. Under such circumstances, meals are also taken in a sitting posture. On the other hand, households with “other ovens” tend to prepare foods and cook in a standing position. Meals are often taken on a table with chairs. Thus, there is a large difference in cooking and eating postures between religious and social groups and between urban and rural areas.

3. Food Consumption Patterns and Regulations on Eating

(1) Foodstuff and Food Consumption

After Independence, the eradication of poverty was an urgent policy issue in India. Accordingly, the National Sample Survey Organization was established in 1950, and detailed data on consumer expenditures (including food consumption) have been collected continuously since the 1950s.

Primary foodstuffs and food consumption patterns have changed considerably in recent years. The per capita consumption of grains and pulses has declined sharply since the 1990s, and the calorie intake per adult has also shown a long-term decrease, reflecting the trend of a decreasing agricultural population ratio and reduced labor intensity. The economic liberalization of the 1990s has led to a rapid modernization and globalization of the economy. With these changes, a transformation of food habits was expected in the direction of greater consumption of high protein products and greater diversity of food consumption (a mixture of traditional cuisine and contemporary/

foreign food). What actually happened was rather interesting: The monthly per capita consumption of edible oil has increased, that of milk and dairy products has been stable, and eggs, meat, and fish have shown mixed trends (the monthly household consumption of the number of eggs has increased, while the monthly household consumption of meat and fish has decreased). Interestingly, per capita consumption of high protein foods including meat has not increased, even with significant rises in per capita income in India. Thus, the “food transformation” commonly observed in other developing countries has not occurred in India. This is a unique aspect of food habits in India, and Landy has attributed this aspect due to high “cultural density” (Landy 2009: 59–61).

(2) Globalization of Food

Globalization of food (e.g., burgers, pizzas, pasta, and ethnic food) began mainly in major cities since the 2000s when the economic liberalization began to take effect in India. In addition to the burger shops and pizza stores owned by foreign capital, the number of shops and supermarkets owned by Indian capital that deal in globalized foodstuffs has also increased.

Meanwhile, the gap between generations about the taste of food has expanded. To cope with the diverse tastes, what is called a family restaurant with a variety of menus (e.g., Panjabi, South Indian, Chinese, and burgers) and food courts with a variety of food corners have also increased in India. Previously, restaurants specializing in specific cuisines such as Panjabi dishes or South Indian cuisine were dominant.

In many restaurants, the menus and food items have been adjusted to cope with the demands of customers for a diversification of tastes and preference for individualized meals. The emergence of fast foods has played an important role in diffusing an individualized meal in India. The typical example of an individualized meal is a burger set, and instant noodles have also played an important role in promoting individual eating (mainly among children and young people) at home.

A rapid expansion of the seasoning market has also begun to change the food habits. In particular, in the food shops and food ingredients corner of the malls in urban areas, various seasonings in the form of powder and paste, condiments, spices, and soups are displayed. Formulated seasonings for various Indian cuisines such as chicken

masala and garam masala for finishing have long been used. This market has expanded rapidly since the 2000s, providing various new ingredients not only for food items of foreign origin such as pasta and Chinese noodles, but also for Indian cuisines such as South Indian and other regional cuisines. More households have started consuming processed ginger and garlic in paste, retort pouch foods, and frozen ingredients. New foodstuffs have been introduced to home cooking, and we observe that various ingredients have been used to pursue a restaurant-style taste. In this way, the gap in taste between home cooking and restaurant foods has been reduced among urban dwellers (particularly among metropolitan dwellers) with the use of various new ingredients and digital information on “how to cook” via Google, YouTube, and specialized TV cooking channels.

Health consciousness has arisen mainly among urban middle classes. India has one of the world’s highest rates of diabetes mellitus, and those worried about obesity and high-calorie diets are beginning to respond with diet regulation and exercise. Typical examples in diet regulation are ghee, high calorie foods, and fried foods, whose per capita consumptions have been decreasing in recent years. Also, consumption of soups has increased mainly among the urban middle class, constituting a recent trend. However, it is not easy to obtain scientific and systematic guidance on diet reform, which remains a major problem to be tackled.

(3) Regulations on Eating

The proportion of vegetarians and non-vegetarians has always been a hot topic of Indian food culture. According to a survey of the Registrar General of India, Indian non-vegetarians (defined as those who eat meat, fish, eggs) made up 75% of the population in 2004, which had slightly declined to 71.6% in 2014.

The IHDS also included questions regarding non-vegetarians in their households: “Do you have non-vegetarian members in the household?” and “Where do they eat non-vegetarian foods?”

As shown in **Table 3**, 77% of the sampled households had non-vegetarian members in 2011/12. Thus, the findings of the IHDS show results similar to those of the survey of the Registrar General of India regarding the non-vegetarian proportion of the

population. The ratio of the respondents who answered “Yes” (non-vegetarian) to the question differed greatly by religion / social group. The ratio was 99% for Muslims, 92% for Adivasi, and 87% for Dalit. These three religions / social groups formed the core of the non-vegetarian population in India, with an aggregated population ratio of about 40%. Furthermore, the percentage of non-vegetarian households was also high among the “OBCs” (Other Backward Classes), accounting for about 34% of the population in India. The smallest ratio of respondents who answered “Yes” was Brahmin, who still accounted for 34%. Brahmins in North and West India are largely vegetarian, but in East and South India there were many non-vegetarian Brahmins. Even among the Advanced Caste households, the share of non-vegetarians was 68%, an overwhelming majority.

Table 3: Distribution of households with non-vegetarians and places for eating non-vegetarian foods by religion/social group (2011/12; %)

Question	Answer	2011/12							Total
		Brahmin	Advanced castes	OBC	Dalit	Adivasi	Islam	Three religions	
Are there non-vegetarians at home?	No	65.9%	32.4%	30.5%	13.4%	8.1%	1.0%	28.2%	23.5%
	Yes	34.1%	67.6%	69.5%	86.6%	91.9%	99.0%	71.8%	76.5%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Where do they eat non-vegetarian foods?	Home	58.0%	62.3%	71.7%	70.6%	65.6%	63.2%	72.8%	68.0%
	Outside	8.1%	5.3%	4.1%	2.8%	2.1%	0.9%	4.3%	3.4%
	Both	33.9%	32.4%	24.1%	26.6%	32.2%	36.0%	22.9%	28.6%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Prepared by the author from the India Human Development Survey unit level data for 2011/12

To the question “Where do they eat non-vegetarian food?”, 68% of the respondents answered “at home”. Overall, the ratio responding “at home” is high because “home cooking” is still dominant in India. In either case, a vegetarian or non-vegetarian diet, the basic meal pattern is to cook and eat at home in India.

The differences in the ratio of answers “at home” by religion and social group were relatively small. The response ratio of Brahmin was the smallest at 58%, followed by Advanced Caste and Muslim in that order. Contrariwise, members of the Three Religions responded with the largest ratio of 73%, followed by OBCs and Dalit at the 70% level. The response ratio of “eating out” was 3.4% overall, but with major

differences among religious and social groups. This response ratio was particularly large among the two groups, Brahmin and Advanced Caste, positioned at the top of the Hindu caste system. This can be explained as their preference to avoid any trouble and risk derived from cooking meat at home. On the other hand, the response ratio of “eating out” was very small among Muslims, who were most familiar with meat dishes among religion and social groups.

Thus, the majority of India’s population follows non-vegetarianism. Notably, the proportion of non-vegetarians has slightly declined even though per capita income has increased during the period. This is a unique aspect of food habits in India.

(4) From a Case Study of Gujarat Vidyapith Students

Here the author analyses the food habits and identity among the post-graduate (PG) students of Gujarat Vidyapith (GV). The school was founded by M. K. Gandhi (1869–1948) in 1920. In recent years, most of the students belong to the Backward Classes from all over Gujarat. The author conducted a survey and group interviews from 2012–14 to reveal changes in food habits and identity, with a special focus on the influence of modernization, globalization, and Sanskritization.

In the survey, 83 persons out of 100 sampled respondents answered that there was a change in their food habits. The most frequently reported change was “more consumption”. with 42 responses. Items such as “development of a market” and “more availability in a general store” are also associated with “more consumption”. The high number of these responses can be understood as a reflection of expanding consumerism backed by economic development and an increase in income (Shinoda 2017: 8)

The second-ranked response, with 11, was “substitution of foods”. Among them, six respondents reported “substitution of cooking oil” and five reported “substitution of grain”. Cooking oil is a very important food item, as it determines the flavor of a meal and is indispensable for Indian cooking. Since there are large price differences among the varieties of cooking oils, poverty greatly affects the type of cooking oil selected (Shinoda 2017: 14). The students who reported “substitution of grain” indicated a change from miscellaneous cereals to wheat.

The other important change in food culture was a shift from non-vegetarian to vegetarian. There were a total of 62 vegetarians in 2002, with that number increasing to 78 in 2012, showing that out of 38 non-vegetarian people, 16 (42%) changed their food habits to vegetarian between 2002 and 2012. Notably, this change has taken place among all social groups and religions. The number of non-vegetarians among Others and OBCs were already small, while the majority of SCs and STs were non-vegetarians in 2002 (Shinoda 2017: 30–31). The shift to vegetarianism is particularly remarkable among STs and SCs. In a group interview with students, I noticed that there were two major factors fostering the change in food habits from non-vegetarian to vegetarian. One reason was the Sanskritization movement, in which lower social groups tried to imitate the customs of Brahmin and mercantile castes to raise their social status. Food habits were one of the most visible customs targeted for Sanskritization. The other reason was the impact of Hindutva, which had swept over the whole of Gujarat since the 1990s. Among the Backward Classes, OBCs responded most significantly to the Sanskritization movement and Hindutva, followed by STs and SCs.

Fasting is widely observed, though the manner, reason, and explanation of fasting might vary by religions in India. Interpretations also differ among those who observe fasting. The share of fasting practitioners was very high among the Jain and Islam respondents. Within Hinduism, the share of fasting practitioners was highest among the OBC respondents, followed by Others and STs at more than 50% (Shinoda 2017: 36–37). Nowadays, many respondents from the Backward Classes observe fasting. Vegetarians are more inclined to fast than non-vegetarians among Hindus. Interestingly, the warden noticed a change in the manner of fasting over time. He reported that previous students observed fasting silently without informing others, but nowadays students tend to demonstrate and declare their fasting openly to others. We also observe influences of political and religious movements and Sanskritization on fasting.

4. Meal Patterns

(1) The Case of India

Changes in the composition of meal patterns are influenced by various factors such as the size of household (family), the composition of age group, the level of per capita income, the working ratio of female members, the development of individual eating, and the development of food service industry.

1) Dominance of Uchishoku (Home Cooking)

Uchishoku (home cooking) is still dominant in India. People can be relieved from the worry of pollution transmitted through cooked dishes and utensils, and it also helps to secure sanitary safety and is economical as well. The example of the lunch box (Bento: dabba) delivery system in Mumbai can be understood as the extended pattern of Uchishoku. Also, it is still common for strict vegetarians and Jains to carry homemade or locally procured “portable meals” (like khakhra) with them to survive for a few days when traveling to domestic and overseas where familiar foods will not be easily available.

2) Development of Gaishoku (Eating Out)

Gaishoku (eating out) is increasingly common in urban areas, but its importance in food habits and meal patterns has not been adequately grasped due to a lack of relevant data. As shown in **Table 4**, only 28% of the sampled households had eaten out during the one month before the date of the survey for both 2004/05 and 2011/12.

By religion / social group, the proportion of households that ate out during the reference period was high among the advanced groups, and the corresponding ratio was low among the backward classes. However, Brahmins constituted an exception, economically better off than other religious and social groups and with a higher urban population ratio, but the ratio of households that had eaten out was the smallest among the advanced group. The Brahmin group seems to have placed importance on the risk of impurities associated with eating out.

The average expenditure for eating out was also relatively small, Rs.87, which was almost equal to the household monthly expenditure for confectionaries in 2011/12. This amount was so small that one or two persons could eat once at a budget restaurant.

There was a difference in the average household monthly expenditure for eating out among religion / social groups, with the Three Religions at Rs.188, Advanced Caste at Rs.135, Brahmin at Rs.108, and Adivasi the lowest at Rs.57. Notably, this rank corresponded to the data of the urban rural residential pattern of each religion / social group. The advanced group reported both higher urban population ratios and higher household monthly expenditures for eating out.

Table 4: Distribution of households with Gaishoku and monthly expenditure for Gaishoku by urban-rural divisions and religion/social group (2011/12; %)

Urban-rural divisions	item	2011/12							total
		Brahmin	Advanced castes	OBC	Dalit	Adivasi	Islam	Three religions	
Metropolitan area	Households with Gaishoku (%)	44.3%	53.7%	42.7%	41.5%	38.2%	35.4%	49.5%	45.0%
	Monthly expenditure for Gaishoku (Rs)	267	304	290	209	138	168	349	262
Other urban area	Households with Gaishoku (%)	39.0%	37.1%	34.5%	30.8%	35.7%	31.1%	37.3%	33.6%
	Monthly expenditure for Gaishoku (Rs)	147	165	113	94	196	102	205	126
Developed village	Households with Gaishoku (%)	16.6%	29.6%	29.0%	23.5%	28.4%	30.9%	25.9%	27.3%
	Monthly expenditure for Gaishoku (Rs)	54	103	68	58	52	71	148	72
Less developed village	Households with Gaishoku (%)	12.5%	23.6%	19.8%	19.9%	22.2%	22.9%	22.6%	20.7%
	Monthly expenditure for Gaishoku (Rs)	49	53	36	35	37	53	46	41
Total	Households with Gaishoku (%)	23.2%	33.2%	28.0%	25.2%	25.9%	28.6%	31.9%	28.0%
	Monthly expenditure for Gaishoku (Rs)	108	135	79	66	57	82	188	87

Source: Prepared by the author from the India Human Development Survey unit level data for 2011/12

If we examine the household expenditure for eating out in 2004/05, we find (Table 5) that 72% of households surveyed answered that there was no eating out in the previous 30 days. It is important to note that there was no change in the distribution of households that reported eating out for the reference period between the two surveys, though modernization and globalization have influenced food culture during the period.

The average monthly household expenditure for eating out was Rs43 in 2004/05. The increase in the rate of monthly consumption of eating out between the two surveys was smaller than the growth rate of other ingredients, confirming that eating out has not developed much between 2004/05 and 2011/12. The average monthly household expenditure for eating out among the upper group was larger than that of the lower group. Thus, the surveys showed that home cooking was still dominant, while the development of eating out has been much restricted in India as a whole.

Table 5: Distribution of households with Gaishoku and monthly expenditure for Gaishoku by urban-rural divisions, and religion/social group (2004/05; %)

Urban-rural divisions	Item	2004/05					Total
		Brahmin	OBC	SC	ST	Others	
Urban	Households with Gaishoku (%)	35.1%	34.1%	29.4%	36.2%	36.4%	34.2%
	Monthly expenditure for Gaishoku (Rs)	109	62	47	69	92	74
Rural	Households with Gaishoku (%)	22.7%	27.4%	22.0%	26.0%	26.6%	25.6%
	Monthly expenditure for Gaishoku (Rs)	41	33	22	20	36	30
Total	Households with Gaishoku (%)	28.4%	29.2%	23.6%	27.0%	30.5%	28.1%
	Monthly expenditure for Gaishoku (Rs)	72	41	27	25	58	43

Source: Prepared by the author from the India Human Development Survey unit level data for 2004/05

However, we note the advantage of India's growing working population ratio and a major generation gap in the preference for eating out. The globalization of food habits after economic liberalization gained momentum particularly in metropolitan areas. Emerging family restaurants and the spread of menus for eating individual meals are typical symptoms of food globalization.

3) Nakashoku (HMR) Yet to Catch on

Nakashoku (HMR) has yet to catch on in India. The government restricts the entry of foreign-owned retail businesses, including supermarkets and convenience stores, the potential suppliers of Nakashoku, in order to protect kirana (a traditional style of small retail shop). Though we find some convenience stores with local capital (Twenty Four Seven, etc.) in the metropolitan areas, the number of stores is extremely small, as if in a trial stage.

(2) Comparison with the Transformation of Food Habits in Japan

We analyze the transformation of food habits after World War II in Japan. There are four important factors that have shaped the form of transformation of food habits in Japan: 1) the material basis of cooking and dining environments such as kamado (a Japanese-style chulha) and chabudai (seated dining table), 2) demographic trends, 3) the impact of technological development and globalization, and 4) meal patterns.

1) The Material Basis of Cooking and Dining Environments

Wood and charcoal were the basic fuel for the then dominant kamado (Japanese style of chulha) till the end of the 1950s. From the 1960s through the 1970s, there was a drastic shift of fuels for cooking from wood and charcoal to liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and urban gas. The consumption of electricity has also increased with the expanded use of rice cookers and other electric equipment. Accordingly, the kamado has been replaced by the gas range. This period observed a rapid economic growth that attracted many workers from rural areas to urban centers. A new type of housing complex called the danchi (modern type of apartments for office workers) emerged within and in the vicinity of urban centers to provide accommodation for emerging urban labor classes. The danchi was designed to have gas ranges and a dining table in the kitchen, and has had an influence of the new life patterns in rural areas as well.

The hakozen,² which was commonly used till the 1910s, has been largely replaced by the chabudai (a dining table for sitting) since the 1920s. Chabudai were generally round in shape (occasionally square) with four legs that could be folded. Due to the limitation of the number of rooms, people used their living rooms for several purposes, for example, as a living or dining as well as sleeping room. The folding type of chabudai was very convenient. However, over time the chabudai were replaced with dining tables in the emerging new life styles during the 1950s–1970s. Importantly, the kamado and chabudai were interrelated, and both disappeared simultaneously.

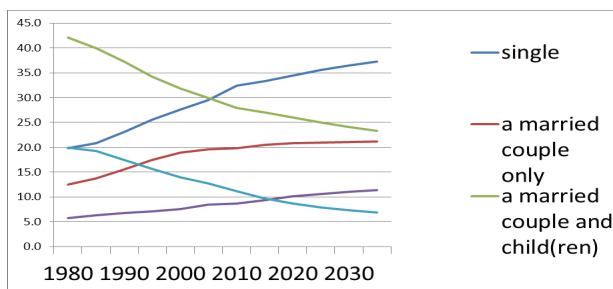
² Hakozen was a small dining box that could contain a set of plates and chopsticks. Each user cleaned the plates with tea or water after dining and dried them for some time before storing them in the box space. It was considered unhygienic, but was suitable for busy families like farmers who had to dine individually when they had free time during busy work schedules.

2) Demographic Trends

Demographic trends have a close association with the availability of labor and economic development. The population of Japan began declining from 2014, and the current percentage of elderly population (65 years old and above) is around 27%, the largest in the world, and is predicted to increase by 40% by 2055.

Thus, Japan is now known as the most aging society, but it enjoyed the benefit of the demographic bonus or dividend from the 1960s to 1980s. The demographic bonus refers to a stage in which economic growth is boosted by a labor force growth rate greater than the population growth rate. This is a state in which demographic dynamics exert a positive influence on economic growth.³ Contrariwise, when the productive age population decreases as the elderly population rapidly increases is called the “demographic onus,” which may negatively affect economic growth. Japan has entered into this stage from the 1990s.

Figure 1: Trends in the distribution of households by type (1980–2030)



Source: <http://www.maff.go.jp/j/syokuiku/pdf/siryoy2-2.pdf>, accessed on 20 November 2016

The demographic transition has brought about a drastic change in the composition of household patterns in Japan. As shown in **Figure 1**, the share of single households has increased rapidly, reaching a level of 33% in 2015, and is projected to reach 37% by

³ Generally, countries in the demographic bonus period have the potential to realize a high economic growth rate due to the expansion of the domestic market and greater labor force, the progress of urbanization, industrialization, and increase in per capita income and consumption. Also, while the burden of social welfare such as education, medical care, and pensions is small, tax income increases, the fiscal burden is lighter, and it is easier to invest funds for infrastructure development and tax incentives, and as a result, the international competitiveness of industry becomes stronger. The Japanese economy was able to enjoy the benefit of demographic dividend as the productive age population peaked during the 1960s and 1980s.

2035. The core of this group consists of males 20–30 years of age and elderly females 65 years and above. The proportion of households with a married couple and children, which were dominant in the 1980s, have declined steeply to 27% in 2015 in the course of population aging, while the households of a married couple only and of one parent and children have increased to 20% and 8%, respectively. The share of “Others,” consisting of joint families, declined sharply to 21% in 2015.

3) The Impact of Technological Development and Globalization

Immediately after the war, Japan was so devastated that it took nearly ten years to reach the pre-war level of consumption. Since the latter half of the 1950s, Japan’s economy has started growing, resulting in rapid changes in the life pattern, including food habits. According to the Cabinet Office’s Consumer Confidence Survey, the electric cooker was introduced in the latter half of the 1950s, and the household ownership ratio of cookers reached 90% by 1970. The TV set (black & white), washing machine, and refrigerator, called the “three sacred imperial treasures” in the late 1950s, took only 10–15 years to spread to almost all the households in Japan (Government of Japan: Cabinet Office’s Consumer Confidence Survey 2016). Among kitchen electrical appliances, the microwave oven held particular importance with the refrigerator because it had a high positive correlation with the development of frozen processed foodstuffs due to its thawing and multi-function cooking. During this period, LPG/gas ranges have replaced the chulha to a considerable extent. Thus, the spread of electrical appliances, replacement of energy sources, and diffusion of the danchi style of life pattern have changed the kitchens and food habits of the Japanese. These changes have resulted in reducing women’s household workload, including cooking, and promoted their social advancement.

With the demographic transition, economic development, and increase in per capita income, Japanese food habits have been strongly westernized, which manifests in the form of greater consumption of milk and milk products, meats, and edible oil, and less consumption of rice, the traditional staple food.

Japanese food culture has been gripped by globalization since the 1970s. The vanguard of globalization was multi-national fast food chain such as Macdonald and

KFC. Family restaurants such as Skylark and Royal have also emerged to capture the more individualized and diversified demands for food.

4) Meal Patterns

Uchishoku was dominant until the 1960s. The transformation of food habits from the late 1950s to 1960s was manifested in the changes in kitchen facilities and appliances centered on Uchishoku.

Gaishoku started emerging in the 1970s, and its growth accelerated until the latter half of the 1990s. During this period, the traditional type of dining where the family members dined together eating the same food items has been largely replaced by individualized and diversified dining both at home and in restaurants. Dependence on processed foods has proceeded to the extent that it constitutes the main expenditure for food. Gaishoku has prevailed particularly among productive age workers who used to have lunch at a restaurant near their workplace/office. However, as the demographic bonus came to an end and per capita income has stagnated, the market for Gaishoku started declining from the 2000s.

The striking feature of this period was the emergence of Nakashoku. Major factors for this were increases in the share of single and two-person households, increases in the elderly population, the further development of women's social advancement, long-term economic stagnation, and the deployment of Nakashoku suppliers such as convenience stores, supermarkets, department stores, and specialized Nakashoku shops. For example, the number of the convenience stores increased from 6000 in 1983 to 53000 in 2015. The merits of Nakashoku were savings of time and labor for cooking, a rich variety of available food items, many choices for quantity, and reasonable prices. Thus, Nakashoku has further promoted the individualization of dining. The share of Nakashoku in the household food expenditure has particularly increased among single and two-person households and the elderly population. Nakashoku was beneficial for busy women to save time, for young people to ease individualized dining, and for elderly single people to have easy access to ready-made food at reasonable prices.

The share of Uchishoku, Gaishoku, and Nakashoku varied considerably by the type of meal (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) and sex. For example, as shown in **Table 6**, the

Gaishoku frequency among the male age group (20–59) by meal type was around 3% for breakfast, 45% for lunch, and 9% for dinner in 2010. The corresponding figure for women aged 20–59 was 2% for breakfast, 26% for lunch, and 5% for dinner. Thus, the productive age group of both sexes, the core of labor and food consumption, shows a high percentage of Gaishoku for lunch, whereas they previously carried a home-made bento (dabha) for lunch to their working place until the 1970s, which has been gradually replaced by Gaishoku and Naishoku. The age group of 60 and above has different food habits. The percentage share of Uchishoku, particularly among females, is much higher, while the share of Gaishoku for lunch is much lower than that of 20–59-year-olds. There was not much difference in the percentage share of Nakashoku by sex or meal type.

Table 6: Distribution of frequency of meals by sex, meal pattern, and meal type (2010)

Sex	Meal Pattern	Meal Type		
		Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Male (20–59)	Uchishoku	68%	45%	87%
	Gaishoku	3%	43%	8%
	Nakashoku	8%	7%	4%
	Skip	21%	5%	1%
Male (60 & above)	Uchishoku	87%	73%	91%
	Gaishoku	2%	17%	3%
	Nakashoku	4%	8%	6%
	Skip	7%	2%	0%
Female (20–59)	Uchishoku	75%	60%	90%
	Gaishoku	2%	25%	4%
	Nakashoku	8%	10%	5%
	Skip	15%	5%	1%
Female (60 & above)	Uchishoku	90%	78%	93%
	Gaishoku	1%	10%	4%
	Nakashoku	5%	9%	3%
	Skip	4%	3%	0%

Source: <http://www.maff.go.jp/j/syokuiku/pdf/siry02-2.pdf>, accessed on 20 November 2016.

According to the household expenditure survey, the index of Nakashoku has increased by 70 points, while Gaishoku has stayed almost the same and Uchishoke has

declined by 20 points from 1985 (base year = 100) to 2015.⁴ Thus, their trends show a strong contrast.

5. Conclusion

The transformation of the material basis of food habits, such as the kitchen and kamado (chulhas) has been a pre-condition of the transformation of food habits themselves in Japan. Likewise, the distribution pattern of kitchens and chulhas has a decisive influence on kitchen technological development and meal patterns in India. Empirically, the life pattern of chulhas is closely associated with such factors as Uchishoku, biomass fuels, rural areas, and backward classes, while gas/LPG ranges are more associated with Gaishoku, fossil fuels, urban areas, and advanced classes. We note a gap between the two life patterns in Japan, but it had shrunk considerably over the 30 years until the 1970s due to the rapid diffusion of the urbanized life pattern to rural areas, while in India, the linkage between rural-urban and backward-advanced groups seems to be more stratified, so India may need more time for diffusion on a similar scale.

The demographic transition has been a driving force among many factors in transforming food habits in Japan, which has experienced both the demographic bonus and the demographic onus during 60 years between the 1960s and 2010s. India just entered the period of demographic bonus in the early 2010s. The per capita income has already started to rise from the 2000s, just doubling in the past ten years in real terms, resulting in vigorous consumption of food and other items in metropolitan areas.

From the late 1990s, McDonald's and other fast food giants of foreign capital have accelerated their investment in India, followed by desi fast food franchise chains. These have changed the concept of eating out to modern and cool among the younger generations, promoting the consumption of individualized food. Simultaneously, family restaurants with a variety of menus have emerged to capture the diversified demand of foods among customers. Though quite restricted to metropolitan areas, Gaishoku has begun to grow steadily, but mainly among the middle and upper classes. Gaishoku restaurants, with high rents and severe competition for survival, were all set to adjust to

⁴ <http://e-kosugi.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/2350a.gif>, accessed on 18/09/2016.

the changing demands of customers, promoting the diversification of menus even among small-sized restaurants. Also, a free delivery system has been gradually adopted by many restaurants for survival.

Thus, the food and restaurant industries are all set to develop. The current situation of the restaurant industries in India, with the development of fast food chains and family restaurants, has a similarity to the situation of the restaurant industries of Japan in the 1970s, but with one exception. In Japan, the Gaishoku could develop rapidly with the steadily backing of the growing demand among the productive age workers for lunch. However, in India, as seen in the dabbawala system of delivery in Mumbai, lunch has remained an extension of Uchishoku. This is a symbolic example, but it shows a very strong inclination of the people including office workers for Uchishoku, which may operate as one of the primary factors restricting the full-scale development of the restaurant industry even in metropolitan areas.

Main suppliers of Nakashoku are supermarkets, convenience stores, specialized stores for bento and catering, and restaurants. Of these, supermarkets and convenience stores are particularly important in Japan. Since Nakashoku is closely related to women's social advancement, aging, and the individualization of dining, demand for Nakashoku will increase if these conditions are met. In India, the government restricts the entry of foreign-owned retail businesses, including convenience stores, in order to protect kirana (traditional-style small retail shop). Though we find some convenience stores of local capital (Twenty Four Seven, etc.) in the metropolitan areas, the number of stores is as yet extremely small.

Taking all these into consideration, we may state that the most important change in the transformation of food habits was the development of Gaishoku and Nakashoku in post-war Japan, while changes in the taste and repertoire of Uchishoku will be the most visible and important change in the initial stage of the demographic bonus in India.

Rapid expansion of the seasoning, condiments, spices, soup, and processed food market has changed the taste and repertoire of Uchishoku. Among urban middle classes, health orientation has been a strong motivation to change the traditional repertoire of the Uchishoku. The concept of "healthy food with soup and salad" is shared by many consumers nowadays. Also, it is now common to pursue the restaurant style of taste at

home with the use of a rich variety of seasoning and condiments. Thus, the menu and taste of Uchishoku has also changed. This change is accompanied by the increasing use of processed foodstuffs, which can serve as a powerful factor of changes in diet across urban-rural barriers, given the diffusion of kitchens and ranges with fossil fuels in rural areas. Digital and TV information on cooking has already prevailed across urban-rural areas, replacing printed cookbooks to a considerable extent.

The other aspect of the transformation of food habits, i.e., change in food and identity, has been examined in this paper based on the case study of Gujarat Vidyapith students in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

The arena of the change in food culture is closely related to the reorganization of identities in terms of region, social group, and economic class. In recent years, the regional variation in food culture has been decreasing due to the reorganization of production and the development of the distribution network. Moreover, the deployment of sales networks and outlets has made it possible for consumers, even in remote villages, to buy fast food and soft drinks. Through the development of infrastructure and information technology, modernization and globalization have an enhanced influence on consumers, resulting in the unification of food cultures across regions and the removal of rural-urban barriers.

Apart from modernization and globalization, economic disparity also has a decisive influence on the selection of food items by the rich and the poor. A prime example is cooking oil, a special item that influences the taste and flavor of cooking. People tend to stick to their favorite cooking oil if they can afford it. However, in reality, the type of cooking oil consumed is greatly influenced by one's economic status.

The diversity of food items and food culture among the social groups has tended to decrease over the past 10 years. The GV survey results reveal the massive shift from non-vegetarian consumption to vegetarianism among the Backward Classes. Sanskritization has been promoted and enhanced by the Hindutva movement and religious movements like Swaminarayan and Swadhyaya in Gujarat.

Overall, the changes in food culture have been closely related to the reorganization of identities in terms of region, social group, and economic class. This reorganization of

food culture identities has been strongly affected by globalization, Sanskritization, and various political and religious movements.

Photographs

Photo 1: Group Interview



Notes:

Photo1. Students reply in a group interview.

Source: Gujarat Vidyapith Survey, Ahmedabad, August 2012

Photo 2: Edible Oils



Photo2. 15 Ltr Can of Cottonseed oil and Peanut Oil. Olive Oil and Rice Bran Oil are also available in this Supermarket.

Source: Gujarat Vidyapith Survey, Ahmedabad, August 2012

Photo 3: Pictorial Menu in a Family Restaurant



Notes:

Photo3. Remarkable Increase in the Number of Family Restaurants with Multi Varieties such as South, Punjabi, Chinese, Pizza and Burgers.

Source: Family Restaurant, Mumbai, March 2015

Photo 4: Instant Noodle Corner



Photo4. Instant Noodles have much to do with the globalization and individualisation of food habits in India.

Source: Instant Noodle Corner, Ahmedabad, 2012

Photo 5: Growing Macdonald's in India



Photo 6: The Flying Bhakhri

**Notes:**

Photo5. Macdonald's has promoted the globalization of food culture in India.

Source: Macdonald's Shop, Delhi Airport, October 2016

Photo6. A vacuum-packed Bhakhri for International Travelers. Many Gujarati businessmen survive with Bhakhri, Khakhra, Thepla abroad.

Source: A packed Bhakhri, Ahmedabad Airport, September 2016

Glossary

Adivasi: tribal people, same as administrative term "Scheduled Tribes"

Angithi: a bucket-type oven in India

Bento: a lunch box, either homemade or bought in the supermarkets or convenience stores in Japan

Chabudai: sitting dining table in Japan (Japanese)

Chulha: traditional furnace in India

Dalit: untouchables, same as administrative term "Scheduled Castes"

Danchi: modern type of apartments for office workers in Japan (Japanese)

Gaishoku: eating out (Japanese)

Hakozen: a small dining box which could contain a set of plates and chopsticks inside the box space (Japanese)

Kamado: Japanese-style furnace (chulha) (Japanese)

Kirana: traditional-style small retail shop in India

Nakashoku: home meal replacement (HMR) (Japanese)

Uchishoku: home cooking (Japanese)

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2

Bangladeshi Female Overseas Workers in the Middle East: Their Experiences and Perceptions of Overseas Employment

Toshihiko SUDA

1. Introduction

Since its independence from Pakistan in 1971, Bangladesh has been known as a poor country, not only in Asia but around the world. However, its recent rapid development is surprising. The average growth rate of its real GDP in the last 5 years (2014–2019) was 7.4%, which stands fourth highest among 179 countries in the world (calculated by the author using the World Development Indicators of the World Bank). It is widely accepted that this fast development is mainly attributed to two factors. One of them is its fast-growing export-oriented apparel industries, which now earn the second largest trade income after China in the world. Another major factor contributing to the rapid development of Bangladesh is foreign remittance sent by overseas Bangladeshi workers based mainly in the Middle East, the US, Europe, and South East Asian countries like Malaysia and Singapore.

This paper focuses on the second major factor, namely overseas workers from Bangladesh, especially female overseas workers (hereafter, “FOWs”) from rural areas. There is a long history of male overseas workers from Bangladesh, and the majority of overseas workers from Bangladesh are still men. However, the number and share of FOWs started to increase dramatically in the 2000s, as we will see later.

The majority of FOWs from Bangladesh are poor women from rural areas who go to the Middle East to work as housemaids. There are pros and cons to becoming an FOW, but in general, there is a widespread understanding in Bangladesh that FOWs in the Middle East are victims of poverty and are exposed to exploitation, various dangers, and disgrace. However, the history of FOWs from Bangladesh is rather new and little is known about them. For example, Sikder, Higgins, and Ballis (2017) discussed the impacts of overseas migration from Bangladesh, but mentioned very little about FOWs in their book.

In this situation, the author studied the socio-economic conditions of female domestic workers from Bangladesh who were undergoing pre-departure training before going to the Middle East and Hong Kong (Suda 2020). This study revealed the basic features of FOWs like

the fact that many FOWs going to the Middle East to be housemaids are poor and little educated. Many of them are either widows or married but living apart from their husband; in other words, they cannot expect any financial support from their husband. Many of them have work experiences as garment factory workers or housemaids in Bangladesh. Many have debt and were asked by their husband or parents to go to the Middle East to earn a higher income than they can get in Bangladesh.

Before going abroad for employment, they are caught between two totally different emotions. One of them is a strong worry and sadness over leaving their families, especially their children, behind, and worries about the dangers of the destination country, namely whether they can get the promised salary and be treated with respect by their employer family. Another strong emotion is a positive one: that they will be able to realize their dreams by getting a high income, which is beyond their reach in Bangladesh. They dream of making life better for them and their family.

In order to deepen our understanding of the situation of Bangladeshi FOWs, this study aimed to reveal the experiences and perceptions of this population by interviewing 16 women with experiences of working in the Middle East. The interviews were conducted between February and March 2020 in the Comilla district using a structured questionnaire.

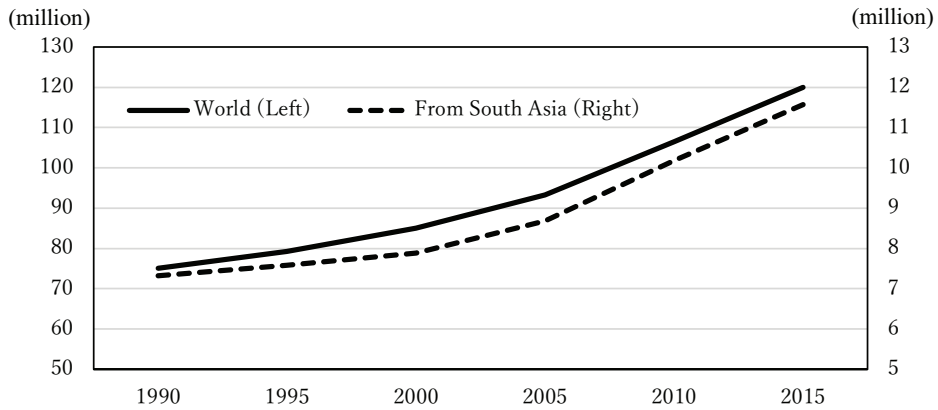
2. Increasing Number of Bangladeshi Women Working Abroad

(1) Increasing Female Migration in South Asia and around the World

As Figure 1 shows, female migration has accelerated around the world since the beginning of this century due to the globalization of the labor market. Women from South Asia are no exception. According to the United Nations (2017), the stock of female migrants from South Asia around the world has increased by 4.5 million from 7.3 million in 1990 to 11.8 million in 2017; there was a 3.9 million increase between 2000 and 2017 (Table 1).

Western Asia/the Middle East is the major destination of the increasing female migration from South Asia. Of the 4.5 million additional female migrants from South Asia between 1990 and 2017, 2.6 million were absorbed by Western Asia, mostly oil exporting Gulf countries such as the UAE (0.94 million), Saudi Arabia (0.93 million), Kuwait (0.29 million), Qatar (0.16 million), Oman (0.16 million), and Bahrain (0.09 million) (United Nations 2017).

Figure 1. Female Migrant Stock in the World and Female Migrant Stock Originated from South Asia



Source: United Nations (2017)

Table 1. Female Migrant Stock of South Asian, Philippines and Indonesian in the World and Western Asia

(person)

Year	Area of destination	Female Migrants from South Asia								Female Migrants from South East Asia	
		India	Bangladesh	Pakistan	Sri Lanka	Nepal	Bhutan	Maldives	Total	Philippines	Indonesia
1990	WORLD	2,861,761	2,288,816	1,371,354	426,845	358,759	14,503	494	7,322,532	1,194,730	684,791
	Western Asia	562,725	161,960	264,523	164,851	42,887	..	..	1,196,946	188,229	293,505
1995	WORLD	3,079,043	2,262,573	1,347,868	437,029	402,509	58,079	471	7,587,572	1,453,678	844,636
	Western Asia	646,199	190,109	282,128	148,478	43,741	..	..	1,310,655	196,582	331,163
2000	WORLD	3,327,529	2,246,112	1,342,609	455,391	449,864	58,709	505	7,880,719	1,760,110	1,043,965
	Western Asia	762,384	224,581	313,538	137,488	44,946	..	..	1,482,937	216,552	372,258
2005	WORLD	3,813,513	2,292,586	1,508,762	514,022	499,525	57,735	923	8,687,066	2,086,871	1,227,258
	Western Asia	958,929	267,843	376,427	156,192	60,071	..	..	1,819,462	255,935	440,713
2010	WORLD	4,775,010	2,401,147	1,764,661	623,086	575,075	41,971	1,444	10,182,394	2,552,543	1,557,377
	Western Asia	1,507,837	375,724	544,494	208,127	88,172	..	..	2,724,354	370,718	616,454
2015	WORLD	5,576,939	2,496,122	2,119,719	697,382	656,672	21,342	1,533	11,569,709	2,924,160	1,767,113
	Western Asia	1,934,930	473,931	683,612	250,574	132,783	..	..	3,475,830	476,356	772,557
2017	WORLD	5,752,410	2,546,016	2,091,750	738,250	676,446	21,334	1,561	11,827,767	3,059,543	1,872,164
	Western Asia	2,077,977	521,365	750,756	275,376	147,867	..	..	3,773,341	521,721	853,065

Source: United Nations (2017)

Note: "Western Asia" include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Georgia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, State of Palestine, Syria, Turkey, UAE and Yemen.

(2) Increase in and Diversification of Bangladeshi Female Migrants

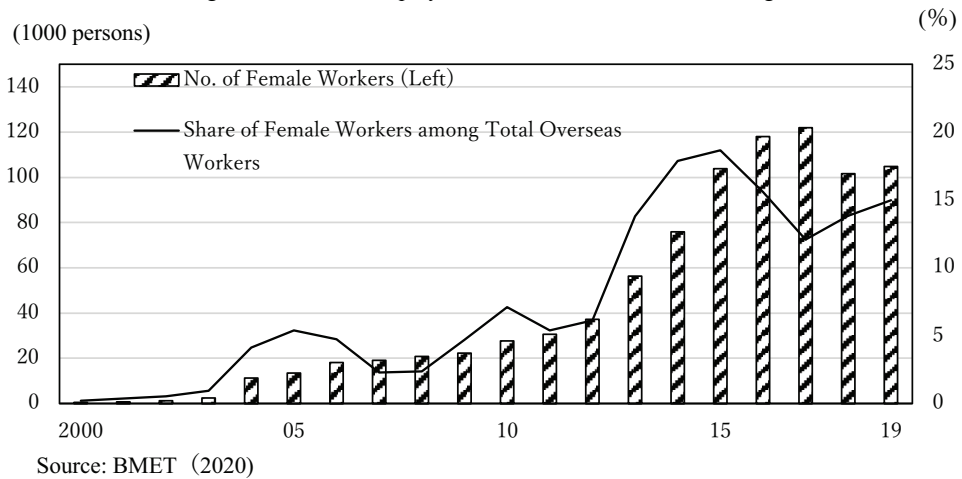
As shown in Table 1, the stock of Bangladeshi female migrants in the world did not increase very impressively compared with other South Asian countries between 1990 and 2017. The number of Bangladeshi female migrants in destination countries has increased only slightly: namely, by 0.26 million (11%) between 1990 and 2017. However, as Table 2 shows, the majority of female migrants from Bangladesh live in India, and their number has decreased significantly (by 0.55 million) between 1990 and 2017. The cause of this is likely the bulk of Bangladeshi female migrants in India are attributed to the mass migration caused by the partition of Pakistan and India in 1947 and the independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971, and the number has decreased gradually since then due to their aging and death. This huge decrease has been more than replaced by increasing migration to other countries, mainly to the Middle East (mainly Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain), Europe (the UK and Italy), North America (the USA and Canada), and South East Asia (Malaysia and Singapore). So, Bangladeshi female migration has not only increased its volume, but there has also been a significant diversification of their destinations, among which the Middle East has the largest share.

Table 2. Bangladeshi Female Migrant Stock in 1990 and 2017 in Top 15 Countries

(person)				
Rank	1990		2017	
	Destination Country	Number	Destination Country	Number
1	India	2,050,262	India	1,500,638
2	Saudi Arabia	121,984	Saudi Arabia	284,688
3	UK	47,917	Malaysia	155,846
4	Kuwait	17,595	UAE	131,239
5	UAE	15,692	USA	111,806
6	USA	7,195	UK	110,513
7	Qatar	3,480	Kuwait	59,534
8	Greece	3,420	Singapore	37,741
9	Singapore	2,978	Italy	26,196
10	Canada	2,157	Canada	25,207
11	Bahrain	2,049	Oman	17,072
12	China	1,227	Australia	16,819
13	Sweden	1,053	Qatar	12,709
14	Japan	1,035	Bahrain	11,139
15	Malaysia	963	Japan	5,579
	World	2,288,816	World	2,546,016

Source: United Nations (2017)

Figure 2. Overseas Employment of Female Workers from Bangladesh



As Figure 2 shows, overseas employment of Bangladeshi female workers increased rapidly from 2004 and more sharply from 2013. The share of FOWs among total overseas workers has also increased to between 12 and 19% in recent years. This sharp increase happened due to their laxation of government restrictions on migration of unskilled female labor. According to Sultana and Fatima (2017), the Bangladesh government relaxed the restrictions on unskilled and semi-skilled female overseas employment in 2003. The restrictions were further relaxed by lowering the bottom age of overseas housemaids from 35 to 25. Since 2011, pre-departure training for housemaids has been organized in technical training centers (TTCs) as a government program in order to support the migration of women as housemaids.

The benefits of overseas employment for poor women have started to be recognized not only by the government but also by major non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like BRAC, the largest NGO in Bangladesh, which mainly works in rural areas. BRAC started various programs to support female overseas employment by providing credit and necessary information (BRAC not dated). These changes in the environments surrounding poor women, mainly rural women, have triggered the mass migration of poor women for overseas employment.

Table 3. Country Wise Overseas Employment of Female Workers (1991 to 2020)

(person, %)

	1991-2000		2001-2010		2011-2020		1991-2020	
	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share
KSA	612	4.1	30,695	22.4	320,643	41.7	351,950	38.2
Jordan	0	0.0	8,186	6.0	153,407	19.9	161,593	17.5
UAE	3,583	23.9	39,158	28.6	88,721	11.5	131,462	14.3
Lebanon	107	0.7	40,380	29.5	66,724	8.7	107,211	11.6
Oman	164	1.1	2,547	1.9	88,079	11.4	90,790	9.9
Qatar	5	0.0	23	0.0	33,522	4.4	33,550	3.6
Mauritius	557	3.7	6,449	4.7	11,326	1.5	18,332	2.0
Kuwait	3,950	26.3	3,708	2.7	1,471	0.2	9,129	1.0
Malaysia	4,889	32.6	1,552	1.1	211	0.0	6,652	0.7
Bahrain	1,030	6.9	2,435	1.8	825	0.1	4,290	0.5
Hong Kong	5	0.0	42	0.0	1,797	0.2	1,844	0.2
Singapore	10	0.1	311	0.2	1,104	0.1	1,425	0.2
Libya	0	0.0	467	0.3	64	0.0	531	0.1
Italy	12	0.1	328	0.2	124	0.0	464	0.1
Cyprus	2	0.0	25	0.0	168	0.0	195	0.0
UK	12	0.1	116	0.1	29	0.0	157	0.0
Brunei	51	0.3	23	0.0	65	0.0	139	0.0
Pakistan	7	0.0	26	0.0	7	0.0	40	0.0
Others	15	0.1	497	0.4	1,028	0.1	1,540	0.2
Total	15,011	100.0	136,968	100.0	769,315	100.0	921,294	100.0

Source: BMET (2020)

(3) Troubles of Female Overseas Workers

According to an official source, most of these FOWs are engaged in domestic work in the Middle East and the rest are mainly apparel factory workers.¹ The reason many women go to the Middle East is that there is huge demand for domestic workers, including housemaids, in this region.²

¹ Quoting the explanation of a Bureau of Manpower and Employment (BMET) officer, Bhuyan (2020) writes that one million women migrated from 1991 to present for overseas employment; 98% became domestic workers and most of the rest became apparel factory workers.

² It is very common for a family in a Middle East country to have domestic workers at home. For example, Sabban (2014) writes that one family has 3.5 domestic workers on average in the UAE. Under 2% of all households have no domestic worker at home, and it is very difficult to find a house without domestic workers (Sabban 2014: 121).

Table 4. Feelings of FOWs under Pre-departure Training toward Foreign Employment (multiple answers)

(person, %)

Destination	No. and Share of Respondents	Happy	Scared	Sad	Excited
Middle East	119	45	45	42	3
	100.0	37.8	37.8	35.3	2.5
Hong Kong	35	25	6	1	6
	100.0	71.4	17.1	2.9	17.1
Total	154	70	51	43	9
	100.0	45.5	33.1	27.9	5.8

Source: Suda (2020)

There is no shortage of information about the risks Bangladeshi FOWs working as housemaids face in the Middle East (Rabbi 2019, Bhuyan 2020). Therefore, many women who are considering overseas employment have strong concerns about the troubles they may encounter in their destination country. A study by the author (Suda 2020) on the conditions of FOWs showed that nearly two thirds of female workers had negative feelings such as “scared” and “sad” toward overseas employment as a housemaid before leaving Bangladesh for the Middle East (Table 4). Their negative feelings were much stronger than those of FOWs going to Hong Kong. Many are afraid of the abuse, hard work, overwork, and under-payment they may suffer at the hands of their employers (Suda 2020).

3. Field Data on FOWs’ Experiences and Perceptions, and a Discussion

(1) Are All Overseas Poor Female Workers Victims of Exploitation?

The main purpose of this study was to reveal the experiences and perceptions of FOWs who worked or still work in the Middle East. This study tested the widespread understanding that female domestic workers in the Middle East are victims of poverty and suffer from inhumane treatment. It is important and necessary to understand the experiences of FOWs correctly, because in recent years more than 100,000 women leave every year for overseas employment and nearly 700,000 Bangladeshi women currently live in the Middle East and South Asia (Malaysia and Singapore),³ and it is probable that the majority of them are working as housemaids. What are their lives like in Bangladesh and the Middle East? What benefits do the

³ This figure was obtained by summing Bangladeshi female migrant stock in Western Asia, Malaysia, and Singapore using data from the United Nations (2017).

get from overseas employment? And what costs do they pay? Studies on the lives of Sri Lankan housemaids working in the Middle East such as Gamburd (2000) and Suda (2013) revealed that their lives are not always unhappy; rather, they are often happy with their lives in their destination countries.

(2) Purposes of the Survey and the Survey Method

In order to reveal the experiences and perceptions of FOWs in the Middle East, a simple survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire. The author designed the questionnaire to ask FOWs about their economic and family conditions, the economic and social benefits of working abroad, and the troubles they had while staying abroad. Then, an experienced local Bangladeshi investigator chose 16 women who had worked or were still working in the Middle East and interviewed them using the questionnaire. The interviews were conducted either at the training center for pre-departure training (Comilla TTC) or at their own residence. The survey was conducted in February and March 2020.⁴

As for the limitations of the survey, the author must acknowledge that there is a question about the extent to which the information obtained from the interviewees can be generalized. Many of the interviewees were trainees of a pre-departure training course organized by the government training institute (TTC). Some interviewees were returnees from overseas work and were taking this course in order to go abroad again for employment. Therefore, it may be that many of them were lucky women who did not have extremely bad experiences such as abuse, underpayment, and severe overwork. ATTC officer who provides pre-departure housekeeping training to Bangladeshi housemaids heading to the Middle East estimated that about 80% of all of her trainees are successful, but there remaining 20% are unsuccessful. Therefore, we should be cautious in generalizing the results of this study. It may be acceptable to generalize the below information from our interviewees to 80% of Bangladeshi FOWs in the Middle East, but the remaining 20% may have different experiences and different perceptions about working in the Middle East as domestic workers.

(3) Results of the Survey and a Discussion

(i) Basic Features of the Interviewed FOWs

Table 5 shows the basic features of the 16 FOWs interviewed. The interviewees are listed in

⁴ The interviews were conducted by Mr. Habib Ullah, an experienced field investigator from the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development. The author is very grateful to him as well as all the interviewees and Comilla TTC staff who supported this study.

descending order of their period of overseas employment. Their present ages ranged from 18 to 52, with an average age of 36.2. They started to work abroad at the age of 27.5 on average. However, the lowest age of starting overseas employment was 15. This is much lower than the present official bottom age (25) allowed for overseas housemaids. The interviewees worked or still work on average for 6.5 years ranging from 1 to 20 years. All of them were Muslims and the majority lived in rural areas (12 out of 16). Their average education (years of school attendance) was 5.1, ranging from 0 to 12 (Higher Secondary School Certificate). At present, the Bangladesh government sets the minimum education level for overseas house maid at Class 5. However, Table 5 shows that many illiterate women are employed for overseas domestic work.

Most of the interviewees had homestead land and agricultural land of more than 0.5 acres, which indicates that they were not very poor by the standard of rural Bangladesh. As the same table shows, many of the interviewees purchased homestead and agricultural land with the money they remitted from abroad. We should keep in mind that the interviewees' present economic situations are mostly the outcomes of their working abroad for a long time.

As for the interviewees' marital status, half of them were either widowed or married but living separately from their husbands. It is very easy to imagine from this that many of them faced severe economic problems before going abroad for work, because a family generally depends on a man's income and there are very limited employment opportunities for women in Bangladesh. Thus, we can understand that severe poverty drove many of the interviewees to go abroad for employment.

The average monthly income of the interviewees was 18,250 Bangladeshi taka (equivalent to 215 US dollars as of Dec. 2020), ranging between 12,000 and 26,000 taka. Most of the interviewees sent all income to Bangladesh, namely 18,125 taka on average. This is possible because a housemaid usually lives with her employer family and all necessities of daily life such as food and clothing are provided for free. Their monthly remittance of around 18,000 taka is more than double the present minimum wage of garment factory workers in Bangladesh of 8,000 taka (Butler 2019), and is much higher than the net income of garment workers, who have to pay for food, rent, transportation fees, etc., for themselves from their salary.

Table 5. Basic Features of the Interviewed FOWs

SL. No.	Age	Approx. Age Period of Overseas Employment	Years of Overseas Employment	Religion (M: Muslim)	Residence (R: Rural/ U: Urban)	Education (C: class)	Own Homestead	Own Agr. Land (acres)	Marital Status (**)	Country of Overseas Employment	Job of Overseas Employment	Monthly Income (Salary + Extra) (Taka)	Monthly Remittance (Taka)	Economic Status before Overseas Employment (***)	Present Economic status (**)	Job before Overseas Employment	Present Job	Whether Taking Pre-departure Training for Next Overseas Employment	Destination	Present Main Income of Family	
																				Main Income Source	Earners
1	38	18 to 38 (still working)	20	M	R	6	Yes*	0.5*	M	Lebanon	housemaid	20,500	20,500	Poor	Very Good	Unemployment	Foreign Employment			Abroad	Husband
2	50	35 to 50 (still working)	15	M	U	5	Yes*	0	L.S.H.	UAE	Employee of school	21,000	19,000	Very Poor	Medium	Garment Work	Foreign Employment			Plumbing Work	Daughter's Husband
3	58	38 to 52	14	M	R	3	Yes	0.5*	M	Lebanon	housemaid	15,500	15,500	Very Poor	Medium	Housewife	Housewife			Abroad	Husband
4	52	41 to 52 (still working)	11	M	R	8	Yes	2.0*	W	KSA	Cook in school, Hospital cleaner	24,000	24,000	Poor	Good	Housewife	Foreign Employment			Remittance	Self-son
5	55	43 to 51	8	M	R	0	Yes	0.8*	W	Lebanon	housemaid	15,200	15,200	Very Poor	Medium	Service in Aluminum Com.	Housewife			Service	Son
6	25	18 to 25	7	M	R	6	Yes	0.3	M	KSA, Lebanon	housemaid	20,500	20,500	Poor	Medium	Sewing	Housewife			Remittance	Husband
7	35	29 to 34	5	M	U	0	Yes*	0.5*	L.S.H.	Lebanon, KSA, Qatar	housemaid	20,500	20,500	Very Poor	Medium	Day labor	Housework	Under training	Oman	Agriculture	Self
8	29	23 to 28	5	M	R	0	Yes	0.2*	L.S.H.	Lebanon	housemaid	12,500	12,500	Poor	Poor	Garment Work	Garment Work	Under training	Oman	Mason work	Brother
9	29	23 to 27	4	M	U	5	No*	0	L.S.H.	Jordan	housemaid	13,700	13,700	Poor	Poor	Garments Work (Dhaka)	Garment Work (BZ, Comilla)	Under training	Qatar	Garment Worker	Self
10	22	15 to 19	4	M	U	9	Yes*	0.04	U	UAE	Employee of school and shop	26,000	26,000	Poor	Medium	Unemployment	Housework	Under training	Hong Kong	Plumbing Work	Sister's Husband
11	25	21 to 24	3	M	R	5	Yes	0.2*	M	Lebanon	housemaid	12,000	12,000	Very Poor	Poor	Unemployment	Housewife			Agriculture	Husband
12	28	26 to 28	2	M	R	10	Yes	0	L.S.H.	Oman	housemaid	16,200	16,200	Poor	Poor	Tuition + Sewing	Sewing	Under training	Qatar	Tuition (House tutor)	Self
13	38	35 to 37	2	M	R	5	Yes	0.6*	M	KSA	Hospital cleaner	21,000	21,000	Very Poor	Poor	Housewife	Housewife	Under training	Qatar	Business	Husband
14	32	16 to 18	2	M	R	12	Yes	1.5*	M	Lebanon	housemaid	19,000	19,000	Poor	Good	Housewife	Housewife			Service	Husband
15	32	30 to 31	1	M	R	3	Yes	0.24	M	Oman	housemaid	16,400	16,400	Very Poor	Poor	Housewife	Sewing in House	Under training	KSA	Agriculture + Business	Husband
16	31	29 to 30	1	M	R	4	Yes	0	W	Singapore	housemaid	18,000	18,000	Very Poor	Poor	Housewife	Shop Clerk	Under training	KSA	Shop Clerk	Self
Average	36.2	Average starting age: 27.5	6.5			5.1		0.5				18,250	18,125								

Source: Field data collected in Comilla district (February and March 2020)

Notes: (1) "Own Homestead" and "Own Agr. Land" with (*) mark means that the whole or a part of the land was bought using the remittances sent by the interviewee.

(2) (**): M: Married, L.S.H.: Married but live separately from husband, W: Widow, U: Unmarried.

(3) (***) Interviewees identified their economic status in the surrounding society by their own criteria from 5 categories, very good, good, medium, poor, very poor.

The remittances sent to Bangladesh by FOWs help their family to improve their lives. As Table 5 shows, the economic situations of the interviewees before starting overseas employment were either “very poor” or “poor” according to their own criteria in the area where their families live. However, 13 out of 16 reported that their economic situation improved, either to a “medium” or “good” level, after they started their overseas employment. And from this table, we can see a positive correlation between the length of overseas employment and the degree of economic improvement for their family.

(ii) Main Usages of Remittances

As Table 6 shows, the biggest and most frequent usage of remittances is the family’s daily expenditure, presumably food, clothes, and other miscellaneous consumption for daily life. The second most important and frequent usage is repaying debt. The nature of this “debt” is not clear. It may be money borrowed from relatives or money lenders, etc., to cover the cost of getting overseas employment, or the debt the interviewees’ families owed from before. The author is of the opinion that both cases are true, but the second case is more important for the FOWs because the cost of going abroad as a housemaid is not so big⁵ and one of the common purposes of seeking overseas employment for women is repayment of debts, according to the author’s previous study (Suda 2020).

The purchase of agricultural land is given high priority by many FOWs as a very popular way of investing their incomes. Accumulating agricultural land contributes not only to increasing the family income but also increasing profitable assets and social prestige. Increasing land as an asset has significant meaning for villagers. First, it is a very safe and productive way of saving because one can expect a capital gain when he or she sells it. The price of land keeps increasing rapidly due to high demand, partly caused by the huge influx of remittances into Bangladesh from overseas workers. Second, it provides employment for family members staying in Bangladesh and brings additional income to the family. Third, it enhances the status of the family in society, as Sikder et al.

⁵ Officially, there is no cost housemaids have to pay to go to the Middle East because all of the costs are borne by their employer family in the destination country. However, some recruiting agencies that set up jobs for FOWs sometimes demand money. In such cases, FOWs often have to pay between 20,000 and 100,000 taka, according to a Comilla TTC officer. But this amount is not so large compared with her salary and monthly remittance (about 20,000 taka). Therefore, the repayment of the debt incurred from getting overseas employment cannot be the second major usage of the remittance.

(2017) discussed.

Remittance is often used to send family members abroad for employment. Unlike for FOWs becoming housemaids, for men, getting a job abroad is generally very costly and often out of reach of poor families. Table 6 shows that several families adopted a strategy of sending a woman abroad at first, and then sent male family members like her brother or husband abroad using the remittance she sent. When male family members get a job abroad, the role of FOWs is often over and they get substituted by a male.

The purchase of homestead land and construction of a modern house made of bricks locally called a “building” is also given a high priority by many FOWs. Having one’s own homestead is highly important and is of a high priority. Making a “building” is very costly and not an urgent need, but is rather a kind of dream for many FOWs. Living in a “building” enhances the social status of the family. It is a symbol of their prosperity and success in life. It is also noteworthy that educating children is one of the important usages of remittances.

Table 6. Main Usages of Remittance

Rank	Usage of Remittance	Rank of Usages in the Order of Amount (No. of Responses)					Total Responses (among 16 respondents)	Score
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th		
1	Daily family expenditure	11	2	0	0	1	14	64
2	Debt repayment	1	7	3	3	0	14	48
3	Purchase of agricultural land	3	2	2	1	0	8	31
4	Savings	1	0	2	2	2	7	17
5	Purchase of homestead land	0	2	1	1	0	4	13
6	House building	0	1	2	1	0	4	12
7	Education of children	0	0	3	0	2	5	11
8	To send family member abroad	0	1	0	2	2	5	10
9	Purchase of durable consumer goods	0	0	0	1	7	8	9
10	Business	0	0	0	3	0	3	6
11	For own marriage	0	0	1	1	0	2	5
12	For children's marriage	0	0	1	0	0	1	3
13	House improvement	0	0	1	0	0	1	3
14	Others (Family's medical exp., Land mortgage)	0	1	0	1	1	3	7

Source: Field Data (2020)

Note: "Score" were calculated by summing the weighted points of each cell. Weited points of each cell were calculated by multiplying weigt to the value of each cell.

The weights are given 5 for 1st usage, 4 for 2nd usage, and so on.

(iii) Main Benefits of Overseas Employment as Perceived by the FOWs

Table 7 shows the main benefits of overseas employment as perceived by the interviewees. Economic benefits like savings, purchasing land, and savings for one's own marriage⁶ were certainly the biggest and most frequently perceived benefits for the FOWs. However, many interviewees were of the opinion that non-economic benefits such as love, respect, happiness, new experiences, and the sense of independence obtained through their working abroad are often more valuable to them than the economic benefits.

Table 7. Main Benefits of Overseas Employment for FOWs

Rank	Benefit	Rank of Benefit Perceived (No. of Responses)				Total Responses (among 16 respondents)	Scores
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th		
1	Savings, land purchase	7	1	4	0	11	39
2	Got love, respect and happiness	1	5	0	1	7	20
3	Became happy	3	0	2	0	5	16
4	Could stand on own feet	3	0	2	0	5	16
5	Had a good marriage	1	2	0	0	3	10
6	Could see new country	1	0	1	0	2	6
7	Got regular salary	0	1	1	0	2	5
8	Could send money to family	0	1	1	0	2	5
9	New experience and learning	0	1	0	1	2	4
10	Debt repayment	1	0	0	0	1	4
11	Send family member abroad	0	1	0	0	1	3

Source: Field Data (2020)

Note: "Score" were calculated by the same way as Table 6 except the values of weight.

Benefits for the FOWs' families in Bangladesh were similar to those for the FOWs (Table 8). The biggest and most frequently perceived benefits were economic benefits such as income increase, improvement of living status and standards, land purchase, maintaining family life, savings, sending family members abroad, etc. Thus, remittances from FOWs more than anything else contribute to the economic development of families in Bangladesh. However, it is also noteworthy that many workers felt that their working

⁶ In Bangladesh, usually the family of the bride has to pay a large amount of money and goods as a dowry to the bridegroom's family. This is a big obstacle for poor women to get married, and especially to get a good husband. So, some young women go abroad before marriage to save enough money for their dowry. If they can save a lot of money, they can expect to get a good husband.

abroad and remittances contributed to increasing society's respect for their families. Though the reasons were not given, the author is of the opinion that this is because the families of FOWs buy land; purchase durable consumer goods like TVs and refrigerators; and make "buildings." These are symbols of wealth and prosperity and help the families of FOWs enhance their prestige in society.

Table 8. Main Benefits of Overseas Employment for the Families of FOWs

Benefit	Rank of Benefit Perceived (No. of Responses)						Total Responses (among 16 respondents)	Score
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th		
Increase of family income	6	1	0	2	0	0	9	47
Development of family	1	3	4	0	2	0	10	41
Land purchase	4	3	0	0	0	0	7	39
Improvement of living status and standard	2	1	3	1	0	0	7	32
Increase of respect among society	0	2	2	3	0	0	7	27
Maintaining of family life	1	2	0	0	0	0	3	16
Savings	0	2	0	1	0	0	3	13
Sending family member abroad	1	1	0	0	1	0	3	13
Helping family member get married	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	10
Loan repayment	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	4
Medical treatment of family member	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1

Source: Field Data (2020)

Note: "Score" were calculated by the same way as Table 6 except the values of weight.

The above data agree with the explanation of one officer of the Comilla TTC who is in charge of providing pre-departure training to FOWs becoming housemaids.⁷ He stated

⁷ This person is an instructor in housekeeping for pre-departure trainees at the Comilla TTC. He has been engaged in this work for nearly 10 years. Therefore, he knows about the change of circumstances surrounding FOWs.

that the views of society on FOW have changed in the last decade. Once there was a prejudice against overseas employment of women and it was difficult for the returnees from overseas employment to get married. The instructor said that the views of society have changed favorably for FOWs and now they can get married. FOWs increasing the wealth of their families have changed the views of society toward women working abroad.

(iv) Troubles Faced by FOWs

As many news stories and rumors about the troubles of FOWs such as abuse, human trafficking, low payment, overwork, and so on have spread in Bangladesh, the interviewees were not totally free from such troubles. As Table 9 indicates, there were two people who answered that they themselves had troubles such as “hard work,” “night work,” “less salary than promised,” and even “abuse.” And to the question asking whether other Bangladeshi FOWs around them had any trouble, 4 out of 16 interviewees answered that there were some Bangladeshi women who suffered “beatings,” “hard work,” “less salary than promised,” “night work,” and “misbehavior.” Among such troubles, “hard work” and “night work” seem to be the main ones Bangladeshi FOWs face.

FOWs suffer troubles from their families in Bangladesh, too. As a serious family trouble, two interviewees answered that their husband found a second wife and wasted their remittance while they were away from home. Separation of families for a long period sometimes causes serious family problems that need to be studied deeply.

Table 9. Troubles of FOWs and Families

SL. No.	Years of Overse as Employment	Troubles of Interviewees and Their Families				Troubles of Other Bangladeshi FOWs around the Interviewees	
		Own Trouble	Reasons	Family's Trouble	Reasons	If Anyone Had Trouble	Reasons
1	20	No trouble		No trouble		Some had troubles	Beaten, Hard work, Less salary than promised
2	15	No trouble		No trouble		No one had trouble	
3	14	No trouble		No trouble		No one had trouble	
4	11	No trouble		No trouble		No one had trouble	
5	8	No trouble		No trouble		No one had trouble	
6	7	No trouble		No trouble		No one had trouble	
7	5	No trouble		No trouble		Some had troubles	Night work, Beaten, Hard work
8	5	No trouble		Big Trouble	Husband got 2nd wife, wasted remittance, and left me	No one had trouble	
9	4	No trouble		Big Trouble	Husband got 2nd wife and wasted remittance	No one had trouble	
10	4	No trouble		No trouble		Some had troubles	Beaten, Misbehaved
11	3	Small trouble	Hard work, Night work, Abused	No trouble		No one had trouble	
12	2	Small trouble	Hard work, Night work, Salary was less than promised	No trouble		Some had troubles	Hard work
13	2	No trouble		No trouble		No one had trouble	
14	2	No trouble		No trouble		No one had trouble	
15	1	No trouble		No trouble		No one had trouble	
16	1	No trouble		No trouble		No one had trouble	

Source: Field Data (2020)

(v) Self-evaluation of Overseas Employment and the Related Reasons

Table 10 shows the overall evaluation of their overseas employment by the interviewees. Nine out of 16 answered that their overseas employment was a “big success” for them. The reasons were that they could achieve their goals—that is, to earn a regular and high income without trouble and to remit it to their family in Bangladesh so that their family could improve their life. In addition, many answered that they could get love and honor from their employer family and live happily. Some gained useful knowledge such as hair dressing techniques that they would be able to utilize in Bangladesh for a future business, as we will see later.

Table 10. Evaluation of Own Overseas Employment and Reasons

Sl No.	Length of O.E. (years)	Self-Evaluation of Own O.E.	Reasons
1	20	Big Success	Regular income, Received love and honor, Lived happily, There was no problem, Timely remittance to family
2	15	Big Success	Family's life has improved, Bought land, Received love and honor
3	14	Big Success	Family's life has improved, There was no problem, Regular income, Received love and honor, Lived happily
4	11	Big Success	Regular income, Received love and honor, Timely remittance to family, Could save money, Family's life has improved
5	8	Big Success	Regular income, Lived happily, Timely remittance to family
6	7	Big Success	Regular income, There was no problem, Timely remittance to family, Received love and honor, Family's life has improved
7	5	Big Success	There was no problem, Regular income, Bought land, Received love and honor
8	5	No Success	Husband got 2nd wife, Became sick and returned home, Money was stolen by husband
9	4	Little Success	Husband got 2nd wife, Little income, Could save money
10	4	Big Success	Could save money, Bought land, Lived happily, Learned parlor work
11	3	Little Success	Little income, Hard work
12	2	Little Success	Little income, Hard work, Timely food and clothes
13	2	Big Success	Lived happily, Received love and honor, Regular income, Timely food and clothes
14	2	Little Success	Couldn't stay Long, Husband didn't want me to stay abroad long
15	1	Little Success	Little income, Hard work
16	1	Little Success	Couldn't stay Long, Had to return home

Source: Field Data (2020)

However, some evaluated their overseas employment as a “little success” or even “no success” because they had bad experiences such as “less payment than promised” and “hard work.” Some did not have trouble and wanted to work longer, but for unspecified reasons they had to return to Bangladesh earlier than expected. The unluckiest case was one where the husband of one interviewee found a second wife while she was away. He took the money she sent and ran away with his second wife. She became sick and had to return to Bangladesh.

So, the experiences and outcomes of overseas employment are not uniform. There is no denying that there are unlucky women and cases of failure. Nevertheless, we can still say that many FOWs could achieve their goals at least to some extent. These were not just economic goals but also social and psychological ones that would have been difficult to achieve if they had stayed in Bangladesh.

(vi) Present Plans for Life Improvement

The author asked two questions to the interviewees about their present plans for life improvement. One question was whether they wanted to go abroad again for employment and their reasons, and the other was if they have plans to improve their life at present and what they are.

For the first question, excluding 3 interviewees who were still working abroad, 13 respondents answered. Of them, eight answered “Yes, I want to go abroad again for employment” (seven wanted to go to the Middle East and one wanted to go to Hong Kong, where a higher salary than the Middle East is expected), again as housemaids. However, four answered “No.” All of these four answered that their husbands did not want them to go abroad again, and three also answered (multiple answers were allowed) that there was “no need.” One person answered that she is “too old” now. From these answers, we can safely conclude that most of the interviewees still had a positive feeling toward working abroad.

For the second question, they were asked about their present plans for life improvement. Eleven out of 16 answered “house construction.” A “house” here means a house made of brick and/or concrete, which the locals call a “building.” So, we can understand that the construction of a “building” was the highest priority for life

improvement for most of the interviewees. As discussed earlier, a “building” is not merely a place to live; it is also a symbol of social status, wealth, and success in life. The second priority was given to high education for children. Following the “World Declaration on Education for All” declared in 1990 in Thailand and its consequent education policies taken up in Bangladesh, the importance of education for children has been widely accepted throughout Bangladesh (Suda 2019). Education is now an important field of investment for the bright future of their children and for all of the family.

FOWs were also eager to invest their income/savings/remittance to improve their future economic condition. Beside using money for their children’s education, purchasing agricultural land for farming, starting a parlor business, cow farming, and purchasing a house in the city to let were popular ways of investing their savings. Often, we hear and see criticisms that overseas workers use most of their income only for consumption purposes and do not invest for the sake of a future income, and that leaves them trapped working abroad. However, Table 11 shows that the FOWs were quite enthusiastic about investing their income/savings for the future.

Table 11. Present Plans of the Interviewees for Improvement of Life

	No. of Responses (Total respondents: 16)	Score
House construction ("building")	11	44
Give high education to children	10	33
Purchase of agricultural land and do farming	7	29
Start parlor business	7	22
Start cow farming	5	20
Buy a house in the city to let	4	16
Savings	4	10
Improve family's life	3	8
Make children get married	2	6
Start sewing business	1	5
Send family member abroad	1	5
Get myself married	1	3
Start fish cultivation	1	2

Source: Field Data (2020)

Note: "Score" were calculated by the same way as Table 6 except the values of weight.

(vii) Recommendations and Advice from the Interviewees to Poor Women and the Government

Finally, the author asked whether they would recommend overseas employment to the poor Bangladeshi women around them, and their reasons and advice, if any. They also gave some advice from their own experiences, which may help the government to improve its policies, especially those related to housemaids in the Middle East.

Out of 16 interviewees, 15 answered that they would recommend that the poor women around them go abroad for overseas employment. Only one person answered that she would not recommend it. Although the reason for not recommending was not mentioned, we can easily guess it, because she reported that she had a bad experience with her employer family, mentioning issues such as “overwork,” “night duty,” and “abuse.”

However, excluding this case, all answered that they would recommend overseas employment to other poor women. The main reasons were, as shown in Table 12, economic benefits such as getting employment and saving money. In addition, poor women can expect other things like learning new things, living a happy life, standing on their own two feet, and increased self-respect.

Five out of 16 interviewees also gave advice to poor women, saying that they should always obtain government information. The reason is presumably the fact that FOWs sometimes get cheated by recruiting agencies while processing the migration procedures and get abused by their employer families. In order to avoid such troubles, government information and support were felt necessary and useful by the FOWs.

In the same context, the interviewees advised the government to create an effective complaint reporting system for FOWs. They also requested that the government regulate the salary and working conditions of FOWs to protect them from arbitrary demands, violations of contracts such as low payment, and violations of human rights such as abuse and beatings by employer families.

Table 12. Recommendations and Advice of the Interviewees to Poor women and the Government

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	No. of response (total respondents: 16)	Score
Reasons for Recommending Overseas Employment								
Can get employment	10	2	1	1	0	0	14	77
Can save money	2	6	1	1	1	0	11	51
Can know and learn many things	0	0	3	3	0	0	6	21
Can get better/happy life	0	1	3	1	0	0	5	20
Can stand on own feet	0	0	3	1	0	0	4	15
Can earn higher income	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	15
Can improve family's life	1	0	1	1	0	0	3	13
Higher income than Bangladesh	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	5
Can increase self-respect	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3
Advice to Poor Women								
Public inquiry is always necessary	1	1	2	1	0	0	5	22
Better to go abroad with training	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Requests to the Government								
Complaint reporting system is necessary	0	0	0	2	1	0	3	8
Need govt. programme to send unemployed women to developed countries	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	6
Salary needs to be fixed officially	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	5
Rules need to be fixed officially	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	4
IGA (Income Generation Activities) training centers need to be set up in every area	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2

Source: Field Data (2020)

Note: "Score" were calculated by the same way as Table 6 except the values of weight.

(4) Examples of FOW Successes and Failures

The author has shown the experiences and perceptions of FOWs collected from 16 interviewees. However, in the above discussions, the information of all interviewees was aggregated and analyzed rather statistically. Here, the author will try to reconstruct alive picture of two interviewees to help the readers understand FOWs' experiences and perceptions more vividly.

Case 1: Successful Case: Mrs. K (25)

Mrs. K is a Bengali Muslim aged 25. She lives in a village in Comilla district. She went to school up to Cl. 6. Before she went abroad for employment, she did sewing work, presumably at home. She started to work in Saudi Arabia as a housemaid when she was 18 years old. Later, she also worked in Lebanon. She returned to Bangladesh in January 2020; that means she worked abroad as a housemaid for about seven years. She got married after she went abroad. Now, she lives in Bangladesh and is a housewife. Her husband works abroad now.

Her family's main income was from car driving (presumably from her brother) and her father's wages from agricultural labor work before she went abroad. According to her own criteria, her family was a poor family in her society.

She went to Saudi Arabia for employment, income, savings, and self-development. She also wanted to support her family and realize a happy life. She worked as a housemaid and her duties were cleaning, washing, childcare, cooking, serving the relatives of her employer family, etc. Her monthly salary was 20,000 taka and she received an additional 4,000 taka each year. She remitted all of her income to her father and mother in Bangladesh.

The money she remitted was used by her family at first for maintaining her family's life, then for sending her brother abroad for employment, repayment of debts, savings, purchasing durable consumer goods such as a TV and refrigerator, improving the house, her father's medical treatment, etc. Her savings were also used for her own marriage.

She is of the opinion that, thanks to her overseas employment, she could save money, get a good husband, stand on her own two feet, and, in a word, become happy. She could contribute to her family by enabling her brother to go abroad for employment, improving the life of her family, and lifting them out of poverty.

While working abroad, she did not have any trouble. None of the Bangladeshi women around her had any trouble either. She feels that her overseas work was a big success because she got a regular salary without any trouble, could remit her income regularly to Bangladesh, received love and respect from her employer family, and her family in Bangladesh could improve their lives due to her remittance. According to her own criteria, her family's economic condition in society is now at a medium level.

However, she will not go overseas for employment again, because her husband is now working abroad and he wants her to stay in Bangladesh. At present, she wants to start a tailoring business because she has related experience.

She would recommend that poor women go abroad for employment, because by working abroad, poor women can get employment, save money, and know and learn many new things. However, she would advise them to get their information from the government, presumably to avoid trouble.

Case 2: Failure Case: Mrs. R. (Age 29)

Mrs. R. is a Bengali Muslim living in a village in Comilla district. She has no education but can write her own signature. Her father has a homestead and 0.2 acres of agricultural land. She stayed in Lebanon as a housemaid from 2014 to 2019; that means she worked as a FOW for five years. Before she went to Lebanon, she worked in a garment factory, a popular job for poor women. She now works in a garment factory in Bangladesh again. According to her own criteria, her family was poor before she went abroad, and her family is still poor.

She went abroad for the purposes of getting a higher income, making savings, having a happy life, and buying land. She worked as a housemaid and got a monthly salary of 12,000 taka, with 9,000 additional taka per year. She remitted all of her income to her husband and mother. Her remittance was used for buying 0.15 acres of agricultural land (300,000 taka worth), the daily consumption of her family, the repayment of debts, paying for medical treatment, and the cost of sending her husband abroad. She saved about 70,000 taka for herself. While staying in Lebanon, she did not have any trouble.

From the above statements, it seems as though her overseas employment was successful, but she evaluates the result of her working abroad as “not good.” This is because her husband found a second wife after she started to work in Lebanon and now there is no contact from him. He not only wasted the money she remitted, but also did not return the land he bought with her remittance. After learning that her husband had gotten a second wife, she became sick and had to return to Bangladesh.

Now she plans to go to Oman for the same work. She has experience, and her brother is working in Oman. So, there will be no problem in Oman. She also expects that she will

get a higher salary there. With the money she will earn, she wants to give a good education to her two daughters, buy land, buy a homestead, and make a “building.”

She wants to ask the government to send poor women abroad via official channels, and the Bangladeshi embassies in destination countries should keep in continuous contact with Bangladeshi women working abroad so that they can work safely and stand on their own two feet.

4. Conclusion

Due to the globalization of the labor market and increasing demand for labor from abroad, female international migration for employment has accelerated since the end of the twentieth century. Bangladesh is no exception. Backed by active government policies for manpower exports and support programs by a leading NGO, the number of Bangladeshi FOWs has increased rapidly, especially in the 2010s. Most of them are poor women from rural areas who work as housemaids in the Middle East and South Asian countries. Although the monthly income of a housemaid is only around 20,000 taka (236 USD or 24,540 yen as of December 2020), this amount is about twice as much as the monthly wage of a garment factory worker. FOWs can remit most of their income to their family in Bangladesh, and in this way, they can contribute to improving their family’s life as well as realizing their own happiness. These seem to be the main reasons for the number of FOWs increasing rapidly in recent years.

However, there are failures, too. As is often reported by newspapers, there are considerable cases of overwork, lower pay than promised, abuse, and so on. These troubles that FOWs often face in the Middle East were confirmed by this study. They are mostly attributed to problems with employer families. The governments of host countries and the Bangladesh government, as well as NGOs working to ensure human rights, are strongly urged to tackle these problems as soon as possible.⁸

⁸ As is often criticized, many of these problems are caused by the “Kafala (sponsorship) system,” which is very popular in Middle East countries. This is a system where foreign workers need to get Kafala (sponsorship) from the local citizen or company they work for. In this system, migrant workers cannot change their job or leave the country without permission from their employer. So, all powers of life and death over the migrant workers are in the hands of their employer. This system often causes exploitation and abuse of migrant workers by employers. Pushed by widespread international criticism of this system, some Middle East countries such as Saudi Arabia started to reform the system (BBC 2020). It is expected

In addition, as mentioned in this paper, there are also unignorable family problems caused by the long absence of FOWs from their family. For example, husbands sometimes find a second wife. In addition, though not mentioned in this paper, the absence of their mother for a long period may have negative impacts on children. These problems need to be studied further.

Even though they admitted the existence of the above-mentioned problems, most FOWs interviewed for this paper recommended that poor women seek overseas employment opportunities in order to escape from poverty and to improve the life of their family. The benefits of overseas employment are generally greater than the costs FOWs have to pay. Of course, all possible efforts must be made by the governments of Bangladesh and the host countries, international society, and local societies to minimize the problems and costs for FOWs.

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that these reforms will reduce the problems FOWs face today to a large extent.

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3

Securing Livelihood Entitlements and Space: A Case Study of Balmikis in Delhi

Maya SUZUKI

1. Introduction

Over the last three decades, the three words globalization, neo-liberalism, and Hindu-nationalism have become crucial words, and simultaneously, a decisive trend has been growing in contemporary Indian society. Currently, one of the broadly discussed issues in public and academic discourses is the widening gap between the haves and have-nots. Wealth inequality remains quite high in India. According to the Global Wealth Report 2020 by Credit Suisse, the share of the top 1% of wealth-holders rose rapidly in China, India, and Russia between 2000 and 2007. In India, the top 1% accounts for nearly 40% of the nation's wealth in 2020 (Credit Suisse 2020: 38). This figure takes a heavy toll on the life of socially and economically disadvantaged people.

There has been increasing concern about the violently exclusive tendency of Hindu nationalist groups. Since Narendra Modi of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu nationalist party, became prime minister in 2014, the influence of Hindu nationalism has spread not only to the political field, but also to civil society as a whole. Due to the development of "Cow vigilantism," which is said to involve Hindu nationalist organizations such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), supporters of BJP, and the conversion movement to Hinduism (*Ghar Wapsi*), there have apparently been increasing cases of violence against minorities, such as Muslims, Christians, and Dalits, in various parts of India. Findings from Amnesty International India highlighted the steepest rise in numbers since 2016. In the first six months of 2019 alone, 181 incidents of alleged hate crimes were recorded by the website, nearly double the previous three years' half-yearly counts.¹

¹ Amnesty International India, 2019, 'Hate Crime Reports on an alarming Rise: Reveals Amnesty International India's "Halt the Hate"', (<https://amnesty.org.in/news-update/hate-crime-reports-on-an-alarming-rise-reveals-amnesty-international-indias-halt-the-hate/>, accessed on 27 November 2020).

At this critical juncture, how are minorities in particular securing their livelihood and what sorts of strategies are being devised? In this paper, I will focus on the situation of the Dalit community in North India. Fieldwork conducted on one such disadvantaged group, the urban Balmikis (known as the sweeper caste) in Delhi, is drawn upon to examine their allegations and complaints. The privatization of the government sanitation department, in which sweepers are employed by the municipal corporation and central/state governments, has accelerated since the 2010s, leading to the denormalization of employment and the weakening of trade unions. Many Balmikis who have been engaged in the government sanitation department are now facing insecurity and the fear of unemployment in the near future.

In this paper, I examine the ways in which Delhi's Balmikis have tried to secure their livelihood entitlements. Collective grassroots activism is supposed to include matters like public interest litigation and workers' strikes on the street as a means of appealing to the government and civil society about such problems. The research question posed here is regarding how awareness of rights and entitlements is formed and manifested. By examining this question, this study will also attempt to analyze different aspects of exclusivity and collaboration of Dalit movements.

The idea of "gentle and peaceful cohabitation," which our collaborative project is going to propose based on case studies from South Asia, is certainly not static. Rather, it can be considered to be in progress. With this perspective, this case study will shed light on the evidence of emerging awareness of cohabitation among the community by exploring how the spatially segregated experience and stigma of urban Dalits have influenced their feeling regarding their neighborhood. This finding will help with addressing another theme, namely, the relationship to space.

2. Segregation and Socio-spatial Discrimination in Cities

There are ample number of streets and localities named based on particular communities such as "Harijan Basti," "Balmiki Colony," and "Chamar Mohalla" across the country. These are known as low-caste names and they may instantly cause discriminatory sentiments against the residents of the locality and a stigmatized experience. In addition,

the stereotypes of insecurity, gambling, drinking, and odor seem to be deeply rooted in the named areas (Ganguly 2018a). Lee (2017) highlights how the segregation of the sanitation labor caste is inscribed in space and sensoria using ethnographic research in the cities of Lucknow and Benaras in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Therefore, local residents and activists have often demanded that governments change caste-based names as a form of collective protest.²

Social and spatial segregation along caste lines is not just a past phenomenon, especially for Dalits. Recently, there has been a significant amount of scholarly literature about caste-based segregation and exclusion in major socio-economical arenas such as residential patterns, rental housing markets, labor markets, and higher education (Deshpande and Newman 2007; Dupont 2004; Ganguly 2018a; Ganguly 2018b; Jodhka and Newman 2007; Kamble 2002; Madheswaran and Attewell 2007; Thorat and Attewell 2007; Thorat et al. 2015; Vithathil and Singh 2012). In past studies, caste-based discrimination and exclusion were largely assumed to be a feature of rural areas. However, it is noteworthy that recent studies have provided data collected from metropolitan cities including the National Capital Region. It appears that caste favoritism and the social exclusion of Dalits and Muslims have infused private enterprises even in the most dynamic modern sector of the Indian economy (Thorat and Attewell 2007: 4144).

The concept of segregation opposes the one of cohabitation, but it is noteworthy that the common experience of segregation can serve to enhance the feeling of “us” or brother/sisterhood among disadvantaged communities like Dalits who live together (cohabit) in the same colony. Place does matter in the history of Dalit protests and movements. This is because place can function not only as a home for living, eating, and conducting religious ceremonies (including marriages, births, and funerals) of community members, but also as a source of collective action and protests.

In the case of Balmikis, their place of residence has also meant a source of (union) leaders and activists for a long time. Balmikis working in government (central/state/

² Apart from grassroots protests, the Maharashtra government announced in December 2020 about abolishing caste-based names of localities across the state and replacing them with names of freedom fighters, social reformers, and ideologues. Social Justice Minister Dhananjay Munde explained that the aim of this decision was to solidify the notion of national integrity. The Maharashtra government has already dropped the usage of the word “Dalit” from official communication, papers, and certificates. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/maharashtra-to-drop-caste-names-from-localities/article33234784.ece> (accessed on 17 December 2020).

municipal corporation) sanitation departments are generally entitled to a flat in government colonies (known as “sweeper colony”) to live in until their retirement. They share time and space mostly with a homogeneous caste group. In this context, inhabitants construct their socio-spatial environment and a sense of security and solidarity. In the next section, I will discuss the Dalit neighborhood in Delhi from a case study based on a relatively old municipal colony of Balmiki sweepers.

3. The Plight of Balmiki Sweepers and a Sense of Neighborhood

Caste is one of the crucial factors of social inequality. This fact can be observed not only between non-Dalits and Dalits, but also between Dalit caste groups. In the case of Delhi, it has been clarified that Balmikis experience the poorest circumstances in terms of education and employment opportunities (Suzuki 2017). According to the 2011 census, the population of Balmikis in Delhi is approximately 5.8 lakh, and they constitute 21% of the SCs, being the second largest population after Chamars (approximately 1 million, 38% of the SCs). Balmikis have a literacy rate of 67.4%, the lowest among all the SCs (78%) in Delhi (Government of India 2011).

In addition to the educational development of Balmikis in Delhi being the lowest, their economic mobility has also seemed to stagnate. According to an article published in 2005, 99% of Delhi’s government sanitary workers were from the Balmiki community in 1995 (Labour File November–December 2005: 11). In addition, in the course of the author’s fieldwork from 2003 onward, comparable information was collected from local Balmiki sweepers, residents, and sweeper union leaders in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi.

It is not necessary to examine macroeconomic indices to know that the prices of goods are rising steadily in Delhi. The author, who visits Delhi once or twice a year, experiences its effects from the rising prices in hotels and restaurants—generally not accompanied by improvements in quality of the services—and has been surprised by the degree of this increase. The rooftop room that the author resided in while studying in Delhi from 2006 to 2008 was located in a luxury residential district in which safety and location are prioritized and life is comfortable. However, its rent, at 12,000 rupees (about

24,000 yen at the time) per month, was high, even for foreigners. To put it into perspective, in hot Delhi, the higher the floor, the lower the rent. The rent on this room had risen to 80,000 rupees by 2010.

At the time of the author's survey in 2019-2020, the monthly income of household heads was approximately 40,000 rupees for *pacca* ("permanent" in Hindi) sweepers, and ranged from 10,000 to 12,000 rupees for *kaccha* ("temporary" in Hindi) sweepers, and 4,000 to 5,000 rupees for contract-based sweepers.

A "pacca" sweeper means a regular or permanent sweeper who is paid as per the pay scale fixed by the government. Along with a salary, they are entitled to government facilities such as housing, gratuity, promotion, pension, and medical care. Kaccha sweepers are those who work with the government or municipality or any agency of the state government. Kaccha sweepers are engaged on a temporary basis. They are supposed to be regularized in service after a certain period. Contract sweepers are those who are engaged by the contractor under a written agreement for a short period, and are paid as per the prevailing rate of wages in the state. Private contractors to whom work is outsourced by the government or local agencies are called government contractors. Government contractors have many NGOs, such as Sulabh International. Contract sweepers are paid as per the wage rate fixed by the government. However, contract sweepers with private contractors lack the scope to obtain regular/permanent employment in the future, as they are not entitled to a permanent job by the government.

The results of the author's interviews with the sweepers showed that each category of sweeper has been facing difficulties. For example, because contract-based and kaccha sweepers need to pay a proportion of their wages to their contractors, they are not paid their full wages by them. They used to receive half their wages. While permanent sweepers are officially supposed to receive proper benefits (family allowance, medical care, and other necessary supplies), they claim that they have not received them. Safety gear such as gloves, gumboots, and masks, along with the timely payment of salaries, cashless medical cards for treatments, and the clearing of pending arrears have been the demands of sanitation workers for close to a decade.³

³ 'Amid Covid-19 outbreak, Delhi's sanitation workers demand safety gear, masks', Indian Express, (<https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/coronavirus-lockdown-few-masks-no-gloves-or-sanitisers-complain-mcd-sanitation-workers-6336100/>, accessed on 4 April 2020).

These difficulties seem to be worsening, especially after the COVID-19 outbreak across the country. Joginder Bahot, president of Akhil Bharatiya Safai Mazdoor (ABSMS) and sweeper of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), said, “After the outbreak of COVID-19, we are forced to clean [the whole] city, but how can we work safely without protective suits and masks? *Kuch nahin* (Nothing!)” Bahot continued to explain to the author, “We used to be provided uniforms, soaps, and oil by the MCD before. But now, nothing. We need to work with our own clothes, and they get easily dirty and unusable.”⁴ Although Bahot and other members of ABSMS and the MCD sweeper union have been raising the issue to the corporation and the Delhi Government and have gone on several strikes, their demands have not been met yet. Meanwhile there is an ongoing political battle and disagreement over the matters of the sweepers’ unpaid salary and needful supplies between the AAP-led Delhi government and the BJP-led MCD.

Many ABSMS activists concur with the opinion that the plight of Delhi’s municipal sweepers has worsened since the MCD was replaced by three new bodies in 2012, namely, the North, the South, and the East Delhi Municipal Corporation.⁵ This significant institutional shift seems to be in line with the privatization of government sweepers employed by the municipal corporation and central/state governments, which has accelerated since the 2010s, leading to the denormalization of employment and weakening of trade unions.

Considering these Balmiki sweepers’ plight, when the cost of rent, food, electricity, water, and other life essentials were deducted from their salaries, they had almost no money left in hand. They set the balance aside for their daughters’ dowries or for religious rites and none was left to invest in the education of their children. In 2007, electric meters and yellow cables were installed throughout the city under the pretext of “preventing the theft of electricity” in order to run the electrical industry more efficiently. The people of the colony studied in the survey look up at the cables reproachfully, raging that, “Those have doubled electricity prices. I have to pay up to 3,000 rupees every other month. What can we, who do not have steady jobs, do?”

⁴ Interviewed on March 7, 2020, Delhi. Here is another similar case amid the COVID-19 pandemic: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/delhi-news/north-corporation-sanitation-workers-not-paid-salaries-for-march-civic-body-says-govt-yet-to-release-funds/story-QDmKuNDcPZvTxVty8qVQ2I.html> (accessed on December 16, 2020).

⁵ The Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Act 2011(Delhi Act 12 of 2011).

Along with complaints about daily expenses, the author often heard people express uneasiness concerning homes. Employees working as sweepers may live in housing for public employees in the center of Delhi to be close to their workplaces. If even one member of the household is an employee, they are qualified to live in this public housing. The author's survey confirmed three residential patterns among Balmiki people in Delhi. The first is the government (municipal) employees' housing pattern, namely, continued residence by generations of people who work as sweepers. The second pattern is ensuring housing by obtaining land in a resettlement colony after removal from a slum where people had been living. In the third pattern, when the government permanent employee in a sweeper household, which has been occupying government employees' housing, retires, the family purchases a public dwelling in the city with their savings, taking advantage of a housing support policy of allotting funds to SCs. Turning to links with the Balmiki movement discussed later, many of the leaders of the movement obtained assets using the third residential pattern.

During the 1970s and 1980s, it was comparatively easy to obtain a home in the city using the second and third patterns, but in recent years, heavy investment in land has rapidly increased land prices to levels beyond the reach of Balmiki people in the low-income class. Life in Delhi is becoming increasingly harsh. At the same time, the first pattern, government employees' housing, is not home-ownership, but does offer conveniences—they are close to their workplaces and their children's schools—and motivates the Balmiki people to choose to work as sweepers in successive generations.

Residential Patterns of Balmikis in Delhi

The 2001 and 2011 census data distinctively show that Dalits are concentrated in the city. According to the data, Delhi is divided into nine districts, North West, North, North East, East, New Delhi, Central, West, South West, and South. Based on the 2011 census data and her field study, Ganguly (2018b) points out that when we compare Balmikis' presence in each district with the population of SCs in the district, New Delhi has the highest concentration (49.2%), followed by South (27.4%) and South West (26.5%). This pattern is in close accordance with the author's study (Suzuki 2015). In the next section, I will describe a municipal colony located in New Delhi district and a resident's movement.

A Municipal Sweeper Colony

The following are the outlines of Colony A situated in New Delhi district. Colony A is located near the center of Delhi. Close to the President's residence, combined government offices, and the Parliament, this colony is surrounded by collective dwellings for employees of the central government, Delhi City, and New Delhi City. The percentage of SCs among the residents (23.4%) is higher than the average value throughout Delhi (16.7%); it is hypothesized that many of the people of SC background are gathered in this colony as government employees. Two interesting characteristics of the SC composition in New Delhi district are that it is the only district in which Balmikis outnumber Chamars to form the largest SC group, and many SC government employees are Balmikis.

Colony A was constructed as the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) employee housing during 1969 and 1970. Nineteen four-story buildings stand in the district. Each building consists of approximately 15 flats, thus totaling to 288 flats. The residential population is estimated to be least 1,440 people, judging from the average household size in the colony.

Only NDMC employees qualify for residence, so at least one member of each household must be an employee of the NDMC. About 20% of the monthly wages of each household's head is deducted as rent, and the family may live in it until the NDMC employee retires. In fact, in Colony A, opinions concerning home ownership differ between officials and residents, causing severe problems dating back to their construction. This reveals the relationship between the sweeper community and the Indian National Congress, which was the governing party at the time they were constructed. Because this is considered a case of the appropriation of Gandhi's view of the sweeper caste, the author wishes to include historical episodes in Colony A based on the interviews with the residents.

The name of Colony A, *Bāpū Dhām*, means "place where Gandhi stays or lives" in Hindi. This suggests that Gandhi is somehow linked to the events leading to the establishment of the district. The year 1969 happened to be when a movement to celebrate Gandhi's 100th birthday was growing among Gandhians. Colony A was established in order to improve the lives of poor lower class government employees (sweepers in particular) as part of the SC support policies. On April 9, 1970, attendees of the

celebration of the district's completion included prominent Indian Congress Party parliamentarians such as the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi (1917 – 1984), and President V.V. Giri (1894 – 1980).

Interesting stone monuments representing the Congress Party and Balmikis remain in Colony A. There are two stone monuments: one is beside a small temple where saint Valmiki is enshrined near the entrance to the colony, and the other is constructed on land deep within the colony. The quadrangular stone monument placed on the grounds of the Valmiki Temple is engraved with inscriptions and pictures. Three sides display the words of Gandhi concerning anti-untouchability and, on the remaining side, the three-monkey design (see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil) is engraved.⁶

Gandhi viewed untouchability as the worst stain on the Hindu religion and launched a movement to abolish it (Harijan movement) in the mid-1930s. From this stone monument, it is possible to discern the situation in 1969, when the Congress Party Government, which inherited Gandhi's Harijan movement, constructed it in Colony A as a project to commemorate Gandhi's centenary celebration.

Another stone monument constructed inside the colony bears an engraved epithet (in English). The following are the English words (Fig.1):

“Keep your house clean.
 Frontage of your house clean.
 The whole city shall be clean.”
 V.V. Giri

⁶ The three-monkey design is seen around the world, but in India, it is said to have originated from the teachings of Gandhi. Gandhi always carried an image of the three monkeys and taught people to not see evil, hear evil, or speak evil; these tenets are extremely familiar to Indians as Gandhi's three monkeys. This stone monument is now in extremely poor condition and is severely damaged. Most of the engraved text and pictures is covered with sand and is illegible, but they can be seen if the monument is washed using water.



Fig.1 The stone monument established in Colony A. (Photographed by the author)

The engraved text of the message from the then President Giri contains the word “clean” three times; clearly a message to the sweepers. Simply put, Colony A was truly established for the sweepers.

The author’s survey revealed that most of the residents of Colony A are actually employed as sweepers. They report that before the construction of Colony A, they lived several kilometers to the north, in a slum that then existed around NDMC employee housing known generally by the name *Mandir Marg*.⁷ *Mandir Marg*’s residents were also municipal sweepers, and in this connection, this colony is well known as the place in which Gandhi stayed temporarily to publicize the Harijan movement in 1946.

As asserted by the residents of Colony A, during the 1960s and 1970s, the government forcefully implemented a slum clearance project, removing slums from central Delhi. The government offered people employed as sweepers by the NDMC Colony A as a relocation site located close to their work places. The aspect of this that invites confusion was the speech by President Giri at the completion ceremony in 1970, in which he stated, “I dedicate this land to you who are poor,” and the attitude of the authorities who urged the people to relocate. According to F.C. Chouhan, who had lived there since the beginning, almost everyone relocated; this was interpreted as meaning that

⁷ Residents of the colony were interviewed by K.L. Meena, former assistant sanitary inspector in the NDMC sanitation division (October 1, 2005, Bāpū Dhām).

they could obtain their own house. Chouhan retired from the post of assistant sanitary inspector in the NDMC sanitary division and participated in negotiations as a representative of the organization conducting a movement to restore ownership to residents of Colony A called the Harijan Society Improvement Committee (Harijan Samaj Sudhar Samiti) (formed in 1970).⁸ The leadership of the resident movement for ownership was formed by union members, arising from the homogeneity of municipal Balmiki sweepers who shared the Balmikis' plight and a sense of neighborhood formed in Colony A.

Balmikis in Delhi, regardless of whether they are undertaking sanitation jobs, try to maintain their caste solidarity by celebrating several anniversaries: *Safai Mazdoor Diwas* (sweepers' day) (on 31 July) and *Valmiki saint Jayanti* (every October). They also hold meetings and organize a collective protest when atrocities against Balmikis occur. In 2020, serial rape murder cases occurred in UP (Uttar Pradesh), followed by protests of Balmiki organizations. These incidents and anniversaries have become an opportunity for Balmikis to work together and recognize a feeling of "us" and neighborhood beyond physical geographical locality.

In the next section, I overview the development of Dalit movements in north India and attempt to map a recent Dalit activism in court. Educated Balmiki activists demand a sub-classification of SC reservation and abolish privatization of government sanitation departments through petitions to the Supreme Court. It indicates a different phase of the movements and intra-Dalit conflicts over SC reservations.

4. Disparity and Solidarity among Dalit Movements in North India

For several centuries, nationwide and regional protests have occurred in India against caste-based oppression and discrimination. Modern and contemporary versions of what we call Dalit movements were initiated by Ambedkar, who made an important contribution to establishing fundamental rights and laid the foundation for the Dalit Buddhist movement for socio-religious liberation.

Dalits are not homogeneous groups; they are differentiated in terms of sub-caste,

⁸ Interview in Bāpū Dhām on October 1, 2005.

region, religion, generation, language, and internal economic situation. Contemporary Dalit movements in the post-Ambedkar period seem to have evolved with the common aims of overcoming caste hierarchy and abolishing the practice of untouchability in pursuit of dignity and equality. However, complexities and various movements exist with different visions and strategies (Gorringer 2005; Pai 2010; Shah 2004).

According to the classification of Jodhka (2015: 173-174) and Jaoul (2007), there are three different phases through which the present Dalit activism evolved in north India, aside from Dalit party politics. The first stream is from the Dalit Panther movements of Maharashtra from the early 1970s to the early 1990s. Young urban male activists, most of them Mahar caste, launched a politically oriented literature movement to express their anger against caste and class injustices. Despite its significant impact on society, the Dalit Panther movement had declined by the early 1990s.

The second phase of Dalit activism was initiated by Kanshi Ram during the 1980s, with his initial mobilization of SC employees in government jobs through the Backward and Minority Castes Employees Federation (BAMCEF). This organization indicated that SC job reservation in government sectors had steadily prevailed to some extent, enabling upwardly mobile Dalits to make a force to organize themselves. This finally resulted in the development of a political party in 1984, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Uttar Pradesh. Although BSP has become a national level political party and it is aimed at obtaining wide support from not only Dalits, but also other communities, it seems to have been stagnating in terms of strategy and leadership in recent years.

The third phase of contemporary Dalit activism started in the 1990s. The significant turning point was the United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa (known as the Durban Conference) in 2001. The Durban Conference was followed by the World Social Forums in Mumbai and Nairobi in 2004 and 2007, respectively.

These international conferences provided a platform for various Indian and foreign human rights-oriented Dalit organizations to collaborate and form a network among domestic Dalits and Dalit immigrants living in Western countries in particular. Their claim and case studies showed that caste practices are common abroad and that they have been widely observed among South Asian migrant communities. Dalit NGOs such as the

International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN)⁹ raised the issue of caste discrimination as a human right violation and aimed to pressure the Indian government as well as the United Nations to address the issue immediately. A characteristic element of the third phase is that Christian organizations provided an important source of transnational support to Dalit networks and NGOs (Jodhka 2015: 174; Mosse 2009).

In addition to the three streams of contemporary Dalit movements, I would underline another landmark, the death of Rohit Vemula (a PhD student in the University of Hyderabad) in 2016. His suicide seemed to have profoundly impacted his generation across the country and abroad, such that the protest against his suicide was followed by the activism of highly educated Dalit youth in the form of the publication of their autobiographies, Bhim Army in UP, and Ambedkarite student associations, for example. They raise the question of caste discrimination, injustice, and Dalit empowerment in various public spheres such as higher education, academia, media, employment, politics, and government administration.

Intra-Dalit Conflicts over SC Reservations from the Late 1990s

Some recent studies point out the intricate circumstances involved in the intra-Dalit conflicts, especially regarding the adequate distribution of the benefits of the present reservation policy (Jodhka and Kumar 2007; Rao 2009). This is what is happening in some states of the country, particularly since the late 1990s, when, based on the recommendations of the Ramachandra Rao Commission, the Government of Andhra Pradesh decided to classify its SC population into four categories in 1997 (Jodhka 2015: 82). This distribution is exemplified by the cases of tMadigas in Andhra Pradesh and Balmikis in Punjab and Haryana. They hold that because the reservation policy has been monopolized by privileged Dalit communities such as Malas and Chamars in their respective states, the reservation policy must be revised by introducing a sub-categorization among those who belong to the advanced or backward SCs. In the contemporary northern states, especially in Delhi, Haryana, and Punjab, the Ad-Dharm/Chamars constitutes most of the SC groups. The account of Paramjit S. Judge points out that agricultural development runs parallel to the emergence of the Punjabi

⁹ The website of IDSN <https://idsn.org/about-us/> (accessed on 10 December 2020).

Chamar middle class through education, modern occupations, and international migration. They have begun to assert their caste identity, a trend that was absent in the 1970s, during which time there was a tendency to hide their caste status (Judge 2012).

Regarding the Punjab and Haryana argument over the classification of SC reservation, Jodhka (2015: 68-91) explains the historical, social, and political contexts. Long before the question of “quotas within quotas” for the SCs became a controversial subject in Andhra Pradesh, the Government of Punjab had introduced a two-fold classification of its SC population. In 1975, the state government directed various departments to offer 50% of all the vacancies of the quota reserved for SCs to Balmikis and Mazhabi Sikhs. The Government of Haryana also followed suit in 1994. It decided to divide its SC population into two blocks, A and B, limiting 50% of all seats for the Chamars (block B), and offering the remaining 50% to non-Chamars (Block A) on a preferential basis (Jodhka 2015: 83).

These schemes worked until 2005, when the Punjab and Haryana High Courts directed the two state governments regarding the “illegality” of the provision in response to a writ petition by Gaje Singh, a Chamar from the region. The petitioner cited the Supreme Court judgments against the sub-classification of SCs in the case of Andhra Pradesh in 2004 (the E.V. Chinniah case). The Chinniah judgment took a negative view of the sub-classification of SC quotas in Andhra Pradesh. However, on 27 August 2020, a five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court held that states could sub-classify SCs and STs in the Central List to provide preferential treatment to the “weakest out of the weak”.¹⁰ This latest Supreme Court judgment has drawn further controversy and intra-Dalit conflicts over SC reservation.

Balmiki Activists in Court

One example of the current trends can be traced to Delhi, the capital of India. Metropolitan Delhi is not only the center of Indian politics, but it is also a judicial field, being home to the Supreme Court and the Delhi High Court. It provides an effective and influential location for social and political activism, including Dalit movements.

¹⁰ ‘States can have sub-groups among SCs/STs: Supreme Court’, The Hindu (August 27, 2020), (<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/states-can-have-sub-groups-among-scssts-supremecourt/article32453272.ece>, accessed on 10 December 2020).

During the last decade, a considerable number of state, national, and global networks and organizations has emerged among Balmiki activists in Delhi. It is noteworthy that they are organized mostly by Balmikis who are educated and have attained white-collar jobs through the SC reservation policy. Although some are retired government officers, others are working as teachers, advocates, entrepreneurs, and medical doctors. The lawyers in the community in particular assume leadership in raising questions related to the ongoing SC quota. They seek a review of policies for an equal share through judicial action, specifically, a public interest litigation (PIL) appeal to the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, the National Coordination Committee for Revision of Reservation Policy (NCCRRP) was formed in 2007 by Balmiki leaders, most of whom were advocates and retired government officers. NCCRRP aims to introduce a sub-classification of SC reservation and abolish privatization of government sanitation departments through PIL (Suzuki 2019). The past petition regarding a sub-classification of SCs was dismissed in 2015 by the Supreme Court. However, in response to the latest Supreme Court judgment on 27 August 2020, we are likely to continue to observe ongoing controversy over reservation policies and Balmikis' survival strategies and collective struggles.

5. Conclusion: Quest for Gentle and Peaceful Cohabitation beyond Spatially Segregated Experience

In this study, I examined the case of Balmikis in Delhi. It was confirmed that Balmikis are seeking to defend their life-world and enter the public sphere by caste-based collective protests (against subcontracting the sanitation department and demanding subdivision of SC reservation). While they attempt to maintain internal solidarity by celebrating community anniversaries and protesting atrocities against Balmiki members, there is a question of how it will be possible for Balmikis to associate with other Dalits and minorities, regardless of caste and religious backgrounds.

“Keep visible” is a key phrase the author frequently heard during fieldwork among Balmiki activists in Delhi. It appears that in the Indian society, minorities have no choice but to keep raising their voices to survive.

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4

The System of “Dry Latrines” and Scavenging in India: 1870s–1990s**Yui MASUKI****1. Introduction**

Indeed, it is marvellous how Bombay has put up with the existing state of things for so long. That it can continue is impossible. It is opposed to the most ordinary feelings of our nature. The mere fact that the system demands that hundreds of men, and women too, shall be engaged for several hours of the day in handling the very filthiest matter that can be produced, is sufficient to condemn. I say “handling,” for this is the plain and unvarnished truth. The sweepers handle the night-soil just as a baker might handle so much dough. Can it be necessary, in this age of mechanical skill, to employ human beings in this degrading occupation? ... The question is, whether the whole system of the native—both his moral and physical nature—is not lowered and debased by it. If it is, then, I say, the consequences must be reflected on the general community.

Hector Tulloch (Tulloch 1872: 13-4)

In 1993, nearly 12 decades after dignitaries such as Hector Tulloch of the Royal Engineers in British India, who proposed the improved sewerage and drainage scheme, exhibited empathetic yet patronizing demeanor toward the human waste collectors of Bombay, the practice of manually carrying any human excrement became legally proscribed in the country.¹ The point of contention in the new law is not about the caste issue in which those from Dalit communities are, and have been, liable to do this work. Instead, it is about how human excrement should be disposed of, in an efficient, not-so-inhuman, and hygienic manner. Or, more precisely, what could be a proper and affordable toilet system. Dalit human rights activists have strived for decades to make their voices heard in the democracy, for the emancipation of sanitation workers impugning the government’s merely rhetorical enforcement of the statute. They hope to materially eradicate what passes for “manual scavenging,” the hand removal of human waste, from so-called “dry

¹ It is formally referred to as “The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act.”

latrines,” which structurally necessitates a daily cleaning and had been prevalent in urban areas especially since the latter half of the nineteenth century.

When rural Dalits migrated to industrial cities in search of greener pastures after the mid-nineteenth century, the colonial modernity helped reinforce the “untouchables’ low status” (Bayly 1999: 225-6). Among those affected were the *Bhangis*,² “the acknowledged ‘scavenger’ jatis,” who were considered “as specialist waste-removers” (Bayly 1999: 227). As Prashad reveals in the case of Punjab, quite contrary to the conventional association between their caste and being sanitation laborers, a number of them earned their bread primarily through agriculture in the countryside (Prashad 2000: 26, 43). Partly due to this generally shared stereotype (Prashad 2000: 26), the Dalits regarded as sanitation workers started to find employment in local bodies, cantonments, railways, and private households. Sanitation services were expanded in British India due to the belief that the cities’ poor sanitation jeopardized public health, which had undergone devastating consequences brought about by diseases such as cholera. Directing all their efforts to prevent epidemics, colonial officials heavily relied on manual laborers. It was a policy they believed would mesh well with their disinclination “to spend money on public welfare” (Prashad 2001: 115). The labor of sweepers and scavengers³ compensated for the bureaucratic inertia in technological development, which militated against extensive mechanization of human waste disposal, or a sewerage system that was deemed a modern product at that time.⁴

What is relatively unclear hitherto is how this particular system wherein toilets served as a basic device for human waste disposal, in this case “dry latrines,” was popularized by the authorities, profoundly affecting scavengers’ way of living as well as their neighborhoods. It did not exist as an independent entity, but it was promoted with

² Although the word *Bhangi* is considered a derogatory term, this paper uses it in accordance with the description in government reports and archives.

³ Technically there was a sharp difference between these two occupational groups; in Bombay, for example, scavengers were engaged in the cleaning of toilets and collecting human waste from them; people engaged in this were “almost invariably” from the *Bhangi* caste (Masselos 1982: 105). Sweepers, on the other hand, were engaged in street sweeping. These two terms, however, were used interchangeably in government documents, especially when it came to the removal of human waste from toilets. As this paper primarily deals with the manual collection of human waste, both terms that appear hereafter signify the group that worked in cleaning dry latrines.

⁴ Although the sewerage system was deemed an alternative to manual labor, it was found to be insufficient in the absence of sweepers when the system came into use in some municipalities (e.g., Tam 2013).

clear purpose at a specific period of time and context, and was gradually adopted by the people who used it. This paper primarily centers on the popularization of the dry latrines, which the colonial administration thought would be a good cornerstone of safeguarding public health, and its impact on city dwellers, including the scavengers themselves. Its time focus sweeps through the second half of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century. The widespread manual technique of feces management in the form of dry latrines was deployed for *daily* and prompt removal of filthy waste from household premises to the extreme outskirts of cities and towns. What the officialdom did, amid the supposed want of financial and water resources, to untie the Gordian knot was to count on human capital by appropriating sanitary machineries. The manual labor involved in cleaning dry latrines affected not only urban citizens, arguing with one another over their right of way for the passage of these scavengers to their toilets, but also scavengers for whom it significantly constituted a part of their life in terms of a “customary right.” Rather than demonstrating a stiff resistance to the widespread stereotype of their “traditional” occupation as a means for emancipation, a number of sweepers strategically appropriated such labor as customarily exclusive to their community and attempted to secure it in the public domain.

2. Abolition of Pit Privies and Mobilization of Scavengers

To contain the outbreak of highly contagious diseases, colonial officials prioritized the machinery of the administration that dealt with the practical sanitation concerns of each municipality. A government resolution in the 1880s sheds light on one of the most distinguishing aspects of the sanitation policy from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. “The main obstacles which have hitherto impeded sanitary improvement in India,” according to the resolution, “lay in the ignorance of the masses and their dislike to any change of custom, and the want of efficient executive agencies, and last, though not least, in the want of funds.”⁵ Despite the manifest description of the issue, these three thorns in the flesh could not be removed altogether. Government officials were not inclined to enlighten the populace, whom they considered ignoramus

⁵ Resolution of the Home Department (Sanitary), 27 July 1888, quoted in (Hewlett 1889: 6).

about the importance of hygiene; neither did they procure funds that could help them develop the modern sanitation technology; rather, the pendulum of the bureaucracy's sanitary measures swung toward the appropriation of an administrative agency, which would execute the commands regarding public health through a top-down approach. In light of the utilization of the hierarchical organ for promulgating every order issued by the executives for the rank-and-file, a sanitary policy was implemented in a sphere of daily life. Thus, sweepers and scavengers became to be, in lieu of nonhuman resources, increasingly mobilized as the sole, although unsatisfactory, mainstay of colonial urban health.

One of the common toilets used by Indian city dwellers at that time, in the northern, western and eastern parts of the country, in particular, was “the pit privy” or “the well privy,” or the like. Some of the colonial sanitary reports offer a brief glimpse of both its structure and the perspectives of the officials toward the native manner of disposing human waste. Pit privies were mostly situated “inside the house” (Chotalall 1892: 167) so that it “formed [a] part of the houses” rather than “detached” therefrom (Ghole 1892: 130). In the case of northern part of India, the pit was “sunk in the floor of the lower compartment” “in the building” (Sterndale 1881: 38). Its design and directions for use were exceedingly simple; the discharged human waste fell into a deep-dug pit. Since the substances naturally became decomposed or liquefied by an artificial mixture with salt, as is done in western India, the feces percolated through the soil (Chotalall 1892: 167). In such a type of toilet, the accumulated feces are removed “only after long intervals – or never” emptied (Dhurandhar 1892: 140). As cited in a sanitary commissioners’ report, in the eastern part of India, when “holes dug in the earth” for toilets became full, another one was dug “until all available ground is dotted with these inadequately-covered pest-holes.”⁶ In some parts of northern India, people used another type of toilet situated inside the house, where the excrement falls into a room at a lower level from the upper floor (Sterndale 1881: 38). Similar to the well-privy, this was cleaned “every two or three months” or “annually” (Sterndale 1881: 38). In the Calcutta municipality, feces were accumulated in a “cesspool” bored in the earth, the contents of which were collected by “*mehters* [sweepers or scavengers],” “and carried away from time to time as convenience

⁶ Description by Gupta, quoted in (Harvey 1878: 47).

or necessity required” (ILR 1883: 783). Some residents did use the so-called dry latrine, aside from the pit privy, which was made of bamboo baskets and emptied by scavengers employed by the house-owners (Dhurandhar 1892: 140).

The sanitary officials’ views on the native custom of disposal of fecal matter were correlated to the fact that urban cities were becoming endangered by the rapid spreading of infections. The colonial officials believed that the system of the well-privy materially allowed for continuous co-habitation of dejecta and human beings, thus increasing exposure to an unsanitary environment. Both the close proximity to drinking wells and the production of polluted gases, according to a medical officer at Baroda, were the structural defects in this toilet (Dhurandhar 1892: 140). It was argued that “the ordure collected in them fouls the subsoil and water-bearing stratum” (Hewlett 1889: 26), and that inhaling the effluvia from the excrement might cause infectious diseases such as cholera and enteric fever (Sterndale 1881: 39). The sanitary officials exposed the odium of this “time honoured custom”⁷ and energetically endeavored to do away with it. This overenthusiasm in maintaining cleanliness in the atmosphere of buildings partially stemmed from a miasmatic theory that had held dominion over the field of public health in British India until the 1890s, when approaches by contagionists were accepted (Arnold 1986: 145; Wilhelm 2016: 31). Therefore, what the sanitary officials regarded as “these abominable contrivances,”⁸ or the “most insanitary, injurious, and filthy practice” (Ghole 1892: 130), were eventually abandoned in the municipalities in the 1870s. For example, in Ahmedabad, which then belonged to the Bombay Presidency, pit privies “were closed and filled up” “on the representation of the Sanitary Commissioner” during the late 1870s (Chotalall 1892: 167) at “considerable expense and litigation” (Gillion 1968: 133).

Along with the abolition of pit privies, daily and prompt collection of human waste, and carrying it away from residential quarters was enforced. Merits of its disposal by way of water, a sewerage system in particular, was indeed appreciated by some officials as early as in the 1870s. They did so because such a system could completely flush all fecal matter far away from the residential areas through the pipes, but questions were raised

⁷ General Department files (hereafter GD), Maharashtra State Archives, 528, 1892, Memorandum by the Army Sanitary Commission, p. 21.

⁸ Memorandum by the Army Sanitary Commission, p. 21.

about its cost-effectiveness and technological feasibility.⁹ Likewise, the technology of flush toilets too, which was under consideration for use during this period, was met with opposition, apparently on the grounds of scarcity of water resources.¹⁰ With their studious avoidance of appropriating funds for mechanization, the only viable option to stave off the epidemic outbreaks was to resort to human capital: sweepers and scavengers.

Thus, the sanitary policies to decrease the mortality rates involved the appropriation of sanitary institutions in local bodies, and the implementation of “new sanitary rules” that forbade the construction of pit privies and directed the owners of newly installed toilets to get it cleaned “every morning” (ILR 1883: 786). In their obsessions with the instant removal of polluted matter that could become breeding grounds for diseases, colonial officials shifted their focus to creating awareness among the masses on, what they believed, “the advantage of removing filth to a distance from their doors” through dry latrines and scavengers.¹¹ These so-called dry latrines which usually had receptacles attached to them, were increasingly being promoted for use in both public and private domains. Ordinarily, as described by Tulloch, in Bombay, these toilets were located “at the backs of the houses,” and the waste collected by scavengers was transferred “on their heads” “to certain central stations, where the carts are waiting to carry it off to the Main Depot” (Tulloch 1872: 12). Government sanitary experts advocated that human waste should be rapidly removed “from the inhabited area.”¹² Sometimes the place for excretion was separated from the receptacle of the ordure and the two were connected by a trash chute.¹³ There were regional differences in terms of the standardized design of dry latrines; however, the manner of disposing the waste from households was more or less the same. It involved a simple procedure: the daily removal of excrement by scavengers using basic cleaning implements (e.g., a basket and a cart).

An intriguing account on the interrelation between the abolition of pit privies and the reduction of fatality rates was given by the president of the Ahmedabad municipality

⁹ *Abstract of Proceedings of the Sanitary Commissioner with the Government of India, for the Month of September to December 1872, 1873*, Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, p.424-25.

¹⁰ GD, 915, 1872, Not Specified. Undersigned by T. G. Hewlett.

¹¹ GD, 626 (part-I), 1892, *Twenty-Eighth Annual Report of the Sanitary Commissioner for the Government of Bombay*, p. 62.

¹² *Annual Report of the Sanitary Commissioner*; p. 64.

¹³ *Annual Report of the Sanitary Commissioner*; p. 62.

in the 1890s. After the discontinuance of the pit privies in the late 1870s, according to him, human waste began to be moved “half a mile from the city” (Chotalall 1892: 168). The death rate in the time period of six years from 1874-75 to 1879-80 was around 55 percent and in next six years from 1880-81 to 1885-86, it dropped to around 45 percent (Chotalall 1892: 168). In the next six years from 1886-87 to 1890-91, when the municipality introduced a tramway to transfer waste farther from “the vicinity of the city to a distance of about three miles in a leeward direction,” as the report explains, there was a further decline of 5 percent in the fatality rate (Chotalall 1892: 168). This reveals colonial officials’ expectation that a complete removal of human excrement to the distant environs would directly “save hundreds and thousands of human lives” (Chotalall 1892: 168), and one of the first steps toward this was to set up a system of toilets from which fecal matter would be daily or regularly collected by scavengers or sweepers.

During the strategic implementation of this conservancy arrangement especially after the mid-nineteenth century, numerous *Bhangis* were swiftly mobilized as the most inexpensive sanitation force of the municipalities. In the Bombay of the 1880s, as the municipal commissioner explained, “4,011 men and women, 704 scavenging and drain carts, and 155 night-soil and cesspool carts” were deployed “daily in collecting and removing filth” including feces.¹⁴ Even in smaller local bodies with populations of less than 10,000, a minimum of 10 *Bhangis* were employed to clean the public and private toilets.¹⁵ At the same time in Madras, there were almost 950 public latrines in its 55 municipalities.¹⁶ As a Surgeon-Major believed, however, the number was not adequate for the maintenance of urban sanitation, since “it represents an accommodation of only 1 to every 1,535 people.”¹⁷ According to him, “there should at least be, as noted by Government, 1 to every 1,000 inhabitants” and the expeditious fitting of additional toilets would end an open defecation in the “streets, narrow lanes, by-paths, and quiet corners” by the residents without access to the sanitation services.¹⁸ Not only public toilets, but also the so-called “private scavenging” was in effect under the control of the

¹⁴ GD, 866, 1891, *Report on Sanitary Measures in India in 1889-90* (vol. 23), 1891, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, p. 140

¹⁵ GD, 404, 1891, ‘List of Municipalities in the Northern Division Classified by Population.’

¹⁶ *Report on Sanitary Measures in India*, p. 106.

¹⁷ *Report on Sanitary Measures in India*, p. 106.

¹⁸ *Report on Sanitary Measures in India*, p. 106.

municipalities.¹⁹ Toward the end of the 1880s, in Madras presidency, almost 17,500 private latrines were serviced by municipal scavengers “in 39 towns.”²⁰ In these conditions, scavengers and sweepers in the sanitation department, under the supervision of a sanitary inspector, plodded through the task of collecting and conveying feces to the station by carrying it on their head in baskets, or by bullock, or iron carts.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the technology of sewerage, flush-toilets, and septic tank toilets became popular by varying degrees in urban cities. In the Bombay municipality, for example, more than 200 latrines and urinals were in operation and most of them were attached to the water-carriage system as reported in 1909.²¹ The practice of dry latrines and manual handling of human waste, however, continued as a makeshift measure during the complete transition to the sewerage system. Even in Bombay, referred to as “the most sewered city in the East,” there were “thousands of houses with the old privy basket system” not connected to sewer lines, and “the basket is emptied twice daily” (Turner 1914: 170). The dry latrines of the 1910s were depicted as: “corrugated iron sheds with partitions” that were “fitted with glazed *gumlahs* [stools] or tarred or enamelled iron pans” with receptacles (Lukis and Blackham 1914: 165).

The cleaning of toilets by scavengers was severely condemned as the method involved “stinking” and was “fraught with large amount of nuisance.”²² The system of “basket privy” itself was considered “primitive and harmful to the health of the residents.”²³ Since the flies swarming around the receptacles of the toilets were deemed a source of infectious diseases, the “rapid and satisfactory disposal” of fecal matter was all the more encouraged (Lukis and Blackham 1914: 167). Despite a number of sanitarians mentioning the “imperfections of the usual hand removal latrines,” manual handling of human waste was maintained by the authorities because it was the cheapest option.²⁴ Unlike the officials during the nineteenth century, who bent every effort to

¹⁹ *Report on Sanitary Measures in India*, p. 106.

²⁰ *Report on Sanitary Measures in India*, p. 106.

²¹ Chapter 10, The Bombay Municipality: Drainage (https://gazetteers.maharashtra.gov.in/cultural.maharashtra.gov.in/english/gazetteer/Bombay%20City/Volume_3/Drainage.html, accessed on 20 December 2020).

²² East India (Sanitary), 1912, *Progress of Sanitary Measures in India*, London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, p. 154.

²³ GD, 1211, 1919, Memorandum, General Department, Government of Bombay, no. 4486, 29 May 1919.

²⁴ *Progress of Sanitary Measures*, p. 107, 154.

abolish human waste disposal in pit privies to reduce the mortality rates, sanitarians in the 1910s considered the system of dry latrines appropriate for the Indian local context. They quoted the Laws of Manu and its implications, highlighting the importance of disposing fecal matter far from “the vicinity of man,” and regarded this Hindu sanitary norm as “the forerunner of the dry method of conservancy” (Lukis and Blackham 1914: 164). Scavengers, under these circumstances, sedulously kept discharging their arduous undertaking of dealing with crude excrement on a daily basis and carrying it “through the streets and lanes by buckets or carts.”²⁵ Reek and sordidness constituted their everyday working conditions, so much so that it was “nauseating” (Madeley 1914: 132) for people when carts laden with feces passed on the roads with a “horrible smell” (Lukis and Blackham 1914: 168) permeating the atmosphere. The waste disposal sites were described no different: extremely filthy and “unapproachable, except by the most hardened scavengers.”²⁶

Aside from the presidencies ruled directly by the colonial administration, some parts of princely states relied heavily on manual laborers for sanitation. Jaipur of the Rajputana Agency, for example, was referred to as “the wealthiest” state in the region with a population of nearly 2.6 million (Showers 1916: 1). The city witnessed rapid construction of public toilets in the early twentieth century, with an average of 60 to 80 per year, or nearly 390 at their peak implementation.²⁷ Although the design of the toilets is not specified in detail, a cost estimate drawn by a municipal engineer lists the number of pans,

²⁵ An editorial in the Indian Medical Gazette, p. 87, 1934, ‘Waste, Wealth and Health’, *Indian Medical Gazette* vol. 69, issue 2, pp. 85-87.

²⁶ GD, 1311, 1920, Collector of Ratnagiri’s letter no. 5109, 7th to 9th September 1912.

²⁷ *Report on Sanitation, Dispensaries, and Jails in Rajputana for 1912, and on Vaccination for the Year 1912-13*, 1913, Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, p.3; *Report on Sanitation, Dispensaries, and Jails in Rajputana for 1913, and on Vaccination for the Year 1913-14*, 1914, Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, p. 4; *Report on Sanitation, Dispensaries, and Jails in Rajputana for 1914, and on Vaccination for the Year 1914-15*, 1915, Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, p. 3; *Report on Sanitation, Dispensaries, and Jails in Rajputana for 1915, and on Vaccination for the Year 1915-16*, 1915, Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, p. 4; *Report on Sanitation, Dispensaries, and Jails in Rajputana for 1916, and on Vaccination for the Year 1916-17*, 1917, Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, p. 5; *Report on Sanitation, Dispensaries, and Jails in Rajputana for 1917, and on Vaccination for the Year 1917-18*, 1918, Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, p. 4; *Report on Sanitation, Dispensaries, and Jails in Rajputana for 1918 and on Vaccination for the Year 1918-19*, 1919, Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, p. 7; *Report on Sanitation, Dispensaries, and Jails in Rajputana for 1919, and on Vaccination for the Year 1919-20*, 1919, Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, p. 4.

which can be equate to the number of receptacles,²⁸ implying sweepers' labor for daily disposal of human waste. To stave off severe epidemic outbreaks without much expenditure, municipalities in the princely states also fully exploited human capital, that is the sweepers. However, these sweepers on whom the authorities relied, did not receive much care from the latter in terms of improving their health and working environment. This came to light in an officially expressed lamentation when a plague and flu outbreak struck in Jaipur in the 1910s. Although the epidemic seriously affected the sweepers' health, for the authorities, the matter that concerned them was sanitation. It was stated that "the strength of the Conservancy staff was much weakened and in consequence of which the general sanitation suffered to a great extent."²⁹ Moreover, their daily toils were regarded as the "malodourous duties."³⁰ The authorities had construed the labor as being directed toward the very reverse of the modernity.

3. Right of Way

The gradual ubiquity of so-called dry latrines in the daily life of peoples in cities and towns profoundly impinged not only on the spatial marginalization of scavengers as "Untouchables," but also on the residents' right of way, wherein citizens did everything they could to avoid even the slightest contact with human waste. As some law reports reveal, there were litigations concerning toilet installation sites and the manner by which waste was to be transported by sweepers, especially since the 1880s. An early case in the Bombay presidency gently hints at citizens' bewilderment when what was called "*Bhangy* privy," referring to a dry latrine cleaned by *Bhangis*, was installed as an alternative to the pit privy. In 1888, a second appeal was brought to the high court of Bombay, where the plaintiff made a plaint to demolish a toilet newly built by the defendant, which was located "within the distance of five cubits from the house" of the former, and was said to have created "a nuisance."³¹ The case for the latter was based

²⁸ Public Works Department files (hereafter PWD), Rajasthan State Archives, 1094, 1929, Abstract of Estimate for Constructing of Public Latrines, by Assistant Engineer, 29 July 1929.

²⁹ *Report on Sanitation for 1918*, p. 6.

³⁰ PWD, 1841, 1936, State Engineer's letter no. B. 226/3329, 9 January 1936.

³¹ 12 B. 634, Sayad Jafir Saheb v. Sayad Kadir Rahiman and Another, 30 August 1888 (<https://bombayhighcourt.nic.in/libweb/lawreports/ilrbom/ILR1888%2812%29/ilrbom12.html>, accessed on 15 January 2021).

on an order of the municipality issued in accordance with the Bombay Act of 1873, which referred to the construction of any privy.³² Although building the dry latrine was considered appropriate in the act, from the perspective of the judge, it should not have caused any violation of the neighbors' rights.³³

What is significant in this case is not the judgment that affirmed the power of a municipality, but the tremendous effort involved in the construction of the dry toilets. Unlike pit privies that were sunk into the ground, ideal locations for dry toilets had to be selected considering the passage for sweepers for daily cleaning and, at the same time, ensure that the sweepers do not come too close to the property of others.³⁴ Accordingly, the process of installation of dry latrines was not just a matter of replacing an old pit toilet built at the owner's discretion, but it was embedded within a whole network of actors including neighbors and sweepers. Dry latrines in urban areas were in most cases laid out in an array in what was called a "gully," a lane along which sweepers passed every morning for the collection and carriage of fecal matter (Figure 1).

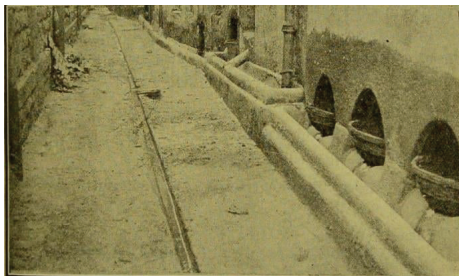


Figure 1: Sweepers' "gully" (Turner 1914: 171)

In this set, the path for the sweepers was blatantly segregated from ordinary roads. Then, a category of "sweepers" was gradually substantialized as the "Untouchables" and the "Polluted." However, for citizens who strictly followed the municipal sanitary regulations and understood the importance of hygiene, it was not the toilet per se, but the manner in which it was cleaned, and the waste removed that proved to be a bane in their life. Notably, not all lanes were neatly separated and the passage of sweepers

³² 12 B. 634.

³³ 12 B. 634.

³⁴ 12 B. 634.

through some of these said lanes was met with contention from the surrounding neighbors.

Judges of Calcutta in the 1880s busied themselves in tackling cases on the use of lanes and drains for cleaning toilets. Some residents complained to the court that “the lane is used for the passage of *mehters* [sweepers or scavengers] with night-soil from the defendants’ premises to the street” (ILR 1881: 675). This conduct in itself, as a judge pointed out, did not infringe on the plaintiff’s right of way (ILR 1881: 675). An injunction was issued against the defendants, however, to restrict them “from using, their present *mehter*’s doors for cleaning their privies into the lane, or otherwise using the lane in connection with the cleaning their privies” (ILR 1881: 677). To some extent, the requirement stipulating that the lane only be used “for the carriage of the night-soil from their premises to the street” circumscribed the sweepers’ working conditions wherein they could not avoid “placing tubs of night-soil in the lane, and letting them stand there” (ILR 1881: 675-76, 677). The same complaint was brought regarding the use of a certain drain to which “the refuse water of the plaintiff’s privies” were thrown, when it became mandatory in the municipality to clean their toilets “more frequently” (ILR 1883: 783, 786). Since this system was held by the court as “likely to be more healthy than the former one,” the plaintiff’s use of the disputed drain, by way of scavengers was declared legal (ILR 1883: 786).

Contests among citizens living adjacent to each other over their right of way lasted well into the 1930s. It was not entirely a matter of mere right; it was also about a “way” used specially by the untouchables. This was clearly shown in a case at Bombay High Court in the 1920s. A plaintiff filed an injunction against his neighbors who wished to use “the way in question as a way for Bhangis and other persons of an untouchable class to clean the privy intended to be erected by them” (AIR 1920: 233). The sweepers, as the judge stated in the course of consideration, were “not one of the normal class of servants of a house-hold in this country” (AIR 1920: 234). City dwellers evidently viewed cleaning their toilets as essential for a sanitary way of life. Nevertheless, the fact that the sweepers had to pass through a certain lane or someone else’s premises to reach the toilets, and carry excrement therefrom was considered a nuisance and therefore sometimes even prevented. Some scavengers in Madras had been cleaning the plaintiff’s

privy for 60 years by passing through the defendants' doorway (ILR 1922: 635). The latter was alleged to "have locked up the door" and was "obstructing and annoying" the former "in various ways contrary to his rights," "with a view to prevent the scavenger from cleaning the privy" (ILR 1922: 635). The right to let sweepers pass on a certain path was, on occasion, legally denied as well. The case in Bombay in 1920, which was mentioned earlier, reveals how the sweepers' use of the passages for "removing night-soil" could not be included under "a right of way for persons, cattle, carts, etc." (AIR 1920: 233). The statement by the judge that "there are ways over which these sweepers may pass: and there are other ways over which they do not pass" (AIR 1920: 234) clearly demonstrates the authoritative perspectives of the time toward the separation of sweepers from the other classes by means of a "path."

Overall, the right of way for sweepers or scavengers was endorsed in judicial decisions. Plaintiffs at Nadiad in the Bombay presidency filed a suit against the defendants in 1924 that the latter "had no right to admit scavengers into their private *khadki*³⁵ land" to clean their toilets (ILR 1933: 188). According to the judge, the houses of both parties, were considered to have initially been one house and the pit privy was only allotted to one party when the house was divided in 1903 (ILR 1933: 192). Since both were relatives, they shared the toilet together. Problems started when strangers bought the house and constructed a new basket toilet in the early 1920s (ILR 1933: 187). Since pit privies in the municipality were prohibited "in the case of new constructions," the defendants had little option but to install the dry toilet, "which requires the attendance of Municipal Sweepers periodically to remove night-soil" (ILR 1933: 191-92). Yet, the sweepers' passing through their property carrying crude human waste was "objectionable" to the plaintiffs, and therefore an injunction against the restriction was requested (ILR 1933: 192). The decision was made in favor of the defendants, since the judges considered it more necessary for a town to have a toilet "in each house" that calls for the service of the municipal sweepers (ILR 1933: 194).

This perspective was retained even after the independence, as is seen in a similar case in Gujarat in the 1960s. In this case, the plaintiffs' *khadki* land was used by the defendants "as passage for their sweepers to carry night soil" from the toilet allegedly

³⁵ This seems to denote some form of property such as a certain land and lane.

built in 1953 and, in the same way, the former demanded that a “permanent injunction to restrain” the latter be issued (AIR 1961b: 116). Regarding the ownership of the *khadki* in question, according to the judgment, the sanad of 1928 was in favor of the plaintiffs, but it also refers “to the right of way of all owners of the houses in the *Khadki* for going and coming” (AIR 1961b: 116). Thus, it was held that the “admitted right of easement is a general right of easement,” which “includes the rights of scavengers going to defendants’ house to use the passage” (AIR 1961b: 117). The prohibition of pit privies and subsequent popularization of basket-type toilets frequently serviced by municipal sweepers caused the city dwellers to have hyperacute olfactory, visual, and tactual sensitivity to the regular collection and transportation of untreated fecal matter from their premises and lanes. Unlike the sanitary officials whose primary concern was to lower the death rates, these legal proceedings evince that one of the main issues that the owners of houses with attached private toilets faced was avoiding frequent and close contact with their own and others’ bodily waste.

4. Customary Rights of Sweepers and Scavengers

In urban localities where scavengers were under the direct supervision of municipal administrations, householders were levied a scavenging tax for the sanitation services. The right to all the fecal matter obtained from the servicing of dry latrines, normally reverted to the local bodies. However, as Khalid delineates in her study on sanitation in colonial Uttar Pradesh during the late nineteenth to the twentieth century, municipalities were sometimes compelled to accept sweepers’ demands to avoid strikes, which they saw as a dangerous threat to public health (Khalid 2012: 64). The sweepers benefitted from selling the human waste they collected as fertilizer (Khalid 2012: 59). Consequently, the authorities deemed it wise to control them (Khalid 2012: 61). Under a supervisory and antagonistic relationship with the authorities, the sweepers routinely accomplished the laborious task of collecting human waste. On the other hand, where there was less municipal control over sanitation matters, sweepers enjoyed their hereditary right to clean the toilets in their neighborhood. After the twentieth century, in particular, this right, officially referred to as the customary right to scavenging, was

roundly scored by the government for its outdatedness and antiquated nature.³⁶ Floundering in municipalizing all the sanitation services, authorities of postcolonial India began to fixate on the abolition of the custom. By their prerogative, private sweepers were barely able to survive on a meager but vital pittance, but the authorities did not pay much attention to their actual situation.

Specifically, since the 1920s, several conflicts bearing on this right surfaced in the public sphere, with a number of hereditary sweepers filing appeals in the regional courts. Cleaning of toilets in each locality was regarded by sweepers as their exclusive right, and it was generally shared in such a way that one might not trench upon the customers of the other. This demarcation of one's right was grounded on mutual understandings within their community. Nevertheless, this practice more often than not involved a dispute in which the sweepers scrambled for their customers, and would not hand over their right to another individual. This customary right was supposed to be considered as "tangible property" among local sweepers (AIR 1928: 390) and, therefore, inheritable, mortgageable, and transferrable. Judicial cases in the twentieth century vividly describe how sweepers attached significance to their so-called unclean and insanitary labor, and the rights accruing from that labor. In the 1920s, in the Allahabad High Court, certain sweepers of Mathura filed an appeal "for an injunction restraining" their counterparts from providing services to a newly built *dharamshala*, a religious institution (AIR 1928: 389). The former insisted that the toilet of the *dharamshala* was situated "on the site of the house which was part of" their right (AIR 1928: 390). As the judge remarked, the right "may arise by agreement amongst sweepers defining the areas or houses where each is to render services without interference by the others" (AIR 1928: 390). This connotes that exercising this right was not necessarily predicated on a contract between

³⁶ With a report by a committee to the Bombay Government in 1952 as its beginning, several boards were set up until the 1960s, to survey this practice with the aim of abrogating it all over the country. The relevant reports submitted so far were: Government of Bombay, 1952, *Report of the Scavengers' Living Conditions Enquiry Committee*, Bombay; Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Central Advisory Board for Harijan Welfare, 1960, *Report of the Scavenging Conditions Enquiry Committee*, New Delhi; Government of India, Department of Social Welfare, 1966, *Report of the Committee on Customary Rights to Scavenging*, New Delhi; Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, *Study of Customary Rights and Living and Working Conditions of Scavengers in Two Towns*, Census of India 1961 Monograph Series Volume I, Part 11-D.

a sweeper and a household owner, but rather correlated to the agreement and usage “prevailing amongst the local sweepers” (AIR 1928: 391).

Other cases illustrate how this right was mortgaged when a sweeper was struggling financially. In fact, this was the most popular agenda for filing such lawsuits at that time. In the 1920s, sweepers in Madras lent another sweepers “a sum of Rs. 550,” and the latter bonded “the income derived from the houses numbering 109” (AIR 1938: 881). In this transaction, the latter ought to clear his debts “within three years with interest rate at 2 per cent. per mensem” (AIR 1938: 881-82). When he defaulted on the loan, the lender was supposed to “do scavenging work for 36 out of 109 houses” that was originally served by the borrower (AIR 1938: 882). The borrowers claimed that they had already refunded the debt and started to disrupt the former from providing services for the houses (AIR 1938: 882). The lenders pleaded in the legal domain that the defendants, or any other “agents and servants” employed by them, could no longer engage in scavenging work in the 109 houses as the right to do so was the lenders’ alone (AIR 1938: 882). The fact that the plaintiffs, in this case the lenders, did not demand complete repayment of the loan graphically epitomizes how sweepers vested critical importance on their customary right of scavenging. Therefore, having “deliberately omitted to” request “for recovery of the money,” which was, according to the judge, the plaintiffs’ hidden intention, he preferred the legitimacy of the “possession of their scavenging rights” (AIR 1938: 884).

Litigations over rights were frequently initiated after independence in the late 1940s. In the 1950s, a scavenger in Madhya Pradesh appealed to the high court lodging a petition to recover “his share of the scavenging right” “alleged to have been mortgaged by him with the defendant respondent for Rs. 20” “without any interest” (AIR 1951: 120). It was claimed that the deal was made in the 1920s, and the mortgagor eventually reimbursed the debt almost 20 years later (AIR 1951: 120). Although he was supposed to “redeem the mortgage,” the encumbrancers did not wind up his mortgage (AIR 1951: 120). Between the 1950s and the 1960s, a few cases were brought to the court in Allahabad regarding customary rights. They were sometimes correlated with issues of one’s scavenging right taken away by the detainer (e.g., AIR 1958, 1964), or regarding the mode of recovery of damages, mainly money, caused by the debtor’s inability to

repay (e.g., AIR 1961a). In the former, the point of argument was on who the owner of the right would be, and how the right should be proved. Moreover, the parties of these cases set forth various past transactions that had involved diverse actors such as their parents, relatives, and non-specified others. This indicates that the private scavengers constantly negotiated with each other to determine who would serve these quarters or households, at least since the beginning of the twentieth century when the use of dry latrines in cities and towns became more widespread.

Their customary right until the 1960s, however, was not legally recognized especially by the high courts of the country. Disinclined to acknowledge sweepers' way of cherishing their custom, the judges refused to bestow legal protection upon the right, enumerating specious logics: that it lacked a "grant by which owners of particular houses may confer the exclusive privilege of serving in that capacity to the exclusion of all others following the same vocation," or "usage and prescription" (AIR 1928: 390). The exercise of the customary right was, for the judicial authorities, "contrary to public good and operates to the prejudice of the many and beneficial only to a particular individual," because of which it was deemed "unreasonable" (AIR 1938: 884). This attitude of rejecting the prerogative of private sweepers was followed by decrees after independence as well, but were tinged with the ideals of a so-called modern and democratic notion. As proclaimed in the judgment in the high court of Madhya Pradesh in the 1950s, the customary right was "no more than a monopoly to pursue an occupation" (AIR 1951: 121). Hence, it was considered to go against "the Constitution of India giving all citizens the fundamental right to practise any profession, or to carry on any occupation" (AIR 1951: 121). Although the right of *mahabrahmini*, a customary right possessed by Brahmans to render religious services to certain customers, was long approved "as immoveable property under Hindu Law," it was observed that this was never applied to the case of sweepers (AIR 1964: 252). Unable to present any qualified evidence, sweepers' pleas demanding legal cognizance of their customary right were mostly dismissed.

Prevalence of the right witnessed its decline after the 1960s. Yet, in some parts of Rajasthan, where scavenging continued to prevail, sweepers resorted to the law to secure the protection of their privilege. What is intriguing in these regional cases is that, unlike

their predecessors in other regional courts, the judiciary did grant it to them. In 1974, the Rajasthan High Court allowed an appeal by a sweeper of Alwar, who claimed that his right of scavenging “had been mortgaged with their ancestors ... about 60 years ago in consideration of a sum of Rs. 200/-” (AIR 1974: 132). It was said that the defendants “are obstructing them [plaintiffs] in exercise of the right of scavenging” and, therefore, the plaintiff requested “a perpetual injunction” against “the defendants restraining them from interfering with” his right (AIR 1974: 132). Although both the trial and appeal court set aside the suit, the high court judge allowed the appeal by citing a similar case on Dhobis and mentioning that “the right to *Birat Jajmani* [customary right] is a right in property which is heritable as well as transferable” (AIR 1974: 133). The latest case so far decided by high court is the one of 2011, which was originally filed in the 1990s. In 1984, a sweeper in Bharatpur first undertook legal proceedings against another sweeper “for redemption of mortgage” of the scavenging right.³⁷ The plaintiff hypothecated his right to the defendant “for Rs. 800” without interest in the late 1950s, but the latter did not return the right to the former after the liquidation of the debt. The suit was accepted in favor of the plaintiff in the first trial, and the dissatisfied defendant appealed against the decree, which was also dismissed in 1991.³⁸ Having followed some of the previous cases, the judge in the second appeal declared the validity of the scavenging right as mortgageable.³⁹

5. Conclusion

As Prashad argues with respect to the general sanitation of colonial Delhi, both the “fiscal conservatism of the government agencies” and the “technological or scientific extravagance” by engineers impeded the development of a human waste disposal system, which consequently led to their complete reliance on sweepers (Prashad 2001: 155).⁴⁰ This financially expedient scheme was adopted in other regions of British India as well.

³⁷ CSA164/1991, *Kalua v. Kinna and Others*, 4 August 2011 (<https://hcraj.nic.in/cishcraj-jp/JudgementFilters/>, accessed on 16 January 2021).

³⁸ CSA164/1991.

³⁹ CSA164/1991.

⁴⁰ Prashad asserted that “the sanitation question” in colonial Delhi “was framed by the nexus between technology and capital” (Prashad 2001: 155).

The officials rendered this plan feasible by preparing legal frameworks and making use of executive organs such as municipalities and sanitary boards to apply them in practice. Authorities regularly dispatched a sanitary force consisting of sweepers or scavengers to houses and public toilets as a countermeasure against pestilence. A number of pit privies were converted into dry ones with vessels, and municipal sweepers, both permanent and temporary, were hired to clean this visible filth every morning. Their attempt, however, did not fare well. The number of toilets and sweepers was not enough for them to complete their mission, and they continued to reinforce the corps. The officials did know that the sweepers had to work under the insanitary and unpleasant condition. Instead of improving their working environment, the officials repeatedly criticized them for their lack of diligence. Furthermore, they reduced the engagement of certain groups of people in scavenging work to a mere local custom that they believed inherently constrained untouchables to that work.

When the so-called dry latrines gradually came into use in cities and towns, the ordure from it and the daily carriage of it incensed the middle-class citizens across regions. Simultaneously, it materially marginalized the sweepers by the increasing voices from city folks to separate them from ordinary people. Toilets were usually located not inside house but in the household premises, and sweepers entered from the backdoor to collect the waste. Inevitably, they had to carry the excrement to certain sites by passing through small lanes and roads. Unlike the city residents, the judiciary did protect the sweepers' right of way, but only because they needed to keep their city clean and prevent the spread of an epidemic. Sweepers were told to work early in the morning so that their work would not be a nuisance to others. The complete visibility of human waste in the receptacles and the very practice of daily removal of the waste from them led citizens to associate toilets and filth with sweepers. Thus, their everyday labor reinforced their untouchability with the notion of both caste-based impurity and material pollution.

This categorization, however, had a significant effect on the sweepers' way of life in terms of their customary rights. Although judicially regarded as illegal except cases in Rajasthan, twentieth century sweepers continued to exercise their right especially in the private sphere. Courts considered them as monopolists of the sanitation economy

who were unsuitable for the course of modernization. What is significant here is not the judicial perspective toward the sweepers' customary right, but their endless struggle and strategies to mobilize a kind of vocational organization in the local communities. Despite their job being considered menial and dirty, and being treated disparagingly, a number of sweepers chose not to abandon it. Even after government committees became zealous and worked toward its abolition and the municipalization of these sweepers, they somehow managed to survive believing that the job guaranteed at least a slender income.⁴¹ Owing to the difficulty in expanding their occupational spectrum partly because of their caste and partly due to their status, private sweepers strategically appropriated their job; they shared the privilege with their fellow local sweepers and enjoyed the system of inheritance, transfer, and security. In this circumstance, their labor assumed the nature of a property, therefore, a right. To a certain extent, they were also able to retain their freedom in keeping this work exclusive to their communities. To secure their privileges in the public sphere, the sweepers attempted to represent their past generations' labor experiences in the current legal system. In doing so, they made this "traditional" occupation recognized by the general public *traditional* on their own terms, effectively turning it into a significant part of their identity.

This paper elucidates how colonial officials and municipalities promoted the dry method of human waste disposal as a means of reducing the fatality rates from infectious diseases, through the regular removal of human waste from the residential areas. The untouchability of the sweepers and scavengers was gradually substantiated not just by their uniforms and baskets, as some studies have hitherto pointed out (e.g., Bayly 1999: 228), but also by their *daily* use of the designated lanes and streets to collect and carry waste, which formed a visual, olfactory, and tactual association among city dwellers. After independence, there was a flurry of campaigns for the liberation of scavengers. Some of the prominent activists' campaigns were those led by Gandhians and Dalits. The former demonstrated, from around the 1940s onward, a committed drive for the transformation of the toilet system from dry to flush to eliminate the manual handling of human waste (Masuki 2018). The latter, from the 1990s onward, devoted themselves to

⁴¹ In her dissertation, Rama Sharma provides a valuable account of the sweepers of Delhi's opposition against the committee's recommendation for the discontinuance of their customary right (Sharma 1987).

emancipate scavengers from the derogatory work of manual scavenging through litigations besides demolishing the existing dry toilets. Both the movements and academics have discussed this matter in terms of technology used in the toilet system, casteism, and modern notions of sanitation and human rights. However, understanding their liberation attempts entails closer scrutiny of the fact that their daily corporeal labor, especially its material dimension, has played a role in both their identity formation and in their everyday experience of untouchability-based social marginalization in their local communities.

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5

The Religion, Politics, and Cultural Activities of Paraiyars in Tamil Nadu: Paraiyattam as a Religio-Political Symbol

Takako INOUE

1. Paraiyars and Their Social Status among Dalits in Tamil Nadu

This paper will discuss and explore how the performance of the Paraiyattam, a traditional group dance accompanied on the *parai*, a frame drum also called the *thappu*, has become a paradoxical symbol, within the traditional arts supported by the upper castes and the religio-political practices of the Paraiyars,¹ one of the Dalit communities, in association with growing and revitalizing Dalit liberation movements in Tamil Nadu. Although the Paraiyattam was once an indispensable part of the Hindu funeral ceremony and associated with pollution, today its performance is regarded as a positive practice that expresses Dalit liberation, that is, a symbol related to their fight against caste discrimination.

According to the data of the 2011 Census, the population of Scheduled Castes (SCs or Dalits) accounts for approximately 20% of the 72.15 million of the total population of Tamil Nadu, and 76 names of SCs are listed.² Out of the total SC population of Tamil Nadu, Paraiyars (including so-called Adi Dravidar) account for 62.8%, the largest Dalit group; Pallar (including Devendrakula Vellalar) account for 17.01%; and Arunthathiyar (including Chakkiliyar) account for 14.42%. Thus, these three Dalit caste groups account for more than 94% of the total SC population. I will describe below the three Dalit communities.

The caste name Paraiyar is derived from the *parai*, a frame drum beaten by a pair of sticks, handed down mainly by the Paraiyars. This caste group started the struggle to improve their social status as early as the late nineteenth century. Ayothee Dasa³ (1845-1914), who converted to Buddhism, which he believed to be the original religion of Paraiyars, launched an anti-caste movement (Basu 2011: 162-163). He established the Sakya Buddhist Society, also known as the Indian Buddhist Association, in 1898, calling Paraiyars to convert as he did so. He advocated adoption of the term “Adi Dravidar”

¹ The Tamil name of this particular caste has previously been spelled with the non-honorific “n” ending, “Paraiyan,” or without this ending, “Paraiya” (Pariah), but today, it is spelled with the honorific “r” ending, “Paraiyar.” A similar process widely is adopted by other Tamil caste groups.

² Lopol.org, “List of Tamil Nadu Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST)” (<https://www.lopol.org/article/list-of-tamil-nadu-scheduled-castes-sc-and-scheduled-tribes-st> accessed on 30 December 2020).

³ There are several Anglicized spellings of his name, such as Iyothee Thass, C. Ayodhya Dasa, and C. Iyothee Doss.

(original Dravidians) as a kind of umbrella term for members to denote themselves in order to avoid using Paraiyar or Pancham, a stigmatized term that refers to the fifth caste of the Varna system and had been used to denote untouchables (Chettiar 2019). The Madras Legislative Assembly passed a resolution to the effect that the terms Paraiyar and Pancham were not to be used in reference to specific communities and, instead, the term Adi Dravidar should be used. The issue was settled when Adi Dravidar was adopted at the legal and administrative level in 1922 (Aloysius 2010: 260). Nevertheless, the traditional and common term Paraiyar has been used up to the present day, while the term Adi Dravidar is used by 18% of SCs in Tamil Nadu (Census 2011) and has not been widely applied as an umbrella term.

The Pallar (also called Mallar) caste is considered to be the highest among SCs in Tamil Nadu. Pallars assert that they were the great cultivators who engaged in the cultivation of the wetlands of Southern Tamil Nadu and are the descendants of the Pallava dynasty that existed from 275 to 897. Because these qualities, they call themselves “Devendra Kula Vellarar” (the cultivators who are descendants of Devendra, the God Indra). They still try to keep their own community above those of the other SCs, such as Paraiyars and Chakkiliyars, by regarding themselves as a class of agricultural labors, by not eating beef, and by not engaging in polluted occupations such as hunting and drum beating (Ramaiah 2004). The issue of changing their caste name from Pallar to Devendra Kula Vellarar has been a matter of contestation since the 1990s and is still controversial.

The Arunthathiyars, previously called Chakkiliyars, are considered to be a group of leather workers who came from Andhra Pradesh during the Nayakas, originally military governors under the Vijayanagara Empire who ruled in Tamil region from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century. Accordingly, the umbrella term “Adi Andhra” has sometimes been used to denote these immigrants’ communities. However, Arunthathiyars assert that they are the descendants of the Tamil Velir King Athiyaman Neduman Anji, who ruled the Dharmapuri District, the northern Tamil Nadu, in the ancient Sangam period from around the third century BCE to around the third century CE, and accordingly the caste name Arunthathiyar is derived from Athiyakulathan. The issue of adopting umbrella terms such as Adi Andhra and Adi Tamizhar is still controversial. Since they still work with leather, their social status is almost the lowest among the SCs (Geetha 2014: 136-137).

As I have described above, every Dalit community tries to locate its identity by reconstructing its historiography to support its claim to be original inhabitants, using evidence endorsing their dignified past.

Since the rise of the Dalit movements in the 1990s to improve their social status,

studies on the Paraiyars have appeared with increasing frequency, focusing in particular on their performance of the *parai* (Gorringe 2016; Karunambaram 2015; Lillelund 2009; McGilvray 1983; Rajasekaran and Willis 2004; Sherinian 2014) and on Paraiyar history (Basu 2011; Viswanath 2014). Among these papers, McGilvray focuses on the *parai* drummers in Sri Lanka, Lillelund takes up the problem of disappearing traditional performances, and Rajasekaran and Willis use the term *thappu* rather than *parai*, since their paper was published in 2004, when the term *parai* was less popular. Sherinian discusses the religious relationship with Dalit Christianity. Gorringe and Karunambaram try to explore the role of the *parai* as a symbol of Dalit politics, particularly with regard to questions about “who speaks for a community, whether a symbol of oppression can truly become an icon of resistance and how marginalized communities can construct positive identities when their cultural memories and practice are inescapably associated with their subordination” (Gorringe 2016: 1). This paper basically shares the same questions, and I will reconsider whether the *parai* can be separated from its function as a religio-political icon in wider perspectives. While making reference to its relations not only with Dravidian politics but also Christianity, the Maoist movement, and women’s empowerment, I will explore how the Paraiyattam is interpreted in various ways by different religio-political parties.

2. Paraiyars and Their Tradition

The word *parai* literally means “to speak” or “to announce.” Historically, it is said that the *parai* used to be performed in the courts to announce important messages and the orders of kings as early as the Sangam period. There are several references available in the ancient Tamil literature: the musical instruments *parai* and *sangu* (conch shell) are said to have been played during marriage, according to *Paripadal*,⁴ and some studies mention different types of *parai* listed in the commentary on the *Cilappatikaaram* (The epic of the anklet) written by Atiyaarkkunallaar: *kanapparai*, *ciruparai* (small *parai*?), and *perumparai* (Ramanathan 1979: 53-54 and 168; Jeyalakshmi 2003: 45). Across the Indian subcontinent, the frame drums beaten by sticks or hands are widely called “*daffs*” or a word with phonetic similarity, such as *thappu* in Tamil (Deva 1977: 31; Day 1990: 141-142). I have mentioned that *Sarvadevavilasa*, written around 1800, described a pair of frame drums called *chandraparai* and *suryaparai* accompanying the procession of

⁴ Articles on references to the *parai* in Sangam literature are also available on websites such as Bhageerathi, M. A., “Tamil Literary Works and Music: An Essay on Tamil Literary Works and Music,” at *Tamilizai* (<https://tamizisai.weebly.com/tamil-literary-works-and-music.html> accessed on 30 December 2020).

deities at temple festivals (Inoue 2006: 50-51); these drums are kept in the Government Museum, Madras (Sambamoorthy 1976: 21).⁵

Even though the *parai* is considered to be a traditional musical instrument, which has been widely used on a variety of occasions, including annual village Hindu festivals and the announcement of messages about festivals, meetings, and the deaths of villagers, the social status of *parai* drummers, that is, the Paraiyar, has been at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. The main reason is that *parai* drumming was indispensable for holding funeral ceremonies associated with impurity in Tamil Nadu villages, and the *parai* drum itself was considered polluting because it was manufactured from calfskin or goatskin. *Parai* drummers who work especially for funerals, called *Vettiyaars*, also dealt with dead bodies. Today there are few full-time *Vettiyaars* and many Paraiyars are engaged in agricultural labor. The *parai* was played only by men, although women also played it in the Sangam period.

Traditionally, in villages in Tamil Nadu, Paraiyars worshiped mother goddesses, such as Mariyamman and Ellaiyamman, who may have originated in the pre-Vedic period. Today, these goddesses are associated with Hindu goddesses like Parvathi, Durga, and Kali. The common ritual of their worship proceeds as follows: the devotees carry pots of milk on their head by piercing their skin, tongue, or cheeks with skewers or a spear; a group of musical instruments, including the *parai*, the *tavil* (a barrel-shaped and double-headed drum), and the *nadaswaram* (or *nagaswaram*, a double-reeded wind instrument), accompany the procession of devotees to a temple of the goddess; the temple priests pour milk out to an idol of goddess; the devotees put this milk on their body and drink it; and finally the pierced bodies of devotees are treated by the priests and other devotees. Although the village custom of offering chickens and goats to the goddess in worship has commonly been seen, animal sacrifice was prohibited by the Tamil Nadu Animals and Birds Sacrifices Prohibition Act of 1950, although this was repealed in 2004.

The social movement to improve the status and eliminate the discrimination against Paraiyars started during the period of British rule in the late nineteenth century. Paraiyars gradually abandoned playing the *parai* for funerals because they considered this musical instrument to have been stigmatized as a symbol of pollution and impurity associated with funerals. To the best of my recollection, the word *thappu* was commonly used instead of *parai*, the word associated with impure funerals, until the late 1990s and early 2000s. However, the Dalit movement grew significantly after India's independence as the

⁵ In addition to reference articles mentioned here, there are several books on the traditional folk music and musical instruments of Tamil Nadu (Annapoorna 2000; Avtar n.d.; Hardgrave and Slawak 1997; Jeyalakshmi 2003; Krishna 1996; Santhi 1994; Sharma 2004).

repressed classes gained political power owing to the reservation system. Along with the growth in movements led by Paraiyars to raise their status, the *parai* has acquired a positive meaning, becoming a political symbol of caste liberation. Today, the Paraiyattam is widely performed at art festivals and political gatherings, and training classes in the *parai* are available in music academies and schools, as the instrument has become clearly separated from its use in funeral rituals. Consequently, Paraiyars proudly call the drum they play the *parai* instead of the *thappu* and the dance with drumming is called the Paraiyattam instead of Thappattam.

Parai drumming is still an indispensable part of worship of the village goddess, but the number of Paraiyars converting to Christianity has been increasing since the eighteenth century due to the activities of Christian missionaries in the Tamil region. Today, conversions to Buddhism and Islam are also increasing due to the political movement of Dalit liberation. I will discuss these conversions in relation to Dalit political movements in the following sections.

Plate 1. *Parai* drummers.



Plate 2. *Parai*, *tavil*, and *nadaswaram* players.



Plates 1 and 2. The Chittizhai Tiruvizha (Spring Festival): The procession to the Ilankali Amman temple, Tillaisthanam, Tamil Nadu, April 2003, by the author.

3. Paraiyars and Christianity

There are approximately 24 million Christians in India, a religious minority that constitutes about 2.3% of the total population, according to the 2011 census. However, the Christian population of Tamil Nadu is about 6.12%, much larger than that of India, while the Muslim population of Tamil Nadu is about 5.86%, which is much smaller than that of India, at about 14.23%. The Buddhist population of Tamil Nadu is about 0.2% and that of India is about 0.7%. It is said that about 42% of Christians and more than 70% of the Catholic population are Dalit converts (Inoue 2017: 48).

Although those who belong to the Catholic community are formally categorized

under Other Backward Classes in the reservation system of India, many of them actually belong to the Dalits, particularly Tamil Christians. Accordingly, Dalit Christians have lost their rights as SCs preserved by the reservation system because of their conversion from Hinduism. It is an important issue for Dalit Christians, who are appealing to the Indian Government to recognize them as SCs and to continue including them in the targets of the reservation system. However, they are able to preserve their rights as SCs in the reservation scheme of Tamil Nadu State, which the caste-based reservation stands at 69% and applies to about 87% of the population given to four categories: Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes. The total reservation percentage is much higher than that of other states except Maharashtra.

The Church Mission Society converted many Paraiyars to Christianity in the nineteenth century, and those admitted to missionary schools and colleges tried to improve their social status and living standards.⁶ In the 1980s, Dalit liberation theology was developed by Arvind P. Nirmal (1936-1995), a Dalit Christian theologian and priest of the Church of North India.⁷ Although he was inspired by Latin American liberation theology, he criticized it as too narrow because its focus was limited to the economic and social realms of life. Nirmal explained that Indian Christian theology was constructed on the “Brahmanic tradition,” under which upper-caste converts were able to preserve the caste hierarchy whereas the pain and pathos of the Dalits stem from the alienation and oppression that has shaped the historical consciousness of the Dalits alongside the “Dalitness” of Jesus Christ (Clarke 2002: 45-46). Sathyanathan Clarke, a priest of the Church of South India, has further developed Dalit liberation theology in the context of the Paraiyars by regarding the *parai* as a symbol of the body of Jesus that was sacrificed for them (Clarke 2002: 179-217):

The (*parai*) drum mediates the Divine presence which empowers them (Paraiyars) to appropriate their human and humane valuation as communicated to them within the nexus of this Divine-human relationship by the symbol of the drum. On the other hand, the Christic presence represented by the drum enables them to assert this human self-affirmation acquired before the Divine in the face of a concerted religious, social, economic and cultural scheme devised and perpetuated by caste communities to value the Dalit as either non-human or less-than-human. (Clarke 2002: 190-191)

⁶ On Paraiyars and Christianity, see Clarke (2002), Jeremiah (2013, 2020), Raj (2014), and Robinson (2010).

⁷ The Church of North India, established in 1970, and the Church of South India, established in 1947, are two ecumenically dominant united Protestant Churches in India that bring together the Protestant churches, such as Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian, working in India.

Serinian (2014) focuses on the life and theology of a composer, James Theophilus Appavoo (1940-2005), Reverend of the Church of South India and Professor of Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, who made the *parai* into an instrument of glory and worship by drumming inside church. He used the *parai* in the middle of the liturgy and sang to praise the Lord's prayer and the confession with messages linking Christian theology and critiques of social inequality in the Tamil folk style he composed (Serinian 2014).

In a similar context, we should note that the Paraiyattam also works as a symbol of women's empowerment. Today, the Paraiyattam is widely performed by both men and women, although it used to be practiced only by men, and it was considered a sin for women even to touch the *parai* until the late twentieth century. Sister Chandra, a Catholic nun of the Immaculate Heart of Mary at Dindigul, started to use the *parai* as a tool of reclamation and empowerment for young Dalit women in their village. A few young girls joined her, and they received more demands from the villagers, giving rise to an all-female folk team called Sakthi Kalaikuzhu. At her Sakthi Folk Cultural Centre, established in 1990, Sister Chandra uses native folk-art forms to campaign against gender, class, and caste discrimination for the girls (Bathran 2012).

As described above, the performance of the Praiyattam cannot actually be separated from the religio-politics of Dalit Christians. It seems natural for Dalit Christians to take up their own musical tradition for the expression of their religio-political emotion since music is indispensable to the liturgical tradition. Seminary students are required to study music as a compulsory subject and congregations naturally learn music at church by listening and singing. As a result of such opportunities for familiarization with music, there are a number of famous Dalit or Christian musicians who have engaged with the secular film industry. Gnanathesikan, popularly known as Ilaiyaraaja (b.1943), is the most famous, a Paraiyar music director working predominantly in Tamil and Telugu films, who was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 2018 by the Government of India. Immanuel Vasanth Dinakaran, known as D. Imman (b. 1986), is the Christian music director of the Tamil film *Kumki* (Elephant), made in 2012, in which we can enjoy the performance of Paraiyattam in the song "Soi Soi," sung by Magizhini Manimaaran, a female singer and member of the famous Paraiyattam group Buddhar Kalaikuzhu (Buddha Art Group). I will discuss this group in the next section.

4. Paraiyattam as a Symbol of Dalit Movements and Dravidian Politics

The Dalit movements for liberation from their oppressed social status commenced in the

late nineteenth century. However, because Dravidian politics had developed in relation to the caste conflict between Brahmins and comparatively upper-caste non-Brahmins, Paraiyars were unable to draw substantial public attention to their movement until recently. The contribution of Ayothee Dasa has been almost forgotten but he has recently been evaluated as a pioneer of the movement for raising the status of Paraiyars.⁸

The following chronological table shows important events in the history of Dravidian politics:

Table: Chronology of Dravidian Politics

1916	Non-Brahmin Manifesto (Anti-Brahminism, Anti-North India, Anti-Congress Party)
1917	Foundation of Justice Party (Anti-Brahminism)
1925	Self-Respect Movement led by E. V. Ramaswamy, who was also known as Periyar
1944	Foundation of Dravidar Kazhagam by Periyar (Anti-Casteism, Socialism)
1949	Foundation of Dravidar Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK, Dravidianism or Tamil Nationalism)
1967	DMK came to power in Madras State (renamed Tamil Nadu in 1969)
1972	Foundation of All India Anna Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK)
1977	AIADMK comes to power in Tamil Nadu
Since then, DMK and AIADMK have held political power alternately in Tamil Nadu	
2016	AIADMK comes to power

The most significant characteristics of Dravidian politics is that caste communities have been highly politicized. Due to the reservation system of Tamil Nadu, caste communities became vote banks. As a result, the number of conflicts between castes, especially between the Most Backward Classes and SCs, are on the increase. In addition, political parties based on particular castes have been founded one after another.⁹ These caste-based parties have constantly formed and broken off alliances with Dravidian parties such as the AIADMK and DMK, in addition to Indian national parties such as the Congress and Bharatiya Janata Parties, in every election of both the State Assembly and the Lok Sabha.¹⁰

⁸ See the following article: N. Muthumohan, N., 2012, "Ayothee Dasa Pandithar: Dalit Consciousness in South India" (<https://nmuthumohan.wordpress.com/2012/09/24/ayothee-dasa-pandithar-dalit-consciousness-in-south-india/> accessed on 20 April 2019).

⁹ For example, Pattali Makkal Katch (Vanniyar), Kamarajar Adithanar Kazhagam (Nadar), and Kongunadu Makkal Desia Katchi. On Wikipedia, 12 caste parties are listed (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_political_parties_in_Tamil_Nadu#Caste_parties accessed on 30 December 2020).

¹⁰ Many studies have been conducted on Dravidian politics, including on the colonial situation (Aloysius

There are a considerable number of Dalit parties, such as Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (mainly composed of Paraiyars) and Puthiya Tamilagam (Pallars).¹¹ Today, Paraiyattam is regularly performed as a part of the program of political meetings organized by the Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK or Liberation Panther Party, formerly known as the Dalit Panthers of India or Dalit Panthers Iyyakkam), the largest Dalit organization and a political party that seeks to combat caste-based discrimination. The organization was founded in 1982 but boycotted elections until Thol. Thirumavalavan, the present leader of the party, contested an election in 1999, later succeeding in being elected as a member of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly from 2001 to 2006, and as a member of Parliament, the Lok Sabha, from 2009 to 2014, and from 2019 onward. The party has supported the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, who fight against the Sri Lankan Government, and Tamil Nationalism (Gorringer 2016). With other Dalit parties, the party members also follow B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956), an Indian jurist, economist, politician, and social reformer who drafted the Indian Constitution and inspired the Dalit Buddhist movement. In 1956, Ambedkar converted to Buddhism, initiating mass conversions of Dalits. However, as noted above, Ayothee Dasa was the first notable Dalit leader to embrace Buddhism; Ambedkar is one of inheritors of his legacy. Thus, active party members are substantially Buddhist Paraiyars, although the party seeks to cover the interests of all Dalit communities.

Among the other Dalit parties, Puthiya Tamilagam (New Tamilnadu) was founded by K. Krishnasami in 1997 to protect the rights of the Devendra Kula Vellalar or Pallar. In the election held in 2011, the party won two seats in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly through an alliance with AIADMK. Today, the party demands that Devendra Kula Vellalars should be removed from the SCs list, claiming that this is an “imposed identity,” even though several castes are seeking reservations for jobs and education.¹²

The political and social movements of Arunthathiyar seem to be characterized by schisms and a lack of integration as a community: there are several organizations working today, such as Arunthathi Makkal Katchi (Arunthathi People’s Party), Aathi Thamizhar Peravai (Original Tamilian Federation), Arunthathi Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam

2010; Bergunder 2004; Viswanath 2014a), on the present situation (Gorringer 2005; Harris 2001; Pandian 2007; Vaasanthi 2006), and in particular on the inter-caste relationship between Dalit and Dravidian parties (Gorringer 2011; Ramaiah 2004).

¹¹ Seven Dalit rights parties are listed in Wikipedia, including the Bahujan Samaj Party, a national-level party for deprived communities such as SCs, STs, OBCs, and religious minorities (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_political_parties_in_Tamil_Nadu#Caste_parties accessed on 30 December 2020).

¹² *The News Minute*, 5 October 2019, “Remove Devendra Kula Vellalars from SC list: Puthiya Tamilagam Reminds TN Govt” (<https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/remove-devendra-kula-vellalars-sc-list-puthiya-tamilagam-reminds-tn-govt-110034> accessed on 30 August 2020).

(Arunthathi People's Progressive Forum), and Tamil Puligal Katch (Tamil Tigers Party). Arunthathi Makkal Katchi, led by Valasai E. Ravichandran, has been demanding a 6% reservation against the present 3% reservation, based on their population, from the 18% quota for the SCs.¹³ Aarthi Thamizhar Peravai was founded by Athiyamaan in 1994 and based on the teachings and principles of Ambedkar, Periyar, and Karl Marx.¹⁴ This party also demands a 6% reservation for Arunthathiyars.¹⁵ Arunthathi Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam, led by Thangavel, an pro-Ambedkar and pro-Periyar party, is active around three districts of West Tamil Nadu (Nagappan 2014). In 2020, another group of supporters of Tamil Eelam, Tamil Puligal Katchi, urged Dalits in Coimbatore to convert to Islam because of the prevailing caste injustice and untouchability.¹⁶

Consequently, it is difficult for Dalit communities in Tamil Nadu to construct a unified Dalit identity to consolidate their political movement, even though it was prevalent in the 1920s. The term Adi Dravidar was proposed as an umbrella term including different Dalit communities, but it continues to represent only Paraiyars. Today, each community has its own position: Arunthathiyars demand separate reservations for themselves, and Pallars or Devendra Kula Vellalars even refuse to identify themselves as Dalit or SCs (Geetha 2014: 137-138). These Dalit political parties have also formed and broken off alliances with Dravidian parties and national parties.

As mentioned above, the performance of the Paraiyattam, which symbolizes Dalit liberation and the pride of Paraiyars themselves, has become a regular feature of political gatherings of the VCK. The regular performances are given by one of the most famous Paraiyattam groups in Tamil Nadu, called Buddhar Kalaikuzhu (the Buddha Art Group).¹⁷

¹³ The party continues to demand a special quota for Arunthathiyars in the reservation: *Oneindia*, 26 November 2007 "Arunthathiyars Demand Exclusive Reservation" (<https://www.oneindia.com/2007/11/26/arunthathiyars-demand-exclusive-reservation-1196072328.html> accessed on 30 August 2020); *New India Express*, 16 April 2014 "Arunthathi Makkal Katchi to Support Congress in TN" (<https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2014/apr/16/Arunthathi-Makkal-Katchi-to-Support-Congress-in-TN-600549.html> accessed on 30 August 2020).

¹⁴ On Periyar and his socialism, see Rajadurai, Geetha, and Rawat (2016), Sankar (2017), Vaitheespara and Venkatasubramanian (2015), and Vishwanath (2014a).

¹⁵ See their homepage: Aathithamizhar Peravai (<http://www.aathithamizharperavai.com/home.html> accessed on 30 August 2020).

¹⁶ See *India Today*, 12 February 2020 "Over 430 Dalits Convert to Islam in Coimbatore Citing Injustice, More Conversions Underway" (<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/dalits-convert-islam-coimbatore-hindu-discrimination-injustice-1645564-2020-02-12> accessed on 30 August 2020).

¹⁷ Articles on Buddhar Kalaikuzhu: *The Indian Express*, 9 January 2021, "Liberating the Parai: An Instrument Played by the Dalits Has Found a Champion, who's Fighting to Take It Mainstream" (<https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/art-and-culture/liberating-the-parai/> accessed on 10 January 2021); *The Wire*, 9 June 2017, "How Tamil Artistes Are Playing the Parai to a New Beat – of Liberty, Away from Caste" (<https://thewire.in/caste/parai-buddhar-kalai-kuzhu-paraiyar> accessed on 30 August 2020); *The Federal*, 21 February 2020, "Parai attam: Drumming Up Change Is Not Easy, but It's Happening" (<https://thefederal.com/the-eighth-column/parai-attam-drumming-up-change-was-not-easy-but-its-happening-caste-gender/> accessed on 30 August 2020).

This group was formally founded in 2007 by Manimaaran, who was brought up in a family who performed *Gaana*, a music genre for the remembrance of deceased persons and their lives during funerals. It originated particularly in North Chennai and has become a popular genre for expressing various social themes, including the remembrance of famous political leaders, such as Ambedkar and Periyar.

Naturally, Manimaaran learned to play the *parai* in his childhood. He left his home when he was eleven years old, came to Chennai at the age of sixteen, and started to sweep streets and other places. He received his formal training in *parai* drumming, in which made his name as a musician. His first recording was made in 1997, including songs written by himself, and he began to teach music to children—although he struggled financially—and performed the *parai* everywhere, including at funerals. When he and his colleagues performed at a political meeting in 2006, they came to know the tragic story of a Dalit activist, Reddiyur Pandiyan, who had been campaigning to get rid of jobs like burying dead bodies, carrying dead cows, manual scavenging, and performing the *parai*, and who was shot dead during a protest in 1987. Since then, Buddhar Kalaikuzhu has refused to perform at funerals.

Today, Buddhar Kalaikuzhu has become a leading Paraiyattam group. Buddhar Kalaikuzhu conducts a free two-hour class every Sunday morning at the Eliot Beach, Chennai, where a considerable number of people belonging to upper castes, many women, and middle-class people get together to play the *parai*. Manimaaran's wife, Margizhini Manimaaran, who sang in the Tamil film *Kumki* in 2012, is an active member of Buddhar Kalaikuzhu. The group encourages women to join, brings the *parai* to people of other castes, and makes the *parai* an effective tool of social freedom. The Paraiyattam continues to be a symbol of resistance, but the group has not been able to take away the stigma attached to the *parai* as a drum of the Dalits since their strong association with the VCK even though the members want to take it to the masses as one of the traditional folk arts of Tamil Nadu. While the *parai* can be separated from funerals by the refusal to perform on such occasions, it nonetheless cannot help but be associated with religio-political campaigns for Dalit liberation.

Plate 3. Pariyattam by Buddhar Kalaikuzhu.



Plate 4. Joint performance with African Students.



Plates 3 and 4. Radical Student Forum “Graduation Celebration of African, Dalit and Tribal People,” 6 January 2018, Chennai, by the author.

5. Paraiyattam as a Symbol of Militant Leftists

Makkal Kalai Ilakkiya Kazhagam (the People’s Art and Literary Association; PALA) is an organization associated with left-wing political organizations, in particular the New Democratic Labor Front, that advocate Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thought by supporting the militant Naxalite parties. PALA is also one of the partner groups in Tamil Nadu belonging to the All India League for Revolutionary Culture, founded in 1983, the purpose of which is to promote “revolutionary culture” through arts and literature, meaning anti-American, anti-Imperialist, and anti-globalization culture in relation to external affairs, anti-central government and anti-economic liberalization in internal affairs, and anti-Brahmanism, anti-state government, and Tamil Nationalism in Tamil Nadu.

The activities of PALA became visible in the 1990s when Tamil Makkal Icai Vizha (the Tamil People’s Music Festival) started up in 1994 in Thanjavur. PALA explains the purpose of holding this festival in the following way. Brahmins attempt to recolonize Tamil Makkal by stealing their heritage and turning Tamil Makkal Isai into Carnatic Music (South Indian Classical Music). Tamil Makkal Icai Vizha is a music festival to fight against recolonization and the fascism of the Brahmins. The program of this festival is characterized by a combination of political agitation and music, including group singing of revolutionary songs and the performance of Paraiyattam (Inoue 2006: 541-542).¹⁸

PALA had to stop holding such a big music festival in 2005 when the Government of Tamil Nadu banned the Communist Party of India (Maoist) for indulging in unlawful activities and asked the Central Government to include the party on the list of terrorist

¹⁸ At that time, the festival organizers called it Thappattam rather than Paraiyattam (Inoue 2006: 542). This fact suggests that the name was changed for performances of this kind.

organizations.¹⁹ The CPI (Maoist) was formed in 2004 with the merger of two banned Naxalite parties, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), known as the People's War, and the Maoist Communist Centre of India. Nevertheless, PALA has never stopped its activities. In the 2010s, S. Kovan, a Dalit folk singer, became a leading artist of PALA. He composed many songs by himself, sang them while playing the frame drum, a modern form of the traditional *parai*, and uploaded his songs to a website called "vinavu.com" an alternative political YouTube channel in Tamil Nadu. He has been criticizing the state government and has been arrested twice, making him a famous activist. In 2015, he was arrested for sedition because of his songs uploaded to YouTube that criticized the state government for allegedly profiting from state-run liquor shops at the expense of the poor. In 2018, he was again arrested for a song against Prime Minister Narendra Modi for conducting Ram Rajya Ratha Yatra (a political and religious rally organized by the Bharatiya Janata Party). His arrest was criticized by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.²⁰

Although Kovan says that he is an atheist in interviews²¹ and leftist organizations such as PALA have no religious affiliation at all, unlike other organizations, including the VCK, for symbolic reasons Paraiyattam continues to be a part of political campaigns and agitations that unavoidably affiliate with religion and caste.

¹⁹ The detailed activities of this organization in the early twenty-first century are listed in "Refugee Review Tribunal, Australia" (2005), available on the UNHCR's "refworld" website (<https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4b6fe20c0.pdf> accessed on 30 August 2020). I presume that the militant Naxalite parties were banned one by one at that time and that some members tried to leave India to seek refuge abroad. The CPI (Maoist) has been designated a terrorist organisation in India under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act since 2009.

²⁰ Articles on his arrest can be found on several websites: Amnesty International, 31 October 2015 "Dalit Folk Singer Arrested for 'Sedition' Must Be Released," (<https://amnesty.org.in/news-update/dalit-folk-singer-arrested-sedition-must-released/> accessed on 30 August 2020); Human Right Watch, "India: Folk Singer Jailed for Sedition," 3 November 2015 (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/11/03/india-folk-singer-jailed-sedition> accessed on 30 August 2020). Articles on his arrest for reference are also available: *The Wire*, 1 May 2016 "Activists Are Rousing the Tamil Nadu Electorate with Songs about Prohibition," (<https://thewire.in/politics/activists-are-rousing-the-tamil-nadu-electorate-with-songs-about-prohibition> accessed on 30 August 2020); *New India Express*, 13 April 2018 "Cauvery Row: Singer Kovan Arrested for Song against PM Modi, Rath Yatra," (<https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2018/apr/13/cauvery-row-singer-kovan-arrested-for-song-against-pm-modi-rath-yatra-1801196.html> accessed on 30 August 2020).

²¹ An interview is available online: *The Wire*, November 30 2015 "The Tamil Nadu Government Should Learn a Lesson," (<https://thewire.in/culture/the-tamil-nadu-government-should-learn-a-lesson> accessed on 30 August 2020).

Plate 5. The entrance of the festival venue.



Plate 6. Paraiyattam performed onstage.



Plates 5 and 6. Tamil Makkal Isai Vila, February 2004, Thanjavur, by the author.

6. Paraiyattam and Cohabitation: Who Owns the *Parai*?

As this musical instrument is affiliated with diverse political and religious groups, upper-caste politicians of Dravidian parties who support Dalit liberation movements are encouraging children to play the *parai* in public schools and are appealing to the upper-caste public to regard Paraiyattam as a widely approved traditional art form from Tamil Nadu. There are a number of cultural festivals held in Chennai and other places in Tamil Nadu that feature Paraiyattam in their program.

Chennai Sangamam is a Tamil Cultural Festival held at various places in Chennai on the occasion of Pongal, the Tamil harvest season. It is organized by the Tamil Maiyam, a non-governmental organization founded by the Rev. Fr. Gaspal Raj, a Catholic priest, and the Department of Tourism and Culture of the Government of Tamil Nadu. Practically, the idea of organizing this cultural festival was conceived by Member of Parliament Kanimozhi and Gaspal Raj in 2006. A daughter of Muthuvel Karunanidhi, the former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and a long-standing president of the DMK, Kanimozhi has been a chief of the DMK's wing of art and literature. The festival was held annually held from 2007 till 2011 then stopped when the DMK lost power in the 2011 Assembly election. Although the festival apparently seems to have been a secular and purely cultural event, and a few thousand artists from both classical and folk fields performed, the process to organize the festival had a highly politicized purpose.

In the twenty-first century, the Paraiyattam is quite often visible at cultural events held not only in Tamil Nadu but also abroad. In Japan, Paraiyattam has become a regular part of events held by the Japan Tamil Sangam, an organization consisting of Tamil residents in Tokyo, and other cultural festivals, such as Namaste India, the biggest festival promoting Indian culture. Far from the political conditions of Tamil Nadu, Japanese and

Indians—children and adults—who live around Tokyo can learn to perform Paraiyattam, regardless of religion, caste, gender, and ethnicity. The *parai* lessons have been provided by a Japanese artist who learned Paraiyattam from Sister Chandra of Shakti Kalaikuzhu (Inoue 2020: 48-49).

In contrast to Japan, Paraiyattam in India cannot be a mere popular entertainment accessible to everyone for their enjoyment. Whether the *parai* are played by Paraiyars or not, the performance of Paraiyattam has been highly politicized in Tamil Nadu, and the *parai* has become a paradoxical symbol that occupies a space within the arts supported by the upper castes and within the religio-politics practiced by Paraiyars in association with the revitalization of Dalit liberation movements. Paraiyattam has been appropriated as a symbol of religion, caste, and gender politics not only by Dalit parties but also by Ambedkarites, Dalit liberation theologians, and militant Maoists. This political appropriation has helped to strengthen the image of the *parai* as the drum of the oppressed Dalits.

The question “who owns the *parai*?” then arises. If it is supposed that the *parai* is a mere musical instrument that can be played by anyone irrespective of religion, caste, ethnicity, and gender who wishes to learn it, then Paraiyattam can be regarded as an artform for everyone, and nobody can declare themselves the exclusive owner of the *parai*. Then, Paraiyattam will acquire the status of a traditional art and might receive public support from any cultural organization. At the moment, Paraiyattam seems to function as a safety valve for the upper castes, who utilize it as an “excuse” for their political concern for Dalits.

On considering the possibility of “gentle cohabitation,” it seems almost impossible for several Dalit parties to unite under Dravidian party politics, which highlights the differences among castes in the present Tamil Nadu. Gentle cohabitation could be achieved in time by sharing a space for all to reside peacefully with others who have different backgrounds in terms of religion, caste, gender, and ethnicity, and recognizing their right to co-existence. Then, the *parai*, owned exclusively by nobody, might be a pure artform and a symbol of cohabitation rather than a safety valve for the upper castes or a paradoxical symbol of Paraiyar identity politics.

Plate 7. Paraiyattam as a folk art.



Plate 8. Paraiyattam in Japan.



Plate 7. (Left) Paraiyattam at the Salagai Naadam Festival and Craft fair, Thanjavur South Zone Cultural Centre, February 2004, by the author.

Plate 8. (Right) Paraiyattam performed by Japanese and Indians at the Tamil Festival (Vanakkam Tamizhagam) held by the Japan Tamil Sangam, Nishikasai, Tokyo, 7 October 2017, by the author.

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6

Muslim Images Depicted in the Novels of Rāhī Māsūm Razā**Hideaki ISHIDA****1. Introduction**

Indian Muslims are a big community. Their population is about 172 million, which is 14.2% of the total population of India (2011 census). However, when compared with 966 million Hindus that constitutes 79.8% of the total Indian population (2011 census), Indian Muslims are regarded as a minority.

Muslims have been inhabitants of India for more than a thousand years. They were the main rulers of India for several hundred years before the British began their rule. The relationship of Muslims with Hindus has been both peaceful and harsh.

India has a long history of immigration. It is generally believed that the Indo-Aryans were immigrants from somewhere near the Caucasus Mountains, Southern Russia; after their immigration, many other groups of different origin came to India and settled. When these post-Aryan immigrants came to India, the Indo-Aryan people had already established their superiority in every sphere of the regional society. If the newcomers were strong, they could have successfully defeated the former occupants and become the new ruler of the area, else they became subordinate to the earlier inhabitants. Notably, the newcomers, regardless of their status in the new colony as rulers or subjects, became accustomed to the way of life of the earlier residents, who were mostly Hindus. Hindus had already developed their special social system based on Varna (class) and Jati (caste). If the newcomers became rulers, they were granted the status of Kshatriya and if they became subordinates, they were allotted the status of Shudra or lower. Except for a few cases, such as Christians, Jews, Parsis, and so on, almost all the newcomers were incorporated into the Hindu society and became full-fledged Hindus. Incorporation of the newcomers into the Hindu society continued until the arrival of Muslims.

Soon after Islam began to spread in Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century, Arabian Muslim merchants came to the coastal areas of Southern India. Some resided at the market

places in Southern India but they remained Muslims. At the beginning of the 8th century, Muhammad bin Qasim invaded Sindh and ruled the area. Islamic influence spread in and around Sindh and caused conversion to Islam among the local Hindus, but the Muslim newcomers did not convert to Hinduism. This kind of situation, in general, has continued even today.

Hindu society, as mentioned before, had (and has) a caste system, in which non-Hindus were allotted a lower status than Hindus. If the Muslims were rulers or aristocrats, they were of course given high status, but the general Hindu population did not respect them religiously. If the Muslims belonged to the general public, they were looked down upon socially. Especially, if they were converted Muslims from the lower strata of the Hindu society, they were often looked down and were the targets of discrimination. This kind of relationship between Hindus and Muslims continued for several hundred years since the arrival of the latter, which sometimes led to a tense situation in Indian society. However, the relationship between them was not always tense; instead, it was peaceful and friendly as far as simple daily life was concerned. Indian society is a caste-ridden society. People do not bother to interfere in the affairs of other groups (castes), which leads to a peaceful social life as long as things go well. However, once the balance is tipped, things change rapidly; tension arises and, in the worst case, riots occur.

The Hindu-Muslim relationship had faced many hard times in history. It experienced the worst crisis at the time of Partition of India in 1947. Many communal riots occurred and more than ten million people had to move to the land where their coreligionists lived in the majority. Statistics show that almost seven million Muslims moved to Pakistan, whereas almost the same number of Hindus and Sikhs shifted to India. More than one million people were murdered. All kinds of crimes against humanity were committed, which left indelible scars in the hearts of the people of both sides.

After independence, according to the 1951 census, the population of Muslims in India was about 35.4 million, 9.8% of the total population. In 1941, British India had a Muslim population of about 94 million, 24% of the total population; out of 94 million, about 42.4 million were in the area later to become India and about 52 million were in the area later to become Pakistan. It means that the Muslim population in India decreased by about 7 million in the decade from 1941 to 1951. The Muslim population of the erstwhile

United Provinces (UP, present Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand) was around 8.5 million, constituting 14.2% of the total population of the state in 1951, while in 1941, it was around 8.4 million, constituting 15.4% of the total population of the state. Astonishingly, the Muslim population in UP increased a little (percentage decreased) when compared with Punjab and West Bengal where the Muslim population decreased a lot.

The author of this paper could not find even a rough estimate of Muslims who emigrated to Pakistan from UP. However, based on the abovementioned numbers of the Muslim population in UP, it stands to reason that the number of Muslims who remained in UP was greater than that of Muslims who left UP for Pakistan. There must have been various reasons why they remained in UP. In any case, those Muslims who remained in India chose the life to live as a minority in a Hindu-majority society. In India, as long as communal tension is minimum, daily life is just normal. However, once the balance is lost and tension mounts, one may even have to face a dangerous communal riot. Muslims may sometimes be asked why they remain in India, why they do not leave for Pakistan.

Rāhī Māsūm Razā was the first Muslim modern writer who wrote in Hindi and became famous. Rāhī, as a Muslim who chose to remain in India, kept thinking of the reasons why he remained in India and expressed his thoughts in his literary works. This paper is a journey to understand his thoughts through his novels.

2. Personal History of Rāhī Māsūm Razā

The real name of Rāhī Māsūm Razā (Aug. 1, 1927 – Mar. 15, 1992) was (Saiyad) Māsūm Razā Ābdī. Rāhī was born in Ghazipur district, UP. His father's old house was in the Gangauli village, 17 km north-east of Ghazipur city. His great-grandfather's house was in Azamgarh district. His grandfather married a woman from Gangauli. She did not want to move to her husband's house, so the husband came to his wife's house and became a resident of Gangauli. Rāhī's family are Saiyad, which is an honorific title given to a family accepted as descendants of the Islamic prophet Muhammad, so Saiyads are highly respected among Muslim people. Rāhī's family belongs to the Shia Islam sect.

Rāhī's father, a lawyer at the municipal court of Ghazipur, had a house in Ghazipur city, where he lived with his family. Rāhī was the second son of his father and fourth of

nine siblings. He had three brothers and five sisters. His father was a rich man and one of the celebrities in the city. The novels tell us that Rāhī was a bright, active, and a bit mischievous boy. However, when he was about 11 years old, he contracted polio (or bone tuberculosis) and could no longer move around freely. He mostly had to stay inside the house and a private tutor taught him. The disease was cured after some years, but an aftereffect of slight lameness remained, which changed a cheerful boy into a sensitive, introspective, and a bit obstinate young man. Sensitivity and introspection helped him to develop a liking for literature and obstinacy helped him to keep his mind stable in oppressive situations. As for his academic career, he sat for promotion exams as a private student and passed BA. He enrolled in the MA Urdu course at Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) in 1958 when he was 31 years old. He obtained a PhD degree from AMU in 1964.

Gangauli, the village where Rāhī's father was from and many relatives lived, has a tradition of celebrating Shia festivals very eagerly. Muharram is the most important festival; all the relatives gather and stay in the village for the period of Muharram. People, life, and the atmosphere of Gangauli, as depicted in the novel *Ādhā Gāmv*, had a great influence on Rāhī. His attachment to his native place, Ghazipur and Gangauli, is one of the main important factors to understand his thoughts and writings.

Rāhī' started composing poems in his teens. He adopted the pen name "Rāhī" at some time around 1948. In those days, he wrote in Urdu. He has also written some stories under another pen name. He stayed in Allahabad for several years in the 1950s and became acquainted with many Urdu and Hindi authors. Due to his elder brother's influence, Rāhī got close to leftist thinking and progressive writers' movement. Later, when he was in Aligarh, he became a member of the Communist Party.

Rāhī's father, being worried about his sick son's future, tried to make him run a grocery shop, but Rāhī was not interested in that. His father even arranged a marriage for his son, but Rāhī did not show any interest in it as well. At last, this marriage ended in divorce.

In 1958, when Rāhī was 31 years old, he enrolled in the MA Urdu course at AMU. He was much older than his batchmates and already a famous poet. He was also very active in the drama circle as a playwright, director, and actor. These things made him very popular among students.

He had already written some 20 to 30 stories in Urdu by another pen name in secret. Many of them were mystery or detective stories. He told this secret to his friend, who advised Rāhī to translate them into Hindi. Around 1962, Rāhī started to translate or rewrite his Urdu novel *Muhabbat ke Siwā* into Hindi. Later, in 1966, this Hindi novel was published under the title *Ādhā Gāmv*, which was welcomed warmly in the Hindi literary world, and thus, gave birth a Hindi writer, Rāhī Māsūm Razā.

In 1964, Rāhī submitted his PhD dissertation. It was about Indian elements found in the Persian novel *Tilasm-e-Hośrūbā*. Soon after obtaining the PhD degree, Rāhī was appointed as a lecturer at the Urdu department of AMU. In 1966, Rāhī married a divorcee. Some people did not like Rāhī because he was too popular among students and he was a member of the Communist Party. His remarriage allowed them to create a scandal, which, in the end, forced Rāhī to leave Aligarh.

In 1968, Rāhī moved to Bombay (present Mumbai), where he started a new life working in the film industry. He became a screenwriter and kept at it for the rest of his life. He wrote more than 300 screenplays. He also wrote scripts for TV dramas and serials, among which *Mahābhārata* (1988-90) was the most famous. Rāhī wrote screenplays to earn money and went on writing novels, poems, essays, and so on.

In 1991, he was diagnosed with throat cancer and he passed away on March 15, 1992. He was 64 years old.

3. Novels Published in Hindi

In this paper, only Rāhī's novels written in Hindi will be examined as the main material. Following is the list of the novels. Headings are as follows; the title of the novel in Roman letters based on pronunciation, title in Devanagari script, year of publication.

1. Ādhā Gāmv, आधा गाँव, 1966.
2. Himmat Jaunpurī, हिम्मत जौनपुरी, 1969.
3. Ṭopī Śuklā, टोपी शुक्ला, 1969.
4. Os kī Būnd, ओस की बूँद, 1970.
5. Dil Ek Sādā Kāgaz, दिल एक सादा कागज़, 1973.

6. Sīn 75, सीन ७५, 1977.
7. Kaṭrā Bī Ārzū, कटरा बी आरजू, 1978.
8. Asantoṣ ke Din, असंतोष के दिन, 1986.
9. Nīm kā Peṛ, नीम का पेड़, 2003.

There is one more novel titled *Chote Ādmī kī Baṛī Kahānī* (छोटे आदमी की बड़ी कहानी). The author of this paper could not get this novel, so it is not included in this paper. According to the comments found in some articles, this small novel is about a Muslim soldier who was killed in the Second Indo-Pakistan war and awarded a bravery medal. This was written before the publication of *Ādhā Gāmv* and therefore, may be considered as Rāhī Māsūm Razā's first Hindi novel.

4. Summary of Novels

4-1. *Ādhā Gāmv*

Ādhā Gāmv is the very novel that made Rāhī famous in the Hindi literary world. Its themes include people, life, and society of Gangauli, where Rāhī's relatives live in reality. His attachment to this place explains his main motive to write this novel. The described period is roughly from 1937 to 1952. The timeline of the novel overlaps before and after the Independence of India and Pakistan; therefore, it is interesting to compare how the Saiyad community in Gangauli changed before and after Independence. At the beginning of the story, scenes of Muharram, the ardor and excitement of people preparing to celebrate the festival, including the tajiya (miniature model of Imam Husain's grave) procession as well as recitals of devotional songs and requiems in the Mosque, are depicted. For the first time, readers, especially Hindu readers, had a chance to see the details of Muharram and the Shia society, which was one of the reasons to make this novel a great success.

After the scenes of Muharram, the novel shows various aspects of the life and society of the Saiyad community of the village. Saiyads are generally most respected among Muslims. Many Saiyads of Gangauli are land-owners of various statures and they conduct themselves as high-class people. However, the novel exposes the reality of these honored

people. Formerly, it was a custom for Saiyad men to marry within the Saiyad community; however, in those days before Independence, some Saiyad men in Gangauli took a wife or just kept a woman from non-Saiyad families, sometimes from a family of low caste. Even if they had a formal marriage, it was not always accepted as unchallengeable. If there was no formal marriage, that is, the woman was merely a kept woman, their children were often regarded as degraded or pseudo-Saiyad. Each Saiyad family is related to other Saiyad families and thus, as long as the mutual relationship is peaceful, there is no problem; however, once something undesirable happens, hidden faults are exposed and abusive words are exchanged.

The timeline of the novel gradually entered into the era of India's pre-Independence struggle. Though Gangauli is a bit far from urban areas, workers of All-India Muslim League or students of AMU sometimes visited the village and explained about Independence, Pakistan, separation, and so on. In Gangauli, where Muslims were dominant, there was no communal tension and therefore, people were not very much interested in Pakistan. Saiyad people were mostly land-owners, which is why they did not show much interest in Pakistan. Still, some people left for Pakistan. In some cases, whole families left together, but in other cases, men of the family left alone leaving behind other family members. Wives with children were abandoned and young unmarried girls could not find suitable grooms. Now, Saiyad people who used to be particular about their noble lineage could no longer afford to be meticulous about such things if they had unmarried girls or boys. There was another serious reason for the change of Saiyad people's mind. As mentioned before, Saiyad people in Gangauli were mostly land-owners (zamindar). In 1950, The UP Zamindari Abolition and Land Reform Act was approved, which affected the Saiyad land-owners of Gangauli very badly. In an instant, they became almost landless and poor. These changes that Saiyad people suffered after Independence were depicted in this novel.

The title *Ādhā Gāmv* literally means "half village." In Gangauli village, people other than Saiyads also live; however, Rāhī mainly described the Saiyads who were a mere fraction of the village and gave the novel its title.

4-2. *Himmat Jaunpurī*

Himmat Jaunpurī is the second novel by the author. *Himmat Jaunpurī* is the name of the protagonist. He belongs to the Sheikh community. Generally, Indian Sheikhs are supposed to be the descendants of converted Muslims who were formerly high-caste Hindus. *Himmat's* ancestors were the residents of Jaunpur, but during the Sharqi dynasty period (15th century), they shifted to Ghazipur; however, they kept using the surname Jaunpuri and took wives from Jaunpur. Later, they stopped taking wives from Jaunpur and started taking wives from Ghazipur. At the time of *Himmat's* great-grandfather, they were completely Ghazipuri by blood, but they did not change their surname.

Himmat's ancestors were rich and lived in a big mansion (haveli). However, his great-grandfather *Dilgīr* married a woman who belonged to a low caste and was a servant of the family. *Dilgīr* was ousted from the house and had to live in a house that he had built in an area with no rich people nearby. His house was a big one but much smaller than his ancestors' mansion.

The younger sister of *Dilgīr's* wife married a man who became a famous and rich tailor. *Dilgīr's* wife often visited the younger sister's house with her second son *Ārzū*. Later, *Ārzū* fell in love with tailor's daughter, namely his cousin. *Dilgīr* was not in favor of this marriage but agreed at the end. *Ārzū* had a son *Nādir*; he was a poet who had married a dancing girl (tawaif) and was ousted from the house. He shifted to a small hut in the poor neighborhood. *Himmat* was born in this hut on August 1, 1927, which is *Rāhī's* birthday.

Himmat grew up in poverty. He had the talent to be a poet but dreamed of unrealistic things. He wanted a girl who had left for Bombay, so he ran after her to Bombay when he was about 20 years old. In Bombay, he wanted to work in the film industry as a story writer, but his dream was never realized and he had to live as a street vendor. He wooed a girl to marry him and go to his hometown Ghazipur with him, but his proposal was rejected. While in despair, he was run over by a bus and died. He was around 40 years old at the time of death.

In this novel, *Rāhī* showed the downfall of *Himmat's* family. *Himmat's* ancestors were rich but, in a few generations, all their riches were exhausted. *Himmat* was killed by a traffic accident, which ended his family line. He lived for about 20 years before and

after the Independence, respectively, but there is almost no reference to Independence or political changes in India in the novel. There is one instance when Himmat as a schoolboy had sung the famous patriotic song of Muhammad Iqbal, which made his father Nādir angry enough to hit him. Himmat sang the song under the covert direction of his grandfather's elder brother Barq, who was pro-Congress and a sworn enemy of Nādir who was pro-Pakistan. This is the only episode related to the Independence struggle in the novel. It is difficult to guess what Rāhī intended to say in this novel.

4-3. *Ṭopī Śuklā*

Ṭopī Śuklā is the third novel by the author. Ṭopī's real name is Balbhadra Nārāyaṇ Śuklā. Ṭopī is a nickname given to him when he was a student of AMU; however, he usually does not wear a ṭopī (cap) at all. He is from a Brahman family that lives in Banaras. His father is a doctor and famous for a medicine made from a blue-colored oil. He is constantly in a kind of election mania and fails in every election. Ṭopī has two brothers. The elder brother is a flirt, whereas the younger brother is pro-Congress and a greedy would-be politician. Ṭopī's mother is simple and obedient to her elders. The strongest character in this family is Ṭopī's grandmother. She is a daughter of a scholar of Persian and Arabic languages, so she is fluent in Persian. She dislikes not only the local dialect but also Hindi, saying the latter is a rustic tongue. Ṭopī was born ugly with thick baby hairs. He was disliked by his grandmother and his mother who simply obeyed her mother-in-law. One day, when he was 6 years old, he was scolded by his grandmother and mother, so he ran away from home. On the way, he met a Muslim boy whose nickname was Iffan. Iffan was a few years older than Ṭopī and they became friends with each other. Iffan was the son of a high-ranking government official. His ancestors were very proud and strict Muslims. Iffan's grandmother was from a rich landlord family but she was very gentle to Ṭopī. Ṭopī was very much surprised to see the difference between his grandmother and Iffan's grandmother. He often visited Iffan's house just to see his grandmother.

Two years later Iffan's family moved to Muradabad because of his father's transfer. Ṭopī was left alone. After Independence, one day when he was watching the RSS performing physical exercises, he was unwittingly recruited by them. He attended the exercises regularly. The RSS repeatedly emphasized how bad Muslims were. After some

years, Ṭopī became an earnest Jan Sangh sympathizer.

After Independence, Iffan's family remained in India. Iffan's father did not intend to move to Pakistan. However, Iffan saw Hindus and Muslims were separating from each other in school. Iffan wanted a Hindustani culture or Hindustani history in which Hindu and Muslim live together. After his father's death, Iffan's elder sister married a Pakistani man. She advised Iffan to come to Pakistan, but he remained in India. He just wanted to overcome the fear he was feeling as a Muslim. Later, he got a job as a lecturer of history at AMU, where he met Ṭopī who was a research student in the Hindi department.

It was astonishing that Ṭopī, an earnest Jan Sangh sympathizer, studied at AMU. Ṭopī raised three reasons. First, he needed a scholarship. Second, he wanted to know why Muslims remained in India when Pakistan existed. Third, he wanted to know about the dreams of Muslim youth. Ṭopī joined the students' association, where he met various kinds of students. They said that they remained in India because they were Indians. Not only Muslims but Hindus also had immigrated and India was made of outsiders. Ṭopī forgot that he was a Jan Sangh sympathizer. Later, he even became a member of the Communist Party.

Iffan's wife Sakīnā's father was a famous Congress party member. He was a lawyer and from a Saiyad family. He worked for harmony and integration of all communities all his life. One day, when a communal riot broke out, he went to the spot to calm people down; however, he was killed with his two sons by the rioters, which made Sakīnā hate Hindus. Still, Ṭopī often visits Iffan's house because Iffan is his friend. Ṭopī even eats food prepared by Sakīnā, though it was a rule for Ṭopī not to touch any food at a Muslim's house. However, his repeated visits to Iffan's house breeds misunderstanding. People begin to suspect an affair between Ṭopī and Sakīnā. Truth is that Ṭopī only wanted Sakīnā to bind a Rakhi on his wrist as his sister. However, at the same time, Ṭopī begins to think seriously about marriage with a Muslim girl. He gets a Muslim girlfriend Salīmā who is a Hindi research scholar. Ṭopī helped her prepare her dissertation. Now, Ṭopī needs a job to get married. He interviews at colleges for a Hindi lectureship but is unsuccessful. Meanwhile, there is an election in Benares. Both Ṭopī's brothers are candidates. They call back Ṭopī to help in their election, but Ṭopī supports their rival candidate. Moreover, Ṭopī rejects a marriage proposal that his father recommends. Ṭopī wanted financial help for

his study but it was rejected. He had to go back hopelessly to Aligarh, where he found out that Salīmā got married and left for Pakistan as she preferred a man who had a job. Feeling he was rejected by everything, Ṭopī commits suicide.

It is not easy to understand Ṭopī's personality. When he was merely a child, all the family members disliked him. He could find comfort only in Iffan and his grandmother. At Aligarh, he wanted to be accepted as a brother by Sakīnā, though he did not realize he was in love with her. When he wants to be honest and natural, things around him seem false as well as dishonest and his mind tends to rebel against them. He needs a job, but at the interview, he cannot compromise and adjust himself according to the situation. His sensitivity and rebellious obstinacy did not let him change the course of his life, forcing him to commit suicide. His nickname is Ṭopī, which is the symbol of India. Anyone, irrespective of their religion, can put it on. However, it seems that this light cap was too heavy for Ṭopī. As for Iffan, he cannot consider emigrating to Pakistan because he is an Indian; he wants a Hindustani culture and history in which Hindu and Muslim live together in peace.

4-4. *Os kī Būnd*

Os kī Būnd is the fourth novel of the author. The story takes place in Ghazipur. Several hundred years ago, two Rajput Hindu brothers lived in Ghazipur. The elder brother Udaybhān Siṃh converted to Islam and changed his name to Abdullāh Khām; the younger brother Jaypāl Siṃh remained Hindu. Abdullāh inherited the ancestral mansion, which contained a Hindu temple built by his Hindu ancestor. Abdullāh continued taking care of the temple and specified in his will that the temple be maintained by his descendants. His will was followed for many years. At present, Wazīr Hasan is a direct descendant but his great-grandfather had bequeathed the temple to Muslim authorities. The land around the mansion was also bequeathed; many had borrowed a small plot of land and built their houses. Due to lack of maintenance, the temple has become a bit dilapidated. A Hindu man, who was ousted from home, took shelter in the temple without any permission. One day he blew a conch shell. Hearing the sound, nearby Hindus and Muslims gathered, which suddenly created communal tension. Police officers were sent to guard the temple.

Before Independence, Wazīr Hasan was a member of the Muslim League; he was

pro-Pakistan, though he did not intend to move there. His son was against Pakistan who, due to unforeseen circumstances, moved to Pakistan leaving behind his wife and a daughter. Wazīr's wife began to lose her sanity after her son's departure. She believes that her husband and Allah are responsible for her son's disappearance. She conducts a mock trial in her room and asks her granddaughter Śahalā, who is acting as a judge, to give judgement on who is to blame. Śahalā says that Wazīr Hasan and Allah are to blame to placate her grandmother. One day, Wazīr saw this scene and on that night, he entered the temple, read a part of Quran, and blew the conch shell. Wazīr was shot dead by the guards. Next day, newspapers said that a Muslim entered the temple to destroy it and the intruder was shot dead.

Muslim authorities told Śahalā that she had legitimately inherited the temple so she should ask the court to protect her right. She followed the advice and the trial started. Ghazipur city was wrapped in tension. Some rich people, both Hindu and Muslim, moved their families to safer places. One day a cow was killed, which triggered a massive riot in the city, and Śahalā was murdered.

Wazīr, despite his pro-Pakistan stance, did not go to Pakistan because his ancestral home is here in India and his childhood best friend lives nearby, who is a Hindu and now supports the right-wing Hindu association. That night, he entered the temple, read Quran, and blew the conch shell because he wanted to show that he had both Hindu and Muslim ancestors. His thoughts were followed by his granddaughter Śahalā. Understanding her grandfather's thoughts, she decided to bring them to the court. Her aim was not to win the trial but to show her and her grandfather's thoughts to fellow Indians that Indian Muslims and Hindus share the same roots.

The title of the novel means "dewdrop," which is the symbol of impermanence and vanity of life. Both Wazīr and Śahalā are proud of their ancestry. They wanted to cherish this pride and leave clear footmarks of a person who lived proudly as a converted Muslim. However, their pride was trodden down, which disappeared just like a "dewdrop." It seems Rāhī is being a bit nihilistic here. The author of this paper thinks that he just wanted to say by this title that life is transient so one should enjoy life and that we share the same root, so communal quarrels are just meaningless.

4-5. *Dil Ek Sādā Kāgaz*

Dil Ek Sādā Kāgaz is the fifth novel of the author. The title means “The heart is a piece of blank paper.” Like other novels, this novel also has autobiographical elements. The protagonist is Raffan, whose real name is Saiyad Alī Raf’at Zaidī. As the name shows, he is from a Saiyad family. He is a Shia Muslim. Raffan’s father built the “Zaidi Villa,” a gorgeous large mansion in English style near the Ganges in Ghazipur. Raffan spent his mischievous boyhood in the villa. Years passed and the villa was sold off. Now, Raffan is a high-school master and lives in a small house. He is also a famous poet. He met a girl Jannat at a party in Aligarh and married her. Raffan wanted to start his married life anew, so he decides to leave Ghazipur and gets a new job at a degree college in Narayanganj. It is a small town neighbored by the developing new town Jawaharnagar, where many government officials, engineers, workers, etc. live with their family. Raffan met some of his old friends in both towns. His political friends are active in laborers’ movements, whereas his poem-lovers are often women who are now homemakers or girlfriends of influential people who are against laborers’ movements. Raffan is a married man so he keeps some distance from the women who used to be his ardent fans. These circumstances place him in a delicate position. Śārdā is the girlfriend of one of Raffan’s political friends. She is a pretty girl and active in social movements. She works for a pharmacy in Jawaharnagar where she commutes by bicycle from her house in Narayanganj. One evening when she was going home from the pharmacy, her bicycle broke down. One governmental official passed the spot by car. He offered her a ride. He took her to a lonely place and raped her. Raffan happened to see the official’s car rushing away in full speed and then, Śārdā trying desperately to run away. Śārdā told him what had happened. Later, when Śārdā filed a lawsuit against the official, Raffan offered eyewitness evidence. However, the official’s witnesses, all of whom were Raffan’s friends or acquaintances, testified that the official was playing cards with them on that evening. On the contrary, they said Śārdā and Raffan were lovers and plotted against the official. Śārdā lost the suit and Raffan, being stigmatized, had to resign from school and leave the town.

Raffan is now in Bombay working hard in the film industry to be successful as a screenwriter. The film industry is full of scandal, machination, betrayal, and so on. Śārdā is also in the film industry and she wants to be an actor. She has already learned the

shortcut on how to be successful. Raffan always tries earnestly to earn the favor of influential producers, directors, actors, and so on. One day he learns that his new story was turned down due to Śārdā's interference.

Years passed. Now, Raffan is a successful screenwriter. One day he visits Ghazipur and buys back "Zaidi Villa." He says that he sold himself to buy back this mansion. Here, readers can notice Raffan's or the author's strong attachment for Ghazipur.

4-6. *S̄m* 75

S̄m 75 is the sixth novel of the author. This is again the story based on the film industry. The protagonist is Amjad, whose full name is Alī Amjad Naqvī. He is from Benares. Now, he is a considerably successful screenwriter and he often writes entertainment stories for the masses. He knows well that the secret of success in story-making for the masses lies in including obscene scenes. This is against the ideals he used to cherish when he was young, but he has no choice now. He sometimes feels vanity in his job and life. He has some friends in the film industry who were also his friends from his school days. He decided to make a film with them to entertain the masses. To make it more attractive, a rape scene will be inserted on the background of the recent Hindu-Muslim communal riot in Uttar Pradesh. Amjad is pondering over the victims' names. There will be two victims, one Hindu and one Muslim. Four names come to his mind. All of them are his past girlfriends. They wanted to marry him. The first two Muslim girls left him, moved to Pakistan, and married there. Now they are living happily. Next was a Hindu girl with a younger sister who wanted to marry as soon as possible. Her mother objected saying that the elder sister should marry first. Then, his girlfriend married a Hindu IAS officer in haste. Now, she is in Pakistan where her husband was transferred. The Hindu victim will be named after her. The last one was a Muslim girl whose father was against love marriage. She married a man whom her father chose as her husband. On the night of their marriage, a communal riot occurred. Some rioters broke into their house. Her husband was killed and she was gang-raped. Now, she is in Pakistan. Her name will be that of the Muslim victim. Amjad was also writing another screenplay along with that of this film. He finished writing Scene 75, the last scene of the film. In the scene, one character speaks to another character, a letter-scrivener on the road, "You are only a scrivener, not God. You

are only writing letters, not the destiny of your client.” Next morning Amjad was found dead. He seemed to have overdosed on sleeping pills. However, it was not known whether he did so knowingly.

In this novel, the lives of people in or around the film industry are described. Competitions and tactics among the screenwriters are interesting but horrible.

4-7. *Kaṭrā Bī Ārzū*

Kaṭrā Bī Ārzū is the seventh novel of the author. The title means “*Bī Ārzū* area”. This is a nickname given to the area (*kaṭrā*) by a resident of the area. The story is set in Allahabad. The main timeline of the story is from 1975 to 77 during the years of Emergency. This novel shows how dictatorial power ruthlessly wrecks the lives of ordinary innocent people.

Kaṭrā Bī Ārzū is a poor neighborhood. Deśrāj is a young man who lives there and works for a maintenance-garage owned by a selfish Congress politician. Deśrāj formed a union and went on strike with the help of a young journalist, Āśārām. Both became good friends with each other. Some years later, when Deśrāj protested against the owner’s selfish management again, he was fired from his job. Āśārām’s grandfather, a veteran Congress party member of good character, wrote a letter to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi about Deśrāj’s plight. The Prime Minister reacted immediately and arranged for Deśrāj to get a bank loan. Deśrāj opened his own garage. Now he is very much thankful to the Prime Minister and Congress. Deśrāj’s wife Billo runs a laundry shop. Her husband’s success also made her a fan of the Prime Minister. It was 1975 and on losing the election violation trial, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi proclaimed the state of Emergency. In the beginning, Emergency was welcomed by the general public. Now government officials keep working hours and do not demand bribes. Trains arrive and depart on time. Black marketeers were arrested and the price of commodities dropped. Akashvani radio station started a program in which citizens are interviewed and they answer affirmatively about the Emergency. Deśrāj and Billo are invited to this program.

While the innocent public was expecting good effects of the Emergency, the government was eager to suppress any voice of protest. Police were ordered strictly to sniff out any signs of a plot against the government. Āśārām was writing serial articles about people of *Kaṭrā Bī Ārzū* for his magazine. He often visited the area. He was known

as a person of leftist thinking to the police. The Police station chief of the area wanted credit and recognition. His subordinate brought information that the leftist Āśārām often goes to the area to meet some people in secret, which prompted an investigation. The police came to know that Āśārām often meets Deśrāj. When Āśārām got information that investigation against him is going on, he went into hiding. The police decided there was a conspiracy in Kaṭrā Bī Ārzū area.

The day of Deśrāj and Billo's interview at the radio station arrived. Now they were expected by the people of the area to dispel suspicions about any conspiracy. The interview was successful. Billo praised Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the Emergency, while Deśrāj admitted that he had met Āśārām at night in the park and so on. After the interview, Deśrāj was detained and tortured cruelly. In his absence, Billo gave birth to a baby girl. When police freed and threw him away in front of his house, he was in a vegetative state. At last, people understood the bitter truth of the Emergency. Radio news announced that Āśārām had surrendered and confessed about the conspiracy. The truth was that Āśārām feared torture and made a false confession.

A plan was announced by the local government to widen the road in front of Billo's laundry shop, which would require her shop to be removed. On the day when workers came to break Billo's shop using a bulldozer, they found the dead bodies of Billo and the baby inside the shop.

This novel shows the dreadfulness of the Emergency. At the end of the Emergency, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Congress were soundly defeated in the general election. The selfish Congress politician in the novel changed party and got elected as a Janata Party candidate. He held a victory parade with his supporters. Deśrāj recovered a bit and could move with the help of crutches. When he was watching the parade, he lost balance and was run over and killed by the lorry on which the elected politician was waving at the people on the roadside.

4-8. *Asantoṣ ke Din*

Asantoṣ ke Din is the eighth novel of the author. The literal meaning of the title is "Days of Dissatisfaction." This novel is set in Bombay and describes the period from May 1984 when a communal riot occurred in Bombay to October of the same year when Prime

Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated. The protagonist is Abbās, whose full name is Alī Abbās Mūsivī. He is the editor of a newsweekly and a literary monthly magazine.

On May 17, 1984, a violent communal riot broke out in Bhiwandi adjoining Bombay. In that riot, Gopīnāth Barq Auraṅgābādkar, sub-editor of the newsweekly, got injured and died after four days. He was 60 years old. He was a scholar of Persian and Urdu languages as well as medieval Marathi devotional poetry. He was the son of a Hindu mother and a Muslim father. He lived his whole life as a Hindu. His mother did not convert to Islam and raised her son as a Hindu. When he was ten years old, he ran away from home and came to Bombay. Since then, he was a Bambaiya (Bombay person).

Zarrīkalam works in the office of Abbās. His full name is Zarrīkalam Saiyad Alī Ahmad Jaunpurī. He lives in Jawaharnagar where a violent riot occurred. On the day he left the office early. Jawaharnagar is a Muslim-majority locality. Zarrīkalam managed to arrive home. He was enjoying watching TV with his family when the riot occurred. All members of his family were killed. Zarrīkalam was a descendant of a converted Muslim. In 1666, when Shivaji Maharaj was summoned to Agra, some Maratha soldiers accompanied him. Zarrīkalam's ancestor, Tukārām Mirājkar, was one of them. He could understand the Persian language, so he disguised himself as a Muslim and stayed at an inn run by Muslims. He fell in love with the daughter of the inn's owner. They got married but on the first night, the bride realized her husband was not Muslim. They talked over the matter and decided that he would maintain his disguise as a Muslim and their children will be Muslim. One of their grandchildren's grandchildren married a girl from a Saiyad family of Jaunpur and took his wife's family name. This is the reason the surname of Zarrīkalam is Jaunpurī.

Abbās has three children. The elder son Māzid is 21 years old, the daughter Fātmā is 19, and younger son Wāhid is 6. Abbās' wife is Saiyadā. Her father was a Congress minister in UP and a friend of Jawaharlal Nehru, so she likes Indira Gandhi, though she does not like Hindus. Viṣṇu Mehrotrā, who lives near Abbās, is pro-Congress and always emphasizes the importance of secularism. Mehrotrā has a son Ravi and a daughter Saṅgītā who are nearly as old as Abbās' elder children. Both families know that their sons love the daughters from the other family and want to get married. Abbās agrees to their marriages, but Saiyadā is against the daughter's marriage with a Hindu. The difference of

opinion resulted in their divorce. Saiyadā left with her second son. One day Abbās visits Mehrotrā and proposes their children's marriages. Mehrotrā agrees to his son's marriage but opposes daughter's marriage, saying daughter's conversion to Islam will cause trouble among his relatives and it is against the idea of national integration. His wife says that she does not mind the children's marriage, but she will separate her kitchen. Abbās is surprised to see the true nature of their secularism. Later, both their sons commit suicide.

This novel shows again the difficulty of the Hindu-Muslim relationship. Abbās says the problem of Amir Khusrau, whose father was Muslim and mother Hindu, continues to this day. Second, Rāhī wanted to show in this novel is that there are many converted Muslims from Hindus, which was emphasized in *Os kī Būmd* as well. Third, in Maharashtra, the Maratha regionalism of the Shiv Sena is another factor of communalism. Fourth, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination, which dragged the Sikh community into communal conflicts and resulted in the new "days of dissatisfaction."

4-9. *Nīm kā Peṛ*

Nīm kā Peṛ is the ninth novel of the author. This was published 11 years after the author's death but seems to have been written before 1991. This was adapted into a TV drama serial and aired in 1991. According to the preface, the story of this novel has nothing to do with the author, which means this novel does not have an autobiographical background that readers see in the author's other novels except for *Kaṭrā Bī Ārzū*. In the preface, the author writes, "Two zamindars in the novel who always quarrel with each other are cousins. Their quarrel seems to me like fights between two countries, which only leaves a chain of hatred."

Budhīrām is a manual laborer of zamindar Zāmin Khām. When his son Sukhīrām was born on July 8, 1946, he planted a neem tree in front of the hut he lives. Zāmin Khām always has an ongoing quarrel, dispute, or lawsuit with another zamindar Muslim Miyām. Muslim Miyām was a member of the Muslim League, but after Independence, he smoothly changed his attitude and became a minister in the state cabinet of UP. On the other hand, Zāmin Khām was convicted in a murder case and was sentenced for life. Now, more than 30 years have passed and a new generation has emerged. Sukhīrām has become a powerful politician and a Member of the Parliament who is involved in illegal deeds.

Zāmin Khām's son Sāmin Khām is an honest volunteer. Muslim Miyām's son is worthless, but his wife is politically ambitious. All these characters except Budhīrām and Sāmin Khām immerse themselves in dirty activities. When the murder committed by Sukhīrām was revealed, his father, Budhīrām, could no longer stand his son's evil deeds and eventually killed him.

In this novel, there is no communal conflict or caste discrimination. Sukhīrām is a Dalit, but a very powerful politician. People in power often fall prey to selfishness and are manipulated through all kinds of trickery, cheating, violence, and so on. The neem tree has been watching these things in calm resignation, asking if this is the country the people of Independent India wanted.

5. Muslim Images Depicted in *Ādhā Gāmv*

In this chapter, Muslim images depicted in *Ādhā Gāmv* are examined. This will provide basic materials to compare with other novels and show how far the images have changed or remained unchanged.

5-1. Saiyads

Ādhā Gāmv depicts the Muslims of Gangauli, District Ghazipur, UP. They belong to the Saiyad community who are accepted as descendants of the Islamic prophet Muhammad or his nearest relatives; therefore, Saiyads are given the highest status in the Muslim world. In the novel, most of the Saiyads are economically prosperous as well because they are land-owners, at least until Independence. Some scenes described in the novel show the superiority of Saiyad people. In one example, a Saiyad child plays with the boys of the Julaha (weavers) community, but he is scolded for playing with boys of lower status. People of the Raqi community are often rich because they are merchants, but they are inferior to Saiyad and do not have equal status.

5-2. Marriage and Lineage

It is the stated principle that marriages of Saiyads are arranged within the Saiyad community, which assures their superiority. However, this novel shows many exceptions

to this principle. They sometimes marry women from other communities, even women of low status (in the past) such as Chamar, Julaha, Nai, and so on. More importantly, if the marriage is not accepted as lawful by the people around, the woman is just regarded as a kept woman. This decides whether children, who were born from a low-status mother or a kept woman, can be completely accepted as a Saiyad. In the days before Independence, keeping a woman was not regarded as a bad custom among Saiyads, which helped to expand this kind of disorder.

For example, Sulaimān is a Saiyad married to a Chamar woman, Jhaᅅgatiyā-bo. He cannot eat food cooked by his wife because he is a religious man and his wife is regarded as impure. Hammād is a rich land-lord, but his mother is a Julahin, so he is not respected by Saiyad people. Migdād is a son of Hammād, but he does not think he is Saiyad. Kalāmuddīn (Kammo) is a son of Jawād (Saiyad), but his mother is regarded as a kept woman, so he suffers from inferiority complex.

Marriages of Saiyads are arranged by the parents. It is an unwritten rule for Saiyads' children to obey their parents' decision. In the novel, Tannū could not accept his late father's will, so he left for Pakistan, though he did not have any intention to go there before marriage.

In the pre- and post-Independence era, many men moved to Pakistan from Gangauli, which reduced the number of Saiyad men. Parents of unmarried young girls were at a loss to find suitable Saiyad boys for their daughters. Now, parents could no longer afford to examine if the other party was fully Saiyad.

5-3. Partition and Independence

Toward the end of 1930s, the Muslim League party members began to appear at Gangauli and seek support for their cause. In 1942, when the Quit India movement began, a mob attacked the police station and a young Saiyad man was killed. After the Second World War, the Muslim League became more active, but Saiyads in Gangauli did not react promptly. Pakistan was something unreal for them not only geographically but also conceptually. They had an attachment for their ancestors' land. For most Saiyad people, the biggest reason was that they could not abandon the land they owned. Still, some people moved to Pakistan. In this novel, we notice that thoughts or mental conflicts of

men who left for Pakistan are not explained well, although it was a serious problem for family members who were left in India. The following lines are some examples that express the thoughts or feeling of Gangauli people concerning Pakistan. In the parenthesis, Aye means “in favor of Pakistan,” Nay means “against Pakistan.”

1. It is a destiny of Indian Muslim to regret and cry. (Aye, villager, Raqi community, p.52)
2. If Gangauli is not included in Pakistan, we have nothing to do with it. We have ancestors’ tombs, our masjid, our land here. Why should we abandon this place? (Nay, villager)

When Britishers leave, Hindus will rule here. (Aye, outsider)

There are good people in Hindus too. When Sunnis tried to disturb our “tajiya” procession, it was Hindu people who helped us. Does your Jinna do it for us? (Nay, villager, p.155)
3. I am a farmer. I have my field here. Those who are ashamed of plow and bullock had better leave for Pakistan. (?, villager, p.216)
4. Pakistan will be made, but even Jinna does not know what will happen in the future. (Nay, villager, p.221)
5. Senior governmental officers can get promotion easily. (Aye, villager, p.222)
6. If we do not make Pakistan, 80 million Musalmans will be made untouchables. Hindus will take away your mothers and sisters. (Aye, outsider)

It is quite impossible that our Hindu untouchables should take away our mothers or sisters. (Nay, villager)

We never do such a thing. (?, passer-by village untouchable, p.239-240)
7. Pakistan is necessary to protect our prayer. (Aye, outsider)

Pakistan has nothing to do with prayer. They say your Jinna does not pray. (Nay, villager)

If we lose the protecting umbrella of English people, Hindus will destroy us. We need our land where we can live in safety with respect. (Aye, outsider)

We do not see any English people around here, but we are always safe. Hindus had not attacked us before English came. If Pakistan is made, will Saiyads and Julahas be made equal and get married? (Nay, villager, p.241-243)

8. When I was on the battlefield in Europe, I always remembered my village, not Makkah or Karbala. (Nay, villager)
 A person like you betrays your fellow countrymen. (Aye, outsider)
 I do not think it a shame to love the homeland. (Nay, villager, p.250)
9. What is built on hatred and fear can never be good. So, I do not agree to Pakistan. (Nay, villager)
 If we vote for Congress, the zamindari system will be destroyed. (?, villager)
 Muslim landowners are more than Hindu landowners, so Congress will definitely destroy the zamindari system. But Pakistan will send Islamic army to attack Delhi. (Aye, outsider)
 Do we Indian Muslims not belong to India? How can you vote for Pakistan, when you do not know how it will be like? (Nay, villager, p.251)
10. Pakistan is very far. It is just a source of quick money-making for activists. (Nay, villager, p.257)
11. It is said Pakistan was made to separate Muslims from Hindus, but for us, it was made to break our family. (Nay, villager, after Independence, p.284)

5-4. Shia Islam

Saiyads of Gangauli are Shia Muslims. Muharram is the most important event for Shia Islam and the novel generously describes the events. People gather at Majlis meeting and sing devotional songs such as marsia, nauha, and so on. When people get highly excited, most of them begin to cry. Some people even become unconscious.

Shia Islam is in opposition to Sunni Islam. If a rumor circulates that someone studying at AMU has fallen in love with a Sunni person, not only their family but almost all the villagers get worried about it. Some people did not move to Pakistan because it is a Sunni country. One description in *Ādhā Gāmv* (p.77) refers to a person of the Raqi community who belongs to the Wahhabi sect and is critical of Shia Islam.

5-5. Zamindari System

Before Independence, many Saiyads in Gangauli were zamindars (landowners) of various stature. They were considerably rich and doing well. However, when the zamindari

system was abolished in UP in 1950, things drastically changed. Their lands were taken away and they suffered a downfall. They bore grudge against Congress and Mahatma Gandhi who let the low caste tenants rise. They bore grudge against Pakistan as well because it drove Congress to adopt this policy. One old ex-zamindar said on the verge of death, “I forgive Congress.”

5-6. Women

When Saiyad women get married, they are no longer called with their real names. They are respectfully called “bride,” “sister-in-law,” “wife,” and so on, in her husband’s family. When they get old, they are called “mother,” “grandmother,” and so on. This is regarded as a matter of honor. The women whose marriages are not accepted as lawful, the kept women or those from low caste or entering a second marriage are called with their real name, such as Jhaṅgatiyā-bo, Rahmān-bo, and so on.

Before Independence, Saiyad women could rarely get an education. Saīdā was an exception and she was fairly spoken ill of. However, after Independence, when her father’s family became poor as the zamindari system was abolished, she supported her father’s family. She could do so because she was a school teacher thanks to the education she had.

6. Muslim Images Depicted in the Novels other than *Ādhā Gāmv*

6-1. Saiyad

There are not many Saiyad men protagonists or main characters in the novels after *Ādhā Gāmv*. Iffan of *Ṭopī Śuklā* and Raffan of *Dil Ek Sādā Kāgaz* are Saiyad. Amjad of *Sīm 75* and Abbās of *Asantoṣ ke Din* appear to be Saiyad but the superiority of the Saiyad community among Muslims is mentioned only in *Ādhā Gāmv*.

Himmat Jaunpurī and *Os kī Būmd* have scenes in which superiority or inferiority of the lineage is questioned. *Kaṭrā Bī Ārzū* and *Nīm kā Per* do not raise such questions. The main Muslim characters of *Os kī Būmd* and *Asantoṣ ke Din* show pride and respect for their Hindu ancestors who converted to Islam.

6-2. Marriage and Lineage

As shown above, Saiyad families are not much mentioned in the novels other than *Ādhā Gāmv*. In *Ṭopī Śuklā*, Iffan's grandmother's case is interesting. Though it is not mentioned, Iffan's grandmother must have been a Saiyad. She was from eastern India (Bihar?), daughter of a rich landlord. She got married when she was ten years old. Her in-law's family was a strict Muslim family. Her husband and father-in-law were mauvis (Islamic scholars) whose ancestors were buried in Karbala. In her husband's family, people spoke in Urdu, but she could not speak Urdu well. She kept speaking in her Eastern dialect. When she visited her father's house, she enjoyed the food and entertainments as much as she could because those were unavailable at her husband's house. She was very kind to Ṭopī as well and narrated fairy tales in her Eastern dialect.

Himmat of *Himmat Jaunpurī* is from a Sheikh family. Indian Sheikhs are generally accepted as descendants of converted Muslims from high caste Hindus. *Himmat Jaunpurī* is the story of Himmat's family's downfall. Himmat's great-grandfather Dilgīr was ousted from his father's mansion because he had married a woman of low caste, rejecting his father's arrangement. His son Ārzū married his mother's niece. Ārzū's son Nādir had married a dancing girl; he was ousted from his father's house and lived in a poor hut. Nādir's son was Himmat. He lived his whole life in poverty and died childless in Bombay. This was how Himmat's lineage ended.

Śahalā of *Os kī Būmd* is the daughter of a Rajput Muslim family whose Hindu ancestors converted to Islam several hundred years ago. She is attracted to her friend's brother, but he is Ansari (generally said to be converted Muslims from Hindu weavers, a low caste), so she thinks she cannot marry him.

In *Asantoṣ ke Din*, lineage is an important theme. This novel is set in Bombay and describes communal riots that occurred in and around Bombay in May 1984, in which two men working at Abbās' office were killed. These riots are said to have a strong connection with the Shiv Sena, a right-wing Hindu nationalist party. In these riots, non-Hindus, especially Muslims, and non-Maharashtrians were targeted. One of the victims was Gopīnāth Barq Aurāṅgābādkar who had a Muslim father and a Hindu mother. He had lived his entire life as a Hindu because his mother raised him so. His killer is unknown, but he was both a Hindu and a Maharashtrian, that is, he should be the last one to be killed

in these riots.

Another victim was Zarrīkalam. His lineage has been explained before. He is a Muslim and his name gives the impression that he is not a Maharashtrian. However, his ancestor was a Maratha soldier under Shivaji Maharaj whom Maharashtrians sincerely adore. His name shows that he is from UP but his ancestor was a Maharashtrian and he is a Bambaiya. Both victims should have avoided death during the riots.

Another example of Hindu-Muslim marriage is the case of Abbās' sister Sakīnā. She has married a Hindu and lives happily in London. She is worried about her daughter's Black boyfriend. Abbās thinks she has forgotten about the days when almost all the relatives had opposed her desire to marry a Hindu man.

One more example of Hindu-Muslim marriage is the case of Abbās' children. Interestingly, both Mehrotrā (the other party) and Saiyadā (Abbās' wife) opposed his and her own daughter's marriage, respectively, as the daughter has to convert to the husband's religion, which cannot be overlooked. They both agree to their own son's marriage because the bride will convert to the husband's religion. Mehrotrā is from a pro-Congress family; he always emphasizes the value of secularism, but both he and his wife are hypocrites in reality. She does not oppose the children's marriages, but she says she will not touch the food her Muslim daughter-in-law prepares.

6-3. Partition and Independence

Iffan of *Ṭopī Śuklā* experienced India's Independence when he was a high-school student. In those days, riots were rampant and the country was in turmoil. Muslim students faced disadvantages as Hindu students disappeared from Urdu classes and Hindu teachers turned against Muslim students. After Independence, his elder sister moved to Pakistan with her husband. She told him to come to Pakistan, but he remained in India to overcome the fear he felt as an Indian Muslim. Iffan's wife Sakīnā is from a pro-Congress Muslim family; however, now she hates Hindus because her father and two brothers were killed in the riot by a Hindu mob. She refuses to bind thread on Ṭopī's wrist as a token of the brother-sister relationship.

In *Ṭopī Śuklā*, *Os kī Būnd*, and *Nīm kā Per*, there are examples of Muslims who belonged to the Muslim League before Independence and changed their party-stance to

Congress after Independence, pretending to never have been anti-Hindu.

Śahalā's father in *Os kī Būmd* left for Pakistan, abandoning his wife and daughter in India, and married anew. In the beginning, he was against Pakistan opposing his father Wazīr who was pro-Pakistan. Wazīr remained in India because he did not want to abandon his ancestor's house and land as well as his childhood friend Dīndayāl who is at present a strong sympathizer of Hindu Mahasabha, a right-wing Hindu nationalist organization. Wazīr and Dīndayāl still share a strong bond of friendship with each other. Śahalā, when her classmates harass her by falsely accusing her to be a Pakistani spy, retaliates by saying that medieval poets such as Raskhan and Kabir were originally Hindus and her ancestors were also Hindus.

6-4 Shia Islam

There are Muslim characters in every novel, but there is no mention of Shia Islam.

6-5. Zamindar System

In Rāhī's last novel *Nīm kā Per*, two zamindars appear. They are on extremely bad terms. One zamindar, Zāmin Khām, is straightforward and the other, Muslim Miyām, is cunning and shrewd. Before Independence, Muslim Miyām belonged to the Muslim League, but after Independence, he became pro-Congress and succeeded as a politician. These characters, including other characters of the novel, show the emptiness of a selfish and greedy life. Both the story and the characters may seem stereotypical, but this novel shows a distinct sense of maturity that Rāhī attained through his long life as a writer.

6-6. Women

In *Ādhā Gāmv*, Saīdā, as a woman character, opened a door for the next era, though it may have happened unknowingly. In the other novels of Rāhī Māsūm Razā, we rarely come across such a character.

One exception is Śahalā of *Os kī Būmd*. She gives the impression of having a spine of steel. She wants to live with the pride of being a descendant of converted Muslims. She emphasizes that converted Muslims also have the same right to live in India just as Hindus do because their ancestors were Hindus. She was killed young during the riot. If

she had lived longer, who would she have become?

However, in other respect, she is also bound by old values. She is attracted to her friend's brother who is an Ansari. Ansaris are generally said to be converted Muslims from Hindu weavers, a low caste. She is from a Muslim Rajput family, much higher in status than Ansari. She thinks she cannot marry him, so she breaks up with him. This attitude, when compared with her decision to live with pride as a descendant of converted Muslim, is too contradictory.

Another exception is Śārdā of *Dil Ek Sādā Kāgaz*. She was a girl with a constructive lifestyle. She works for a pharmacy shop in the next town and she uses a bicycle to commute. She is the first woman bicycle rider around the area. She takes part in the group for social reform movements. If she had advanced as she should have, she would have opened the door for the new era. However, she was as unfortunate as Śahalā. After the rape incident and losing the lawsuit, her mindset changed and she went to Bombay to become an actor. Her ambition to become an actor is commendable, but she has lost social values in her life. Now, she is living only for her sake.

Iffān's wife Sakīnā of *Ṭopī Śuklā* hates Hindus because her father and brothers were killed by Hindus. Though understandable, she could not open a door for the new era because she was bound by her personal feelings and could not move forward. Abbās' wife Saiyadā of *Asantoṣ ke Din* seems to be an intellectual but she is stuck with old values.

That Rāhī did not create a woman character marching towards a new future, is an important topic to be studied.

6-7. The Film Industry and Life in Bombay

Some years after the publication of *Ādhā Gāmv*, Rāhī came to Bombay to start a new life in the film industry. Muslim images found in the daily life and film industry in Bombay are shown here.

Sīn 75 describes people in and around the film industry. When Amjad was a novice screenwriter, he often offered story ideas to a Hindu film producer. The producer avoided food touched by a Muslim; therefore, Amjad had to conceal his identity. He introduced himself as a Hindu revolutionist. Later, his identity was disclosed and he was dismissed. He has trouble finding a room for rent because he is a Muslim and connected with the

film industry.

It is a well-known fact that actors often use a screen name or a stage name. As is often the case, the name is connected with religion. Thus, when they change their name, religion follows their name. In this way, Hindu actors sometimes use Muslim names and vice versa. *Sīn 75* shows the same thing happening in the world of house servants in Bombay. They change their name according to their master's religion.

The film industry is a world full of vanity, machination, and deception. It is depicted in *Dil Ek Sādā Kāgaz* as well. Rāhī entered the film industry to support his family's life. He might have had the epiphany that he had lost his true self just like Amjad in *Sīn 75*.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, Muslim images depicted in Rāhī Māsūm Razā's nine novels have been examined to create an example of coexistence consciousness and a sense of estrangement, which Indian Muslims may feel in their daily life.

Ādhā Gāmv is Rāhī's first Hindi novel and his most important novel. It depicts the changes in the people and society of Rāhī's home-village Gangauli roughly from 1937 to 1952 during which the Partition and the Independence, the two most shocking incidents of modern Indian history, took place. As a motive to write this novel, Rāhī highlights his attachment to his homeland and the people living there. In this novel, the author mainly described the Saiyad community to which he belongs. Saiyads are accepted as a noble community among Muslims, but in reality, it has various aspects. One condition which assures their nobility is their pure lineage and thus, it is necessary to find a spouse from a pure Saiyad family. However, the reality is different from the ideal and thus, Saiyad men sometimes do not mind marrying women who are not from pure Saiyad families or even women who are from a low caste. The Partition of India changed the situation even more. It became more difficult to find a spouse from a suitable family. They had to compromise with the actual situation of society. Rāhī depicted this change of Saiyad community that happened after the Partition.

The problem of marriage with other Muslim communities is shown in *Himmat Jaunpurī* and *Os kī Būmd*; however, it seems Rāhī's main interest in marital problems

shifted to marriage between Hindus and Muslims. Amjad, the protagonist of *Sīn 75*, had a Hindu girlfriend. He could not marry her because she had to marry a man her parents chose. He could not convince himself to let the matter go and used her name in an obscene scene in his film. He becomes desperate noticing the ugliness in his mind.

The main theme of *Asantoṣ ke Din* is Hindu-Muslim marriage. The protagonist Abbās' sister married a Hindu for which she had to face strong objection from her family and relatives, but now she lives happily in London. If she had kept living in India, what would have happened to her and her family? This question is based on another episode in the novel, in which Abbās' son committed suicide as he could not marry his Hindu girlfriend. If he and his girlfriend had lived outside of India, could they have married safely?

Hindu-Muslim marriage has a historical background and it is related to the religious conversion problem. *Asantoṣ ke Din* explores this theme as well. Zarrīkalam was killed in a communal riot. He is a descendant of a converted Muslim. His ancestor was a Hindu Maratha soldier of Shivaji Maharaj whom Maharashtrian Hindus love and adore. If the rioters had been aware of this fact, would he have not been killed? Another victim of the riot was Gopīnāth Barq, who was the son of a Muslim father and a Hindu mother. He was raised as a Hindu and lived his whole life as a Hindu; however, sometimes he felt a vague vexation.

Śahalā of *Os kī Būmd* is also a descendant of converted Muslims and she is proud of it. However, unfortunately, she was killed in the riot. In the same riot, a Hindu man was killed by a Hindu mob. He belonged to the Kayastha caste, but the mob said Kayasthas were half Muslim.

Rāhī depicted the downfall of Saiyad community in the first novel *Ādhā Gāmv*. In the second novel *Himmat Jaunpurī*, he wrote about the downfall of Himmat's family. In the third novel *Ṭopī Śuklā*, he depicted Iffan, a Muslim intellectual who cannot decide a place to settle down despite the decision to remain in India. In the fourth novel *Os kī Būmd*, he described the difficult ways to remain a proud Muslim in India. Rāhī had just started a new life in Bombay and it seems he was facing various troubles. In the fifth novel *Dil Ek Sādā Kāgaz*, he recounted his past and decided to settle down in the film industry in Bombay. The problem of Muslims is not the theme of this novel. In the sixth

novel *Sīn 75*, Rāhī depicted the vanity of a screenwriter who had to abandon his ideals to “entertain masses”. The consciousness of vanity is strengthened in Bombay where one has to sometimes conceal one’s identity to avoid unnecessary troubles in life. The seventh novel *Kaṭrā Bī Ārzū* depicted Emergency. It shows that ordinary people, regardless of religion, are helpless in front of the violent cruelty of a dictatorial ruler. The eighth novel *Asantoṣ ke Din* showed that the perennially existing Hindu-Muslim communal problem has become more complicated due to the Shiv Sena’s regionalism. The ninth novel *Nīm kā Peṛ* depicts the downfall of zamindars and upliftment of down-trodden people, which are the same factors shown in the first novel *Ādhā Gāmv*; however, regardless of religion or class, those who are selfish and lack human values wither away or destroy themselves in the end. The difference between these two novels lies in the author’s perception of the characters. In *Nīm kā Peṛ*, Rāhī remained an objective observer. He kept his distance from all the characters and depicted the changes in people and society in an unattached manner. In *Os kī Būnd*, Rāhī touched the vanity of a “dewdrop;” then, in *Sīn 75*, he highlighted the vanity of a screenwriter. Lastly, he reached *Nīm kā Peṛ* and became an objective observer free from all restraints.

The main reason Rāhī remained in India after Independence is his attachment to his homeland. Attachment for one’s homeland has nothing to do with any particular religion. It comprises nature, life, culture, history, and so on, that is to say, the undivided India before Independence. Therefore, the Partition of India and Pakistan do not have any meaning for him. *Mahābhārata*, which he later dramatized for TV serial, is of course included in the objects of his attachment. Rāhī says he has three mothers. His first mother is his birth mother, the second mother is the Ganges River that flows by Ghazipur city, and the third mother is Aligarh Muslim University. The Ganges that flows by Ghazipur, not by Allahabad or Benares, is not only the river of his homeland but is the river without any religious color.

How far do the people of present India sympathize with his feelings? Coexistence consciousness and the sense of estrangement that Indian Muslims may feel exist not only inside the Muslim community but also outside of the community when they have contact with non-Muslim communities. Rāhī sincerely faced these feelings of coexistence and estrangement in his novels. We should keep in mind that Rāhī’s attachment for homeland

and India supported his activities in literature and his life.

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