Students’ Journal of Education and Development (SJED) is a space where the student community of Azim Premji University talks to itself and the wider world about issues related to public importance and interest. This fourth edition of SJED brings together a collection of papers that takes this spirit of engagement forward with some insightful research articles, perspective building pieces, and notes.

The first research article in this volume by Aradhana Sanil, *Policy Analysis of Demonetisation in India: 1946–2016*, looks at the demonetisation policy of 2016 and the factors that led up to the policy decision, while analysing instances of similar policy changes in 1946 and 1978, in India. In this paper, the author argues that the demonetisation policy of 2016 was a technocratic decision, with very strong political and economic motivations. The second research article, *Construction of Science Identities Among Students*, by Shruthi H Kedilaya, is an attempt to understand science identity construction and reconstruction among school students. It looks at identity as an analytic lens to explore students’ and teachers’ views about science. Studying identity as a construct can help us in understanding how learning of and engagement with science successfully takes place inside and outside of school classrooms. The third research article by Ketaki Prabha, *Women in Non-Traditional Workspaces: A Study of Women Bus Conductors in Delhi*, looks at identifying the degrees of autonomy that women experience in a non-traditional workplace, specifically in the case of women bus conductors in Delhi. It tries to understand the perception of gender identity of these women and how it is influenced through their interactions with the workspace.

Apart from research articles this issue of SJED has a range of perspectival pieces and notes. In the essay titled *Unrealised Human Right to Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation: The Conundrum of The Indian Supreme Court*, Ankita Guru argues that countries like India deny their obligation to human rights, and will continue to do so with impunity, unless there is a binding responsibility for the protection of LGBTs, with mechanisms for enforcing adjudication and dispute resolution. In the next essay, *The Political Green: An Analysis of Manifestos of Indian Political Parties from an Environmental Perspective*,
Vaishnavi Rathore analyses the 2009 and 2014 national manifestos of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian National Congress (INC), Communist Party of India (CPI) and Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M), and the 2014 manifesto of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). This paper analyses the context of the presence of environment in the manifestos as a reflection of nationalist values and as influences of the reigning discourse of sustainable development. The paper then goes on to reflect upon the nature of green politics in India. In the next essay, *Franz Fanon: Anti-Cartesian Decoloniality, Transmodernity and Pedagogic Possibilities*, Anwar Salahudeen critically analyses some aspects of Cartesian philosophy, which is considered as one of the foundational epistemic sources of modern rationality and worldview. It makes an argument for the necessity of thinking beyond this Eurocentric rationality, which forms the foundation of all modern educational systems in the world. In the last essay of this section titled, *The Truth about Fiction: Caste, Class, Gender and Dissent in Urmila Pawar’s Short Stories*, Vaishnavi Mahrukar seeks to understand how fiction writing has cognised the historical oppression of the women of the dalit community, who have been subjected to triple discriminations on the basis of caste, class and gender.

The last piece in this issue of SJED revisits the book *Flight Behaviour* by Barbara Kingsolver which promises to become a classic. Parul Dubey, in her review essay, first provides a brief introduction to the author and an overview of the book’s broad storyline. This is followed by a more detailed discussion around the key characters, their background stories, journeys, hopes and despair. This essay concludes with a discussion of points of personal connect with the book and the possibilities of the advancement of environment sustainability through literature such as *Flight Behaviour*.

As must be evident from the above discussion, these papers cover a wide terrain in the domains of education, development, public policy and law. They deal with the issues at hand from a set of plural perspectives. Such a pluralistic exploration of social issues is the need of the hour. This edition has been made possible by many other current and old students, apart from the journal’s Advisory Board, the Editorial Collective and the Coordination and Advocacy teams. Some noteworthy mentions are Saumil Sharma from the batch of 2014-16, and Ankita Aggarwal and Neha Mohanty from the batch of 2016-18.

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Research Articles
POLICY ANALYSIS OF DEMONETISATION IN INDIA: 1946–2016

Introduction

This paper attempts to understand the demonetisation policy of 2016 through an analysis of similar demonetisation policies in 1946 and 1978. While a lot has been written about the barriers to the implementation of the demonetisation policy of 2016, not much has been said about the factors that led up to the policy decision. In this paper, I argue that the demonetisation policy of 2016 was a technocratic decision, with very strong political and economic motivations.

A study of the instances of similar policy changes in 1946 and in 1978 in India will help enrich our understanding of the factors that led to the demonetisation policy of 2016. A comparative analysis will not only bring to light the differences across the three identified time frames but also provide an insight into the perceptions among policymakers towards certain threats and their responses.

This paper argues that the demonetisation policies of 1946, 1978 and 2016 were pitched against the suspected black economy. The language of anti-corruption measures appears to remain constant across the varying time frames. It also attempts to draw parallels between the political circumstances across the three time frames.

The first section of the paper highlights the methodology employed and the theoretical frameworks that could assist the understanding of the policy change under consideration. The second section reviews the available literature on demonetisation at the national and international levels. The third section provides a timeline of the events that led up to all three national instances of policy change. The fourth section attempts to analytically compare the political circumstances that led to the instances of policy change. The paper concludes by briefly restating the arguments made and will hopefully make the reader question what she already knows about the policy under scrutiny.

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Methodology

By constructing this narrative, I wish to explain the causes that led to the three identified instances of policy change, i.e., the demonetisation policies of 1946, 1978 and 2016. Since most literature around demonetisation policies emphasises the effects of the policy decision and the economic ramifications of the policies, the major source of information for this paper are the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Ministry of Finance notifications issued across all three time frames. While I have been able to access the original notifications, the published interviews with officials in 1946 and 1978 were also useful sources. As for the 2016 demonetisation policy, the main sources of information are the RBI notifications along with several articles published in newspapers such as *The Hindu* and *The Economics Times*.

I have tried to construct a narrative of policy change that seamlessly strings together the three instances of the adoption of the demonetisation policy. All information being used for this paper has been acquired through secondary research. Apart from the effects that these policies have had across the three instances (in terms of monetary ramifications for the government), this narrative largely relies on qualitative data, most of which is sourced from published newspaper articles.

Literature Review

All the published material on the subject of demonetisation in India and around the world can be divided into three broad categories: one set of writings analyses the notifications issued by the central bank (the RBI in India) and the Ministry of Finance that announced and operationalised the policy through a series of notifications. This also includes an investigation into the legality of the decisions made. The second set of writings not only scrutinises the implementation of the policies but also analyses the effects that the policies of demonetisation have had on the masses, the bureaucratic practices that they have encouraged and the overall impact on the economy. This kind of writing also seeks to question the declared motivations behind these policy decisions. The third set of writings tries to understand the political and electoral motivations that create the conditions for the formulation of macroeconomic policies such as the demonetisation policies of 1946, 1978 and 2016. This paper situates itself along the blurred boundaries that separate the second and third type of writings.

While a lot of scholarly analysis has been done of the demonetisation policy of 2016 through all the aforementioned lenses, the rigour of analysis was
Weaker around the 1978 policy and nearly absent around the 1946 policy. This section of the paper will review the writings around the three instances of policy. However, emphasis will be laid on the policy of 2016 on account of it being the instance of policy change that I wish to explain via a comparison with the preceding policies.

It is in the first style of writing that relies on a close scrutiny of the notifications and/or ordinances that legitimised the politico-economic decisions made by the ruling government that I situate the articles published by *The Indian Express, The Economic Times* and *Livemint* among others following the announcement on 8 November 2016. These articles are informative in that they enlist the various RBI notifications and central government and Ministry of Finance (MoF) announcements regarding the policy change. However, apart from being descriptive and informative, a few articles published in this category bear headlines that reflect a greater skepticism about the number of notifications and announcements issued that point towards the argument that the move was not well planned. This includes the articles “Demonetisation: 50 days and 74 Notifications” (*The Indian Express* 2016) and “59th Circular by RBI, How Many More to Come?” by T K Arun (*The Economic Times* 2016) An article published in *Livemint*, dated 22 December 2016, enlisted the several RBI notifications that had been issued between 8 November and 22 December 2016. Most writings in this category are first descriptive and then critical of the decisions made by the ministry and the RBI. A few other writings in this category also question the legal foundations of the decisions made by the government.

For example, an article in *The Economic Times* (Wahi 2016) makes the legal–philosophical argument that we live in a country governed by the rule of law and not by the rule of men, and a purely legal argument that questions the demonetisation of 2016 by stating that while Section 26(2) of the RBI Act empowers the government to declare any series of notes as illegal, it does not sufficiently justify the continuously shifting restrictions on cash withdrawals and deposits (via subsequent notifications and public announcements). It also does not enable the RBI to discriminate between holders and non-holders of bank accounts. This line of argument also analyses the procedures that led to the adoption of the demonetisation policies of 1946 and 1978.

The 1946 demonetisation policy that devalued currency notes of Rs 500 and above (following the recommendation of the new Finance Minister Sir Archibald Rowlands). A similar process was followed in 1978 when the devaluation of Rs 1,000 and above was announced on All India Radio
after the promulgation of an ordinance. However, the argument that the
demonetisation policy of 2016 is unconstitutional on account of following a
legal process that differs from the one followed previously is not convincing.
Having said that, the public discontentment after the demonetisation move in
2016 found expression in a number of public interest litigations (PILs) filed
with the Supreme Court that questioned the validity of the “demonetisation
notification”.

The second broad style of writing that characterises the discourse around
demonetisation can be seen to include but not limited to the arguments made
in the first style of writing. Economists and scholars in this category try to
analyse the policy of demonetisation based on the effect that it has had or
could have on the masses and the economy. This can hence be seen as an
argument that concerns itself with the effects of the policy decision(s).

While alluding to the effects of the policy decisions, writings in this category also
analyse the implementation of the policy. This includes articles that describe
the inconvenience caused to the common man, the effect of the policy decision
on the informal economy (Bhardwaj 2016), the unequal impact across masses
(Gopalkrishnan 2016) and the irreversible damage that the policy decision has
casted to the economy (Dhole 2016). These arguments include predictions
and speculations pertaining to the effect that policy decisions have on the gross
domestic product (GDP). For example, India Ratings and Research revised its
GDP forecast and stated that it will fall from the earlier estimated 7.8% to 6.8%
in FY17 (Dhole 2016). Economists like Pranab Bardhan and Amartya Sen
expressed their skepticism about the demonetisation policy of 2016 by calling
it “an assault on the poor” and a “despotic action that has struck at the root of
economy based on trust” (The Hindu 2016).

While an attempt has been made to pitch the policy of demonetisation on
several grounds, the government has insisted time and again that the policy
decision was intended to adversely affect black money hoarders, terrorist
funding and bureaucratic corruption, and encourage the development of
a digital economy. However, in a series of articles that express skepticism
about this claim, it has been opined that by encouraging the economy to
be digitised, the state has done little to curb corruption but has only created
newer means for the practice of corruption. As illustrated by the case of B
Srinivasa Rao, an income tax officer in Visakhapatnam (Javaid 2016), who
asked for bribes in installments owing to the cash crunch being faced by the
payee, one can imagine the several innovative ways in which the practice of
corruption would have and will continue to thrive in post-demonetisation
India. Apart from demanding bribes in installments, one can expect bribes being demanded in the form of movable assets.

On further speculation, one can imagine the other ways in which the demonetisation policy would have affected the market of corruption in India. At a time when the entire country was scuttling around to come to terms with the ramifications of the new policy that included exchange of notes and hours spent in ques for cash withdrawals, it would be safe to imagine that the “babus” in the government offices and banks could have exploited the helplessness of citizens. While the officials themselves would have been facing a similar struggle, the demand for cash made of citizens and the promise to “move things along quicker” could have created conditions for the development of a more lucrative and mutually benefitting system of corruption.

As mentioned before, this paper can be situated in the middle of the second and the third style of writing, the one that I will try to explain in this concluding part of the section. Individuals, scholars and reporters using this style of writing seek to answer questions that this paper tries to explain in detail. Highly speculative in nature, writings in this category try to question and understand the motivations behind the policy decisions, the political and economic policy objectives, the electoral aspirations that these policies could be used to achieve, among others. This style of writing does not limit itself at trying to construct a narrative of the instances leading up to the policy change but also pays close attention to the factor of temporality, that is, it asks the question: Why did the policy change occur at a given point in time, not sooner and not later?

According to a report in the Hindustan Times:

The BJP’s thumping victory in the Chandigarh municipal election on December 20 led party chief Amit Shah to describe it as a “stamp of approval” for Narendra Modi’s demonetisation decision. He had reasons to make that claim. BJP won almost every poll countrywide, post the note ban. But Shah has taken a huge risk in describing election victories as endorsement of demonetisation. Any adverse outcome in the ensuing assembly elections in five states—Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Goa and Manipur—will deny him the liberty to delink the election result and demonetisation (Kumar 2017).

Apart from the belief that demonetisation occurred when it did in order to render some political parties cashless for the upcoming elections, several other speculations with reference to the effect this move would have on businesses such as a Paytm have been made. Experts emphasising on this
form of writing are discomforted by how the focus of discussion has been the inconvenience and not the policy of demonetisation, which exposed a deliberative deficit in the government and cast a shadow on its capacity to effect sound policies (Hasan 2017). Scholars have also been concerned about how the opinions that disagree with the 2016 policy of demonetisation have been termed pro-corrupt and, hence, anti-national. I will try to consolidate the opinions in this category in the subsequent sections of this paper.

Timeline

In this section of the paper, with the help of a timeline, I will try to highlight the three identified instances of policy change. Largely descriptive in nature, this section will state the events leading up to the policy changes of 1946, 1978 and 2016. An understanding of these events will make the analysis of the subsequent questions more comprehensive. Although the larger theme that this paper is based on is the analysis of the factors leading up to the demonetisation policy of 2016, I refer to the demonetisation policy of 1978 with the aim to draw some parallels between the prevalent conditions then and in 2016. The reference to the 1946 demonetisation policy does not essentially contribute to our understanding of the 2016 policy decision but is still a part of the analysis for the sake of completeness.

1946: The Demonetisation of Currency

On 12 January 1946, the Government of India passed the High Denomination Bank Notes (Demonetisation) Ordinance. This entailed the devaluation of currency notes of Rs 500 and above. Two important political and economic factors are said to have led to the promulgation of this ordinance. First, the Second World War, fought between 1939 and 1945, was said to have been largely profitable for businessmen in India who, it is believed, supplied towards the Allied war effort and concealed huge profits from the tax department. After the end of the Second World War in 1945, the promulgation of the Demonetisation Ordinance in 1946 was seen as a move made against those big businessmen who had amassed huge sums of wealth and were evading taxes.

Second, the Bank of England, withdrew (from circulation) the notes of £10 (issued from 1759 to 1943), £20 (issued from 1725 to 1943), £50 (issued from 1725 to 1943), £100 (issued from 1725 to 1943), £200 (issued from 1725 to 1928), £500 (issued from 1725 to 1943) and those of £1,000 (issued from 1725 to 1943) on 16 April 1945 (Bank of England 2014). Taking a cue from this
exercise of the Bank of England, Sir Archibald Rowlands, recommended that India should demonetise higher denomination currencies\(^1\).

As a response to the observed tax evasion by businessmen in India and Rowland’s recommendations, two ordinances were promulgated on 12 January 1946. These ordinances officially devalued currency notes of Rs 500 and above in India (Gazette of India 1946). However, people were given several windows for the conversion of higher currency notes. This exercise resulted in the conversion of high currency notes to the tune of Rs 9 crore (out of the total Rs 144 crore in circulation). However, notes of Rs 1,000, Rs 5,000 and Rs 10,000 were reintroduced in 1954.

**1970: The Direct Tax Enquiry Committee**

In 1970, the Indira Gandhi government set up the Direct Tax Enquiry Committee under Justice Wanchoo. This committee (also known as the Wanchoo Committee) was set up to solicit recommendations about the strengthening of the taxation system in India. Among several other recommendations, the Wanchoo Committee recommended the demonetisation of high currency notes. Bibek Debroy (an economist and a member of the NITI Aayog), quotes Madhav Godbole, from his book *Unfinished Innings: Recollections and Reflections of a Civil Servant* (1996):

“In the middle of 1971 the Direct Taxes Enquiry Committee, popularly known as the Wanchoo Committee, submitted an interim report in which, inter alia, it recommended the demonetisation of high-value currency notes. As soon as the report was received, it was discussed in a series of meetings in the Finance Minister’s room. By that time Y.B. Chavan had been shifted as Finance Minister.

After detailed consideration, it was decided to undertake a series of steps, including demonetisation, as recommended by the committee. In view of the sensitive nature of the subject and the need for maintaining utmost secrecy, it was decided that the Finance Minister should speak to the Prime Minister and obtain her approval to the proposed course of action before further steps were initiated. Accordingly, the Finance Minister spoke to the Prime Minister. As he told me on his return from the meeting, the conversation was very brief and very crisp. When Y.B. Chavan told her about the proposal for demonetisation and his view that it should be accepted and implemented forthwith, she asked Chavan questions about the Congress Party’s electoral prospects after such a measure.” (Debroy 2016)
Hence, the probability that the demonetisation policy would be formulated and/or implemented in 1971 ceased to exist with the rejection of Finance Minister Y B Chavan`s suggestions by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

1975: The Declaration of Emergency by Indira Gandhi

The period that most people describe as the dark age of Indian democracy began on 25 June 1975 and lasted till 21 March 1977. Those 21 months of uncertainty and fear were triggered by the declaration of Emergency by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Threatened by a series of factors that included the political environment within the country, recession, growing unemployment, rampant inflation and the food crisis, and the upheavals in Gujarat and Bihar (where the JP Movement was beginning to gain momentum), the Indira Gandhi government (via the then President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed) issued an order that gave the prime minister the authority to rule by decree and curbed civil liberties of the people. The suspension of fundamental rights led to the arrest of dissenters. Although threat to national security and adverse economic conditions were reasons cited for this decision, it is believed that this move was made to protect the government`s political and electoral interests, especially as a safeguard against the revolution against the prime minister that J P Narayan was organising. The censorship of the press under the provisions of the Emergency played a major role in this term being called the “darkest days” for Indian democracy. This time frame has been described as the time when “the nation was bound with chains and turned into a jail due to one person`s lust for power” (The Hindu 2015).

On 18 January 1977, the prime minister suddenly announced that the elections to the Lok Sabha would be held in March. This declaration also came with the release of political prisoners, removal of censorship on the press and the removal of the restrictions on civil liberties. The speculations about the motivations for conducting the “surprise elections” are many. While some believe that better sense had prevailed and Indira Gandhi had finally realised the importance of the existence of a liberal democracy, others believe that she was misinformed, that is, she might have believed that the declaration of the 22-point programme, the slum rehabilitation policies and the other “pro-people” measures would ensure that she would win the next election. However, popular discontentment found democratic expression when the elections were held on 16 March 1977 and the Congress Party faced a humiliating defeat.
1977: The Janata Party Comes to Power

Popular discontent during the Indira Gandhi rule led to the voting out of the Congress government as the Janata Party government came to power. Taking full advantage of the popular sentiments and exploiting it for political gains, the Janata government continued to speak of the excesses during Congress rule, especially during the Emergency period. The Maruti scandal that involved Sanjay Gandhi and reeked of cronyism and corruption was used to bolster the narrative against the Congress. In a time when the new government was making a conscious effort to distinguish itself from its predecessors, several actions and inactions of the Congress government under Mrs Gandhi were highlighted. This also included the failure to implement the recommendations of the Direct Tax Enquiry Committee (also known as the Wanchoo Committee). This particular inaction on the part of the government was further used to support the claim that the Congress was corrupt and would not adopt any measures that addressed the issue of corruption.

1978: The High Denomination Notes (Demonetisation) Act

The factors stated in the previous section seem to have motivated the move by the Janata Party government. On 14 January 1978, R Janaki Raman, a senior official from the chief accountant’s office in RBI was informed about the government’s decision to demonetise high-denomination notes and was asked to draft an ordinance. After the ordinance was drafted, it was sent to President N Sanjiva Reddy for assent. Having received the president’s assent, on 16 January 1978, the ordinance was announced via All India Radio at 9 am, which stated that all banks and government treasuries would be closed the next day. Banks and government treasuries were expected to submit information to the RBI regarding the high denomination notes held with them. The public was to be given three days to exchange the notes and was expected to make several declarations in the decided format. The ordinance defined “high denomination bank notes” as those bank notes of the denomination of Rs 1,000, Rs 5,000 and Rs 10,000, issued by the RBI (India Kanoon 2011). The Demonetisation Act of 1978 is said to have brought back Rs 20 crore (out of the Rs 145 crore in circulation) in the form of high denomination notes.

Having taken one step towards arresting the growth of black money in the economy and against tax evasion, the RBI kept up with its policy decisions by issuing several Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) circulars that allowed tax evaders to disclose unaccounted sources of income and wealth. This then resulted in the ratification of the Voluntary Disclosure of Income Scheme in 1997.

2004–14: Congress in Power

After coming back to power in 2004, the Congress government (the United Progressive Alliance) under Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh faced several challenges. One such major roadblock was the number of scams exposed during their regime. These included:

- **The Bofors Scam (1980s–1990s):**
  
  A scam with a strong emotional appeal on account of being related to defence services and India’s security interests, the Bofors scandal came to light in the year 1987. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was said to be involved in the receipt of kickbacks from the Swedish arms company.

- **The Telgi Scam (2002):**
  
  The infamous Telgi scam involved the counterfeiting and circulation of stamp papers across states in India. The losses to the exchequer were estimated at about Rs 2,000 crores. The mastermind behind the scam A K Telgi had confessed that he enjoyed the support of several Congress ministers across 12 states in India.

- **2G Spectrum Scam (2008):**
  
  Former Telecom Minister A Raja was involved in a Rs 1.76 lakh crore scam that involved the awarding of dubious 2G licenses in 2008 at throw-away prices pegged at 2001 prices.

- **The Coalgate Scam (2012):**
  
  The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) had accused the government of allocating coal blocks without following the mandated process of competitive bidding. As a result of this, several public sector enterprises and private firms paid far less than what they were required to pay. As per CAG estimates, the loss to the exchequer was estimated to be approximately Rs 1.8 lakh crores.
Other scams that were unearthed (and was said to have Congress involvement) were the Commonwealth Game Scandal and the Wakf Board Land Scam, among others. Despite the political turmoil, the UPA government managed to stay in power for a period of 10 years, i.e., 2004–14.

However, in the latter years of their rule, especially with the active role played by the then CAG, Vinod Rai, the scams that were unearthed began to become one of the active concerns of citizens. The popular sentiment helped in the creation of several anti-corruption movements such as the one led by Anna Hazare. The demand for a transparent and accountable system of governance became stronger by the day.

**2014: The BJP and the General Elections**

Having retained power for a period of 10 years, the Congress (the UPA) was hoping to be re-elected in the 2014 general elections. However, the party chose Rahul Gandhi as their prime ministerial candidate to oppose Bharatiya Janta Party`s (BJP`s) prime ministerial candidate—the then Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi. Modi was successfully able to pitch the Gujarat model of development and was able to convince the masses, yet again, that the Congress and its government were corrupt and that the country needed to vote it out of power. Attempts in this direction also found expression in the BJP election manifesto, which not only highlighted the faults of the then government in power but also presented a roadmap that promised to lead the country out of its economic and political miseries. The BJP manifesto criticised the UPA government for being corrupt, and vowed to track down and bring back black money stashed in foreign accounts (BJP 2014).

**2014–16: The BJP in Power**

Owing to its strong campaigning strategy, a strong prime ministerial candidate and weak opponents, and the anti-Congress sentiment within the country, the BJP came to power after winning the 2014 general elections in India. Soon after coming to power, the BJP, in the 2014 budget, constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to discuss policy matters on combating the black money menace and the status of ongoing probes, among other issues (The Hindu 2014). The first meeting of SIT was held on 4 June 2014. This could be seen as the first step taken by the BJP government to distinguish itself from the UPA government, which the former had time and again criticised for being corrupt. Following the constitution of the SIT, the Prime Minister, on 15 August 2014, announced the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana.
(PMJDY). The biggest financial inclusion initiative in the world (india.gov.in 2014), this scheme sought to empower citizens financially by ensuring access to the formal banking system.

In 2015, the BJP government, keeping in line with the promises made in its election manifesto, initiated an information exchange (on matters concerning hoarding of black money) and changes in tax treaties with Mauritius, Cyprus and Singapore. Later in the year, the government passed the Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets (Imposition of Tax) Bill, 2015. According to the provisions of this Act, willful attempt to evade tax on foreign assets, failure to furnish returns and abetment of tax evasion were declared to be punishable offences (PRS India 2015).

The setting up of the SIT, the launch of the PMJDY scheme, the changes in tax treaties with a few countries and the Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets Bill, 2015 were followed by the Income Disclosure Scheme in 2016. The scheme was expected to remain in force for a period of four months from 1 June 2016 to 30 September 2016 for filing of declarations and payments towards taxes, surcharge and penalty (Press Information Bureau 2016).

While the government was establishing mechanisms for the declaration of unaccounted wealth, the Cost of Cash in India Report and the RBI Annual Report (2015–16) were released. The Cost of Cash in India Report, commissioned by MasterCard, stated that transactions in India are very cash intensive unlike other developed or fast-developing countries. The study stated that cash deals cost India 1.7% of the GDP every year (Srivats 2016). The RBI Annual Report (2015–16) estimated that 6,32,926 fake currency notes were in circulation. Also, at the end of March 2016, 16 lakh crore bank notes were in circulation, out of which 6 lakh crore notes were in the denomination of Rs 1,000 and 8 lakh crore notes were in the denomination of Rs 500.

Having estimated the number of fake currency notes in circulation along with an estimate of the number of Rs 1,000 and Rs 500 notes in circulation, it was believed that most counterfeited notes were of these higher denominations. Also, the low real estate and capital markets were seen as a reason for the cash being held in hand by the public.

2016: The Demonetisation Policy

On 8 November 2016, the prime minister announced that (through RBI Notification (RBI/2016-17/112), Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 denominations of bank notes of the existing series issued by RBI (hereinafter referred to as Specified Bank Notes) shall cease to be legal tender with effect from 9 November 2016.
It was also announced that a new series of bank notes called Mahatma Gandhi (New) Series having different size and design, highlighting the cultural heritage and scientific achievements of the country, would be issued. Through several notifications (by the RBI and the MoF) dated 10 November, 13 November, 22 November, 23 November, 24 November, 25 November, 29 November and 1 December, the implementation of this policy decision was elaborated.

Analysis

Having understood the history of the policy of demonetisation in India, we can now look at the several ways in which the 2016 policy interjected the policy stasis. In this section, I will also try to draw out similarities and differences between the demonetisation policies of 1946 and 1978 with the policy of 2016. I argue that the formulation of demonetisation policies across the identified years has been based on an ill-informed and incomplete stakeholder analysis.

During the first instance of policy change, that is the 1946 demonetisation policy, the target population comprised big businessmen who, it was believed, had made huge profits during the Second World War. At that point in time, it was assumed that the nature of the economy was such that the attack would land directly on the target population without having an effect on the others. This was because of the nature of the population that had high denomination notes of Rs 1,000, Rs 5,000 and Rs 10,000. Similarly, the policy decision of 1978 must have envisioned the nature of the population that would be affected by the policy decision.

Although the size of the economy in 1978 was larger than that in 1946, it was only a few people who were under scrutiny (black money hoarders) and the policy was designed to target them. However, the motivations behind the formulation and implementation of the demonetisation policy of 2016 were starkly different from those of the previous policy decisions. Although all three instances of policy change targeted the black economy comprising black money hoarders and tax evaders, the latest policy decision had additional motivations.

Apart from the black economy, the 2016 policy was also meant to interrupt the circulation of counterfeited banknotes and the funding of terrorism in the country. However, while the effects of the previous policy decisions were more or less limited to the target population, the effects of a similar policy decision in 2016 spilled over and largely affected the common public. It
could then be said that the social construction of the target population in the
case of the 2016 policy was shortsighted and incomplete.

While the criticisms of the policies of 1946 and 1978 are centred around (but
not limited to) the fact that the devaluation of notes of higher denominations
eventually led to an exercise of conversion, the criticisms with reference to
the latest policy are not only centred around the erroneous social construction
of the target population but also the lack of planning that is reflected through
the several RBI notifications that were issued after the official announcement.

It is also interesting to note that while the Modi government has mentioned
the Wanchoo Committee report to support its decision, some writers like
Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay (2016) argue that this reference is reflective of a
“selective memory”. In his opinion:

One could call it selective amnesia or partial use of facts, but Prime Minister
Narendra Modi cited just one of the Wanchoo Committee’s recommendations
to claim that while Indira Gandhi lacked courage and will to demonetise
high-value currency in the early 1970s, he demonstrated exemplary courage
since he is not driven to seeking short-term political and electoral gains and
instead is motivated by the objective of eradicating black money. While
citing the Wanchoo Committee’s recommendations on demonetisation, the
prime minister conveniently left out that the committee was against voluntary
disclosure and tax amnesty schemes (Mukhopadhyay 2016)

Although the Indian Executive did not have a strong say in the matter of
the formulation of the policy of 1946 under British rule, the disagreement
that Indira Gandhi had (as discussed earlier) led to the inability to adopt
this policy in 1971. When the decision to demonetise high denomination
currency notes was made in 1978, I G Patel, the then RBI governor, was not
in favour of the step. However, the way in which the 2016 policy was pitched
to the people was largely nationalistic and patriotic. Hence, any opposition
to the policy was meant to imply a support for corruption and hence against
national interests.

The similarities between the demonetisation policy decisions of 1978 and
2016 lie in the fact that just like the 1978 move was made by the ruling
government (Janata Party) in order to assert its commitment to address the
issue of corruption, a word synonymously used with the Congress (then),
the policy decision of 2016 and the basis for it (the declarations made in the
BJP manifesto, 2014) has similar objectives. The discussions about the scams
of the Congress/UPA government helped in making the UPA look like the
antagonist. The anti-corruption measures undertaken by the BJP assisted in the assertion of its identity as that of a party that is against corruption.

It is believed that if the demonetisation policy had been formulated in 1970, the effects would not have been remarkable on account of the fact that the recommendations of the Wanchoo Committee were public in nature and hence gave the defaulters a window to protect their interests. However, the way in which the “surgical strike against black money” was announced on 8 November 2016 made sure that the defaulters were caught unawares.

A lot can also be said about the time at which the Modi government decided to introduce this anti-corruption policy. Right in the middle of its term, when there was great debate about the ability (or the lack of it) of the government to live up to its promises of “Acche din”, the demonetisation policy could be seen as a way by which the state was reasserting its presence in the lives of the citizenry. Also, temporality is crucial to the understanding of this discussion. While a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Pune called Arthkranti claims to have advised the government to demonetise higher denomination notes, regardless of whether this claim is valid or not, the fact that the government was thinking in the direction of taking concrete steps to address the problem of black money helps refute the claim made by several groups that it was not a deliberated decision.

It is believed that the timing of the move was based on electoral politics within the country. Since it is believed that campaign financing is generally dependent on the black economy, with the Uttar Pradesh elections coming up, the decision to demonetise higher currency notes would render several political parties cashless.

While the policy change of 2016 greatly disrupted the formal and the informal economy in the country, the introduction of notes of Rs 2,000 and the subsequent ease with which the conversions were being made possible appear to have led India into a situation that can temporarily be described as that of stasis.

Conclusion

Through this paper, I have tried to understand the history of demonetisation in India with the aim to find an explanation to the policy decision of demonetisation in 2016. One can conclude that while the decision to demonetise high denomination currency notes has largely been described as being a purely political and electoral move, it would be safe to say that
the decision was also technocratic. For example, the measures taken before the announcement of the policy (Income Disclosure Schemes, Black Money and Imposition of Tax Act and the PMDJY) provided sufficient time for the people to channel/declare their assets. The PMJDY undertook a large-scale effort to improve access to the formal banking system. However, after being given a number of windows to come clean, for those who still continued to be a part of the black economy, the sudden demonetisation of 2016 could be seen as a final sweep. Although the decision could be rooted in political aspirations, it would be a mistake to conclude that the move was only limited to the politics associated with it.

The broad research question that I have tried to answer through this paper is: What factors contributed to the rollout of the demonetisation policy in 2016? I believe that with a comparative analysis of the three policy moments, I have been able to identify a connection (although not very robust) between the three instances of policy change. Also, alluding to the previous policy decisions, we can, in my opinion, conclude that while the problems of black money and tax evasion have been constant across several decades, the government’s response to it has largely been homogeneous. This can be said on account of the fact that the stated motivations for all the three policy decisions were very similar, i.e., to disrupt the functioning of the black economy.

Largely retrospective and speculative in nature, I believe that my study assists in a better understanding of the demonetisation policy of 2016 by grounding it in the history of the political economy in India. This study also cautions us against making hasty conclusions and categorising major policy decisions as either political or technocratic. Through this study, I have tried to draw attention to the blurred line that separates political and technocratic decision-making.

This study can be criticised on account of the comparative approach that it takes. One might believe that the understanding of the policy decision of 2016 need not be grounded in the history of the gamut of similar policy decisions and that these can all be explained in isolation. However, a comparative study such as this one allows for us to pay attention to the ways in which changing times might add to the problems, but the solutions to them are largely homogeneous. This realisation can then be used to evaluate the policy decisions that will be made in the future. Having a sense of what works and what does not and mapping the stakeholders involved in the operationalisation of the policy could allow for the creation of more robust
policies. While analysing the demonetisation policy of 2016, the results of the Uttar Pradesh elections can make us conclude that the electoral objectives of the policy have been achieved. However, it would be interesting to know what explains the defeat of the BJP in the Punjab elections.

In conclusion, this study shows that there are several factors that might seem unrelated to the given instance of change but can assist us in constructing a narrative leading up to the change. One way by which this study can be carried forward is by taking a closer look at the changes that the three policy decisions have had on the economic behaviour of people. If we are able to identify a steady trend in the way by which the economy has reacted to these decisions (while taking into account the differential economic conditions), it could add to our ability to foresee the implications of similar policy decisions in the future.

End Notes

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Introduction

When we look back at our schooldays, all of us might be able to recall our favourite subject. Mine was science, a strong reason for which was that I always scored good marks in science assessments (tests and exams). This, in my classroom and school setting, was enough for me to be termed “a good science student”. But was I really?

There were many students in my class who enjoyed experimenting with new things, who never accepted a claim without questioning it. Some of them, however, did not perform well in the assessments. This was enough to term them “unfit for science”.

Who according to my school was a good science student? What did my teacher think science was? Did she think of it as just being able to memorise facts and produce the “right” answers? This was, in fact, all that was required to do well in assessments and be called a “good science student” and sometimes even to be told, “I think you should take up science in your higher education!”

When we look at identities in a school, it would not be right to only look at the dominant ideological interests of the school and in turn of the subject. As much as we feel like this is what determines the identities of the participants, it is also very important to view how these interests function and produce a particular way of life and how these are taken up by the participants in that setting. Hence it is very important to give attention to the setting and the individual, as each setting has different ideologies and each individual can perceive them differently.

Studying Science Identity Construction

This paper is an attempt to understand science identity construction and reconstruction among students in a school. It looks at identity as an analytic lens to explore students’ and teachers’ views about science. Studying identity as a construct can help us in understanding how learning of, engagement...
with and relation with science successfully takes place inside and outside of school classrooms. The ideas of identity and identity construction can help us develop “feeling for the learner” and lead to a productive discourse about teaching and learning (Varelas 2012).

This paper provides a sense of how both the larger structure and an individual’s agency have an impact on the construction of identities. The following questions serve as the guiding framework in this paper:

1) What is the role of a teacher in the construction of students’ science identity?
2) What is the role of the school norms in the construction of students’ science identity and on teachers’ pedagogical approach?
3) What is the role of students’ informal experiences in the construction of science identity?

Through these questions, the paper draws some meaningful discussions about school students’ science identities and the factors that have an impact on it.

Identity is a multidimensional, multifaceted and complex construct. Identity can reflect a person’s individuality, and her distinguishing characteristics of style and personality. However, this same term can be used to characterise an individual’s membership within a context of common character, culture, behaviour and thought. Identities are lenses through which we position ourselves and our actions, and through which others position us. For example, what science means to a student or a teacher, is constantly being constructed and reconstructed through the institution called school and its activities, i.e., identity construction is closely related to learning and teaching, educating and being educated (Varelas 2012).

From the lens of social practice theory, an assumption that could be made about identity is that “people are formed in practice” (Carlone, 2012). Then one can explore what it could mean to be, say, a “good student” or a “bad student”. These labels depend on the setting and the practices that the settings follows. “Identity” is the kind of person an individual is interpreted to be in a given context. This might differ from context to context and hence is a very dynamic construct. In cases when one is labeled, the child might withhold him/herself from indulging in practices that would oppose or threaten their current identity.

We can say that the identity outcomes of any given set of practices are sometimes, not always, shaped by larger social structures. Anyone possessing
a science identity would signal (1) competence, (2) performance and (3) recognition. However, while looking at science identities in classrooms, instead of looking only from an individualistic approach, one might get better insights by looking at what larger structures expect from individuals. For example, instead of looking at “who is a good science student”, it might be better to look at “what does it mean to be a good science student in this setting”. Schools do provide a significant sense of place and resources for (science) identity development among students. There is an importance in understanding a variety of personal factors in teaching children. Student identities, as well as teacher responses to these identities, are shaped by macro-structures like gender, race and class relations.

It is important to see how learning and identity formation are interrelated. Both these involve meaning making in different ways. For identity construction, meaning making involves the development of reasoned, coordinated, coherent and meaningful ways of seeing one’s self. For content learning, meaning making lies in the development of disciplinary concepts, processes, tools and norms within practices (Varelas 2012). Learning can be looked at from two perspectives: socio-cultural and socio-political. The “socio-cultural” would include interactions among people, artifacts and ideas in cultural spaces that people shape, and are shaped by, as they act and interact within these spaces. The “socio-political” sphere involves issues of hierarchy, power and authority that affect social relations, access to ideas and positioning, which learners of a particular socially constructed racial group, ethno-linguistic affiliation, class, gender, and so forth, negotiate.

The Study and Its Context

The study on which this paper is based was carried out mainly through an interpretive framework (using qualitative methodology), giving more attention to conversations and experience gained over six weeks, inside and outside classroom settings. It was conducted by teaching 5th, 6th and 7th grade children for 20 sessions, classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. Both teachers and students were interviewed. The study was aimed at understanding the science culture of the selected school and the different factors that might have an impact on students’ and teachers’ (science) identity construction and reconstruction.
**The School**

The school is a charity-run school, which caters to students from socio-economically under-privileged backgrounds. The school does not charge any fees from students. It provides free food, uniforms, books and transport facilities to each of the students. It follows the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) till grade 7, after which it follows the Karnataka State Board. The school has only one level intake for students, i.e., students can join the school only at kindergarten level. Students go on to study in the same school all the way till 10th grade.

**The Infrastructure**

The school is located in the north of Bangalore. The campus is quite huge and is filled with trees and plants. The school walls have paintings lined on them, most of which are painted by students themselves. The school also has a food mess.

The classrooms are well lit and spacious. Each student has his/her own chair and table. The school has science laboratories, one each for biology and chemistry. It also has a very well-resourced library that the students visit in their library hour or whenever they have free time.

**Role of a teacher in the construction of students’ science identity**

The observations to this question were based on numerous classroom observations and some informal interviews with the teachers. The observations were focused on:

- Teachers` own understanding of science and nature of science
- Pedagogic practices used in class
- Teachers` attitude towards students
- Teachers beliefs about students` capacities

The following are the case studies of three teachers` classrooms.

**Teacher 1**

This teacher has been working in the school since eight years. She did her BSc and BEd and started her career as a science teacher. She worked in two different schools before joining this school. She has been teaching science for almost 25 years now.
She has an authoritative personality, and this comes off in her classes as well. There was always explicit labelling that took place in her classes. For instance, she was teaching the topic adaptations, and there was a discussion about differences between an owl and an ostrich. There was a set of students who wanted to answer all the questions. Most students never volunteered. There was one boy in the class, Kishan (name changed), who used to give out answers very softly. The teacher could barely ever hear him; he went unnoticed all the time. In this particular discussion, he decided to put his hand up to answer the question. Maybe he felt confident about the answer he knew, maybe he wanted to feel included in the discussion. But the teacher bluntly said, “Aye, you keep quiet. Stop disturbing the class. I’m sure you have no idea about what is being done in class.” These instances instilled a sense of fear in some of the students and hence they hesitated to talk or participate in discussions in class. She believed that certain students were not meant for science.

In the same discussion, some of the answers given out by students were: “Ostrich is heavy, whereas an owl is light”; “Owl can see the color blue but ostrich cannot”; “Owl is a wise bird, whereas an ostrich isn’t”. These answers were not accepted or rejected. The teacher did not initiate any conversation to discuss these statements and just went on to dictate what she thought the right answer was. The answer she dictated was, “Owls are active at night and are called nocturnal, whereas ostriches aren’t”. There was little effort made to talk about students’ existing conceptions about any topic that was being discussed in class.

There was a lot of emphasis given on using the textbook. Every student had to keep their textbooks open at all times. Here explaining a chapter meant: asking any one student to start reading the chapter loudly from the textbook. The teacher then rephrased the same sentences with other words and some intonations in voice. For example, “Plants with weak stems that cannot stand upright and spread on the ground are called ‘Creepers’.” The words “weak” and “cannot stand” are said in a slow pace and the word “creepers” is said loudly and in an assertive tone. This way of teaching is characterised by a manner of speaking that is different from conversational speech. Words are uttered slowly, with pitch variations and so on. A lot of importance was given to how students write in their notebooks. Labelling also took place on the basis of their test scores. The teacher read out each of the student’s score loudly to the class. Students who had failed (according to the standards of the test) were insulted in front of the whole class.
The teacher said that science involves a lot of curiousness and practical work, but this did not come across in her classes. To her, being scientific meant to remember as many facts as possible. To ensure this with her students, she would sometimes ask students to collect facts about the topic being discussed and share it with the class the next day. And therefore, in her classes, only students who could give out facts about a particular topic, who scored well in tests, and who maintained neat and structured class notes felt like they liked science and might want to take up a career in it.

Teacher 2

This teacher has been working in this school for one year. He did his engineering before he started teaching here. He did his schooling from kindergarten to grade 12 in the same school. After graduating, when he was looking for a job, he was offered a job by the school to teach physics to grade 8 and 9 students. He also teaches mathematics to students in grade 6 and 7. Since he himself comes from a background that all the students in the school come from, he is easily able to relate to all the children. And the children feel the same with him too. He is friendly with students and very approachable.

Each of his lessons are taught in a very different way. For instance, when he introduced the topic “light” to students, he had covered all the windows and the door with black chart paper before he asked students to enter the class. He wanted to give them a feel of how things would be without light. He then made a small hole on the cardboard on the window through which a light ray entered. He spoke about properties of light and continued the discussion from there. In this way, he tried to introduce each topic in a new and creative way. He tried to make students wonder and question. He also admitted to his students when he did not have answers to a particular question. He got back to them with the answers later.

He was also able to weave conversations in class with relevant examples that students would actually be able to relate to. For instance, when he spoke about transistors, he gave examples about the small shop close to the students’ homes that repaired electronic gadgets. He even asked them to go there and ask for something that the shopkeeper would not need anymore and bring it to class. He added that he himself had visited that shop many times as a student.

These conversations always built interest and enthusiasm in students to sustain discussions. Also through discussions, he was able to understand what students already think about these topics and tried to work upon it through further questioning and probing.
It did not matter to him how students wrote in their class notes. In fact, he did not have any structure as to how he wanted them to write in their books. He did not really look at the questions given after each of the chapter. He formed his own questions and asked students to write what they had understood.

At the end of each chapter, he conducted an activity with students, wherein he stuck a huge chart on the black board. He asked each student to come up to the board and write anything about the chapter. It could be a question, it could be something you thought was the most interesting part of the chapter, a fact, a word even. Students thoroughly enjoyed this activity.

He also did not restrict his classes to the classrooms. Sometimes he even took students to the garden.

His assessment questions did not involve questions that required students to remember or memorise words. It involved questions that required students to have actually understood the chapter. For example, in the chapter on sound, one of the questions in the assessment paper was: Before playing in a musical concert, a sitarist tries to adjust the tension and pluck the string suitably. By doing this, what is he trying to adjust?

In his class, the very fact that students were able to talk about any question that came to their mind, made them like this class. Students felt like they could relate to the examples and hence can understand better. The marks that they scored did not determine if they were good at physics. The teacher mostly did not label students in class. However, he did ask students to meet him after class to be able to discuss why they had not performed well in that assessment.

Also, because the teacher was able to relate to each student’s personal life, students felt a connection with him, and for this reason alone, sometimes students felt like they enjoyed science.

Teacher 3

This teacher is the head of the science department in the school. She has done her BSc and MSc in biology. She also has a BEd degree. She has been a teacher in this school for over 10 years. She teaches biology to grade 9–12 students. I only got to observe her classes for grade 9 and 10 students.

She is a friendly yet an assertive teacher. Students do not fear to ask questions in class. She encourages dialoguing by constantly telling students, “I’m happy when you ask me questions. Please ask. No question is silly!” This helps students get the courage to talk and raise questions in class. She also spends a lot of time after class hours talking to students about their personal life.
Students always feel like they can share their problems with her. Through her conversations she mentioned that to her science is all about understanding the world around us. It is about being a good observer and drawing reasons for why things are happening around us.

She likes taking students to the lab, even if they do not have the need to use any of the lab equipment. She feels changing the classroom environment might help in students move from a monotonous routine.

She tried to probe and make sure that every student in the class talked. For example, when she was teaching students about mitosis and meiosis, she posed a question, “Why does a cell divide?” Then she said every student from one particular row should give her one reason. Students had so many different answers. The answers that came up were: “To develop, to grow, to reproduce, to give a character to oneself, to reproduce, to increase in size, to increase the population, to heal our wounds, to fight diseases, to keep one healthy”.

She did not stop any student while they were talking. She gave each of them their chance and after everyone had spoken, she said, “All of you are right, we´ll have to modify your reasons a little.” This acted as an encouragement to the students and made them feel like they could all contribute to the class. This sense seemed like it was very important in order for students to develop a liking towards the subject. Students from her class were more confident that they would be able to take up a career in science. Test marks were not the only factor that determined if a student was a good science student. Here, anyone who raised questions, who gave out answers that popped up in their minds and who observed keenly was encouraged. However, sometimes, just because she had to abide by the norms of the institution, she carried out assessments that were more inclined towards scores/marks.

**Role of school norms in constructing students’ science identity and its impact on teachers’ pedagogical approach**

This question was analysed through my own teaching experience and other sources like observations inside and outside the classroom and interaction with teachers and students. There was a set of school norms that had to be followed by all students and teachers. The following are the different norms that existed, which are related to my research:

- The school management and the higher authorities expected students to write their notes in a very structured manner. They required that students wrote answers to all the questions given at the end of the chapter.
• There was a huge emphasis given to the ASSET (Assessment of Scholastic Skills through Educational Testing) test performances of the students. ASSET tests happen once a year and are based on the content that has been taught to them in the previous academic year. The test has only multiple-choice questions. The school started “preparing” students for this test about two months before the scheduled test dates. They gave students the previous year’s papers and made them solve it as a part of revision.

• There was a need to maintain absolute silence in classrooms and labs. Restrictions of movement were imposed on students in classrooms and labs.

• During their assembly, they had a discussion about a topic related to science once a week. However, the topics were dealt with very superficially. Emphasis was always on the “right” answer rather than discussing the topic in detail. Emphasis was laid on remembering facts.

These norms played a role in the construction of students’ science identities. To maintain notes in a structured manner did not give students the space to explore and express their understanding in the way they wanted. For example, in one of the classes, a student asked the teacher if he could write the answer about mitosis and meiosis through a diagram. The teacher bluntly refused and asked him to first write the definition of each term and then give examples. Instances such as these restrict students from expressing a concept in their terms.

During their ASSET revision, teachers focused on students being able to arrive at the right answer. The process/method used to arrive at the answer was never discussed. How much of a student’s complex thinking or meaning making can actually be understood by just checking the answer? Due to this method of conducting revision of ASSET tests, students never even bothered to read the question fully or make sense of a question if they thought it was even a little complicated. They would just make a guess. Students openly even admitted to it. Students also tend to start feeling that science is mostly about remembering facts and is all about arriving at the “right” answers. This also came about in the interviews of the students. To quote one student, “I’m not sure I can do engineering because science has so much to remember, and I don’t have a good memory power. And in my tests, I never get full marks for any answer. I think it will be difficult for me.”

Practices that emphasise on arriving at the right answer, which reinforce the idea that there is only one right way to carry out a process, start making students feel that science is a very rigid subject and not everyone can do it.
There are also conflicts between their normal science classes when topics are explained and the science classes when ASSET test practices takes place. It puts students in a very confused place to be able to build ideas about what science is all about.

The same is the case with a science topic being spoken about once a week in the assembly. Through these different experiences, students start feeling that science has a lot to do with remembering and that it involves coming up with one correct answer.

Going back to the first research question and drawing connections between the roles of a teacher and the school norms, we can see how school norms also pose implications on the pedagogical approaches of teachers.

Some of the teachers have been in the school for more than eight years, which is a very long time. Their tenure in the school has almost made them internalise the school norms in their daily classroom activities. For instance, with teacher 1, through observation, one could see that it comes naturally to her to make students maintain silence in class, to make them write notes in a very structured pattern and to even make them feel that there is one right answer to every question. It is, however, not possible to draw conclusions about whether these are her own beliefs from even before she joined this school or whether she has internalised them after she worked in the place for so many years.

In the case of teacher 2, however, since this is his first year in the school, he is not willing to follow the school norms. He feels that the school norms will hinder his way of teaching science, and he does not want to let that happen. Hence, he is sticking to his own methods and beliefs about science, and his pedagogy is not being affected by the school norms yet. Through conversations with the other teachers, it came about that the school management does not stop teacher 2 (for various reasons which they said they could not share with me).

Academic and disciplinary identities often become intricately fused as students try to make sense of the disciplinary practices of science in which they engage, and of the institutional norms of schools and schooling that they experience. In cases like this, students are posed with contradictory expectations from the institution, which contributes to the “academic identity”, and the science teacher, which contributes to the “disciplinary identity” (here science identity).

The underlying ideology of the academic identity that students construct is marked by control, rightness and compliance to school rules. However,
the underlying ideology of their science identity is marked by questioning, exploring and making mistakes. In the case of teacher 3, she openly admits that the school norms do not let her create a learning space that she believes in and that she wants for her classroom. Hence, these norms act as barriers to the teacher’s pedagogy.

**Role of students’ informal experiences in the construction of science identity**

Children come to schools with a lot of pre-existing experiences from home. Science as a discipline can be relevant to each student’s life in one way or the other. In classrooms, while discussing concepts in science, a much better understanding can be brought about in children by connecting the concepts to their everyday experiences.

Through classroom observations, I saw how some teachers were able to draw connections between students’ experiences from home and what was being taught in class. For instance, in teacher 3’s class, when she was talking to students about methods used for ripening of fruits, she asked the students to discuss about all the methods they used at home for the same. A very interesting conversation came up after which the teacher introduced students to the scientific reasons behind the traditional methods used for ripening of fruits.

The school also organised some community outreach programmes once a year for each grade. Grade 6 students went to a horticulture field, where they could relate to what they had been studying about plants and seeds in their chapter.

Grade 9 students (three groups chosen by the teacher on the basis of who they thought was good in chemistry) participated in a competition wherein they had to make something using the content from the chapters they had learnt in their 8th and 9th grades. For this, students went through books from the library and had many discussions with their teachers, to come to a consensus as to what they will make. One of the groups decided to make a mosquito repellent. They went through books in the library, used the Internet to find out more about it, spoke to the teachers to ask for advice and help, and then carried out the experiment by changing some factors so as to come up with the optimum mosquito repellent. Students also ended up winning the competition.

This kind of a process, where students themselves worked on each component, with the help of the teacher as a facilitator, definitely gave students a good
idea about what scientific processes look like. This exposure also added to their confidence about science as a subject and built on their science identity.

Conclusions

We often find that a lot of assumptions are made about children from minority and socio-economically backward backgrounds. They seem to be positioned at the lowest/lower levels of learning science and mathematics. In many cases, we find teachers too making assumptions about the lack of preparation for learning science among these students. This is reflected in the way the teacher treats a student and has an impact on the science identity that the student creates for him/herself. Actual identities are a part of what people believe themselves to be. However, designated identities are based on what people expect others to be, now or in the future. In the case of this study, I saw that students have preconceived ideas about themselves and their capabilities, originating from their socio-economic background. Many feel that science is not for them because they do not know of anyone from their own background having succeeded in science. Students may also see a designated identity as inevitable for those from the same socio-economic origin or the type of future they are destined to have according to their teacher.

A teacher, therefore, plays a huge role in creating a designated identity for students and in helping their designated identities become their actual identities. A teacher`s pedagogic practices aids this process too. In case of Kishan, who himself believes that he is “bad” at science, and the teacher`s (teacher 1) designated identity for him being “he won`t be able to do well in science” does not help at all. As discussed earlier, different teachers posed different expectations from students in their classrooms. This aided each student`s behaviour in their classrooms. And hence, it also played a huge role in each student considering him/herself fit or unfit for science.

For the purpose of my study, I used identity that originates from students` socio-economic background in place of ethnic identity. The underlying ideology of the academic identity that these students are constructing is marked by control, rightness and compliance to school rules. However, the underlying ideology of their science identity is marked by questioning, exploring and making mistakes. These contradictory expectations from the institution and the science teacher make science identity construction for the students a complex process. We find that the teacher, her pedagogical practices, the school norms and the child`s existing identity play a huge role in constructing a student`s science identity.
References


Introduction

Gender identities are ascribed to us since the day we are born into society, and we are expected to behave in ways that are consistent with these norms. These norms and structures are often oppressive and infringe on human freedom and potential, as in the case of patriarchal set-ups. However, different spaces are also used to assert autonomy by individuals as modes of resistance against dominant structures of society, and the workspace is one such crucial space.

In a survey done to examine why women do not often make it to top positions in organisations, several women cited an unsupportive work culture as the main reason (Stocking 2016). Such a culture included interruptions and being ignored at meetings, male-dominated socialisation events, having to work harder to succeed and being judged on whether they are “tough enough”. Studies done of female-only workspaces find that the reason there are fewer women entrepreneurs in work settings is because of factors such as balancing work and family, societal expectations, lack of opportunities and fear of failure (Disney 2013).

There is a stress on the importance of women forming networks and connections that can advise and support them, and this need leads to the formation of women-only workspaces such as small businesses. The key motivations for women to choose such workspaces are comfort, safety and support. In such a context, the motivation for women to opt for and continue to pursue occupations that have traditionally been male-only spaces becomes interesting to study.

The 1990s in India saw increasing women’s participation in work along with a simultaneous decrease in sex segregation, or the tendency of women (and men) to place themselves in jobs dominated by their sex, a phenomena perpetuated by ascribing gendered qualities to jobs. Bakshi (2011) explains how this was made possible by the post-liberalisation economic reforms,
which, along with economic growth, also resulted in increased literacy and the opening up of new opportunities for paid work for men as well as women. The aspiration for improved standards of living along with the desire for consumer goods lent a new significance to the value of education, and it became common for women to pursue higher education in universities or go on to find jobs to supplement the family income.

Competitive trade requires efficiency for productivity, and this factor also helped override gender preferences to an extent. Women continue to be a source of cheap labour in India, like in most other developing nations. Along with an overall decrease in occupational segregation, there has been a simultaneous increase in the size of the informal sector due to trade liberalisation, with women also getting employed in this sector. While sex segregation has declined more in urban India, it is still an important feature of the Indian labour market. Also, while the quantity of jobs may have increased, the quality is likely to continue to be adversely affected.

Nonetheless, as Wright (2016) points out, the entry of women into non-traditional workspaces, i.e., jobs where members of one’s gender are in the numerical minority (less than one-third, in general), challenges notions of masculine attributes that are considered “natural” for such occupations. In her study on the transportation and construction sector in the United Kingdom (UK), she notes that such conceptions have for long justified male dominance and exclusion of women from certain workspaces and also led to hostility towards women by men in the form of sexual harassment and scrutiny of their sexual orientations. However, women who have continued with these jobs despite such forms of discrimination have been found to gain a sense of confidence and autonomy, because of challenging these notions and deriving some form of financial independence in the process.

The mobility that has been made possible with the image of the new modern middle-class citizen, which includes women, has pushed women’s role beyond the realm of domestic work. However, this has not entirely translated into an improved position for them in society. The forces of liberalisation and globalisation exist simultaneously with traditional values and practices, and often come into conflict. While opportunities are created to challenge existing structures, many of the older ones embedded within patriarchy are reinforced (Nielsen and Waldrop 2015). As an example, the information technology (IT) boom in India is providing more and more employment to middle-class women, but it is this very mobility that makes them targets of virtual abuse and threats and makes them more vulnerable to sexual harassment in public spaces.
It is within such an interplay of economic and social forces that this study is located, and it aims to understand the status of women within non-traditional workspaces through a study of women bus conductors in the government as well as privately run buses in Delhi. While Baglihole (2002) raises the important question of whether women opting for non-traditional work do so to challenge gender barriers and assert their autonomy, taking into account financial incentives or, more importantly, the inescapable necessities of subsistence and the need for a source of income further complicate the discussion. Another significant point of inquiry she brings up is whether these women are agents of change, pushing the boundaries for what is considered socially acceptable for women, or whether they are simply individuals who end up conforming for personal success, getting co-opted into the very systems that constrain them.

**The Study**

The two key aims of the study were to (i) identify the degrees of autonomy that women experience in a non-traditional workplace, specifically in the case of women bus conductors in Delhi, and (ii) understand the perception of gender identity of these women and how it is influenced through their interactions with the workspace.

The site of the study was Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) bus depots, private cluster bus depots and the buses that ply on routes specific to these depots. These were identified as the workspace of the women conductors. Respondents for the study were women bus conductors and were identified through visits to various bus depots and the method of snowball sampling. The first part of the study involved in-depth semi-structured interviews with the respondents and in the second part they were accompanied on their respective bus routes during work hours to observe their workspace more closely, along with their interaction with passengers.

**Women Bus Conductors: The Background**

The DTC began employing women bus conductors around 2008-09, as part of their broader goal towards empowering women before the Commonwealth Games in 2010. Currently, there are over 300 women conductors employed, while the number of men is in a few thousands. This is, however, not the first time that DTC is employing women as conductors. In 1976, around 200 women were recruited, but within a few years, they were all transferred to clerical positions within DTC. Many lower middle-class women are looking
at this job as an option today, mainly since it is a government job. The qualification required is being a 12th pass and the possession of a fitness certificate, and the selection process only involves an interview after the application process. Rampant unemployment is also cited by many of the respondents as a major reason.

The possibility of a permanent government job provides a glimmer of hope for the applicants despite all employment being made on a yearly contractual basis and the current Aam Aadmi Party government not having fulfilled its promise of making all the workers permanent till date. Another incentive for women is that their eight-hour shifts are compulsorily in the morning, and they are free by 2–3 pm to leave for home. This is done with their safety in mind, and women feel that it allows them to balance housework and childcare with professional work. Women conductors are also given duty only on routes that are considered “safe” or routes where the passengers are less likely to misbehave or create trouble. The daily wage for DTC conductors is Rs 447, and they are not granted any leave. There are monetary incentives offered for working over 26 days in a month, along with medical insurance under the Employees’ State Insurance (ESI) provided by the government.

The private or cluster buses arose from the need for more safe, reliable and comfortable public transport, and came about through a corporatisation scheme by the Government of Delhi. All existing DTC routes are grouped into clusters, with each cluster allotted to a private entity through a bidding process for 10 years and to be serviced by both the private entity as well as DTC. A cluster bus depot currently employs 15–16 women bus conductors on average as opposed to between four and six in DTC depots. Hiring of conductors is outsourced to a third party agency, and these contractual conductors earn Rs 390 per day. While the work timings for these women conductors are similar to their government counterparts, more discretion and flexibility is employed occasionally, by extending their line duty to an extra late evening shift, as and when required.

Out of the eight women interviewed, six were employed in DTC and two with the private cluster buses. Six of them were married with children and were between the ages of 26 and 40, having worked at the job for three to six years. While one of the respondents was a 20-year-old unmarried student, another was over 40 years of age and was offered the job as compensation after her husband’s death. For six of the women, this was their first job, while two had shifted from their previous job as a teacher and a salesperson at a mall respectively.
Findings

The primary reason for getting this job was a financial one for all the women, either to support the family income or as the sole breadwinner of the family. This motivation was a strong enough factor to outweigh considerations about the unconventional nature of the job for women, and one of them articulated this as unemployment being the strongest overriding driving force behind women opting for this job. There were other concerns for some women who had taken a while to convince all their family members, but these concerns seemed to arise from the entire notion of a woman going out to work rather than choosing a job dominated by men. For those employed by DTC, there is a strong preference for government jobs, which are seen as more secure and accountable, with one of the women having left a private teaching job for this one.

When questioned about the fact that it is still an unconventional profession for women, everyone agreed and shared stories about their experiences of passengers being surprised by them, many just walking past them in search of the conductor, and some even expressing their admiration and appreciation (or disapproval in some cases) vocally. However, the women conductors feel these instances and reactions have decreased with people becoming used to their presence as well as the general presence of women in several unconventional jobs such as cab and auto driving or working at petrol pumps. The overall sense is that “there is no job today that a man can do, that a woman cannot”, as one of them put it.

When questioned on the difficulties that women face on entering such unconventional fields, they did not stress much on the unconventional nature of the job as much as simply claiming that women face problems of harassment, safety or combining housework with professional work in any field that they choose to enter. A possible cause might be that the women seemed happy with the department staff at their depots and said they were extremely friendly, cooperative and supportive. It can also be argued that the nature of the workspace itself, which is on the bus and involves dealing with passengers, and not in an office space with other men, is one of the major reasons that the non-traditional nature of the job is not perceived too strongly. There is, however, an acceptance and consensus that the job of public dealing in buses is a tough one, and it is easier for men to carry it out than women, not because the women are any less skilled but because of the attitude of some passengers who do not take them as seriously.
When questioned directly about whether passengers perceive women conductors differently from men, they responded that most passengers treat them as they would treat any other male conductor, with the occasional miscreant who is usually asked to de-board the bus. The driver usually helps them out when there is such a case. The women do not feel that they face any problems on the buses simply by virtue of their gender and that the occasional passenger who is rude or misbehaves is present irrespective of the gender of the conductor. This seemed a strange opinion since when directly talking about specific experiences, there were clear cases of passengers attacking women on the basis of their gender.

As an example, during one of the bus journeys, one of the respondents got slightly agitated after she was blamed for giving a ticket worth Rs 5 to a passenger who had paid Rs 10 (she did not feel it was her fault, though it was probably an oversight on her part), and immediately a group of male passengers congregated at the back of the bus to loudly and pointedly converse about how such problems would never arise if women stayed and worked at home, where they belonged, and did not try to pursue work meant for men. Instances of sexual harassment in the form of staring or touching are also seen as a normal everyday experience, but unlike many female passengers, these conductors do speak up when it occurs.

The behaviour of women conductors with passengers is polite but firm, and they do not hesitate to raise their voice if required. While some do not shy away from resorting to abuses when a passenger does so, and they even feel it is necessary, others felt that it is not possible for a woman to converse with a man using such language. Some, for example, while acknowledging the difficulties a woman faces in public dealing, are clear on the fact that they will not tolerate any kind of misbehaviour or rudeness without retorting, and they have gotten non-cooperating passengers thrown off the bus. Others prefer to stay away from unnecessary trouble and only interfere as much as required. Each of them has their own way of dealing with passengers, some being friendly and building relationships with regular commuters, while others stick to their jobs. They find their own ways to handle misbehaving passengers and push themselves only as much as they personally regard as appropriate within their work environment.

A common cause for dissatisfaction amongst them all is that during the resolution of complaints filed regarding disputes between passengers and the staff, the passenger’s account is taken as the final word on the matter, and such complaints by passengers on buses could lead to loss of working
days for them. On the other hand, no internal complaints committee has been set up in any of the departments for grievance redress of staff members, or specifically for the redress of sexual harassment complaints by women employees, despite this being mandated by the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act of 2013.

According to the respondents, no such problem had arisen which required the need for filing of complaints, and minor problems were resolved informally. Each one of them spoke positively about their department staff, calling them supportive and cooperative. One of them mentioned that the older male staff treated them like daughters and others too treated them very respectfully. While there have been cases of men gossiping about women interacting with male colleagues, she claimed that in person, everyone behaved respectfully. They did, however, mention that women in some of the other depots did not have colleagues as supportive or understanding.

In general, the interaction with male colleagues is minimal since these women work in early morning to afternoon shifts and immediately leave for home after work, unlike the men who stay back longer and have a chance to interact with others. At one of the depots, a respondent was unhappy about not having a separate room for women to rest in during breaks, and she would spend these breaks outside the depot office at the bus stop since she would feel uncomfortable sitting in a room full of men.

Another common complaint cited by all the women was the lack of toilets en route and at some of the terminals where buses halt during line duty. They manage the problem by not drinking too much water while on duty so as to minimise the need for using the toilet. This problem is not perceived as an issue to be taken up with the employers and is seen as another adjustment to be made by women.

All the women feel that their confidence in public spaces has increased after doing this job, while for some the change has been quite drastic in making the transition from being quiet and scared of using public transport to feeling extremely confident. Their confidence is evident in their manner of conversing as well as their interaction with passengers. Some of the women are extremely proud of their job since it is their own independent source of income earned through their hard work, and one of the respondents even brought her two children along to work one day to show to them how their mother earns her money to support them. For others, it is simply a responsibility to be carried out, and they would prefer other opportunities such as teaching. One of them feels that while her transition to a working
woman may not significantly improve her situation at home and only adds to the amount of work she has to do, she does think it influences the way in which her son sees her, making him sensitive to the amount of work and effort she puts in daily.

Nonetheless, this positive change in their own perceived personality has not translated into any changes in the private sphere, with all the women having to carry out all the household duties, taking care of their children, and, in the case of some, still requiring their husband’s permission before leaving the house. The one unmarried respondent was working while simultaneously pursuing a correspondence bachelor’s course and did not intend to continue the job after she got married, unless her husband’s family wanted her to. It is not clear whether these women have any independent control over their incomes. It is household work that is their prime concern, while the requirements of the job are expected to adjust around it, making the timings of this particular job very convenient. Even the choice of opting to work was a decision taken by the husband or accepted by the husband’s family only due to pressing financial considerations.

One of the respondents explained that once a woman gets married, her family does not have rights over her anymore, and she must live according to the “terms and conditions” of her new family, which entails the full responsibility of domestic chores and bringing up children. Thus these women unquestioningly take up double the workload, working hard towards balancing work life with their personal life. When questioned further on the fairness of such a set-up, there was a reference to the “mentality” of people, which changes gradually over time, and that for the time being it is necessary to get used to things the way they are.

There is an interesting interplay of contradictory values for some of the younger women who have pursued higher studies till graduation and have aspirations of their own, ranging from jobs with Delhi Police and the teaching profession to marrying out of their poverty. While, on the one hand, they would like the freedom to pursue certain kinds of jobs, at the same time, they all see getting married and managing a household as a major priority, even if it acts as a barrier to their independence. For these younger women, there is some sort of compromise involved in taking up this job, and they are merely settling for it till they are faced with better opportunities, but for the older women nearing 40 years of age, the nature of the job is not relevant as it is simply a source of income and a responsibility to be carried out. Nevertheless, few of the older women also talk about their job proudly as it does serve as
an independent source of income through which they feel they contribute to household expenses and building a secure future for their children.

**Conclusion**

Space, as generally perceived, is not just a static entity to be to be occupied, but should be viewed in the context of time, as space–time, and as a dynamic concept that comes from changing social interrelations. Since social relations involve various changing configurations of power and meaning, spaces are also constantly evolving configurations of power. The lived experience thus becomes the intersectionality of spaces, each of which may be perceived differently by different individuals. The attempt to denote spaces and places as fixed and with boundaries is an attempt to stabilise their meanings and understanding. These definitions can be challenged by questioning the particular boundaries or, as Massey (1994) points out, by challenging the entire framework of understanding space as fixed and bounded itself. This is important for realising that spaces are not always natural or universal, they may be entirely manufactured, and also to resist the imposition of meaning on spaces that makes them rigid and closed off to the multiplicity of meanings that people attribute to them. Such an understanding of space, or more specifically, the workspace, is useful for understanding how women engage with them.

As an example, this particular workspace being considered non-traditional by virtue one’s gender being in the numerical minority, or the relationship between gender and the workspace, is not a factor actively discerned by any of the respondents. On being directly asked about it, everyone agrees that the job may be a tough one for women or that it was odd initially to work amongst so many men, but the job’s non-traditional nature is not of particular significance. Almost all the respondents spoke about having gotten used to the job to overcome the conscious awareness of its unconventional nature, even though it might be perceived in that manner by external observers.

Gender as a category itself is not associated with influencing the workspace, and wherever the existence of gendered differences in experiences is acknowledged, it is talked of in terms of a general social inequality. The experience of the workspace for each woman then is a combination of factors beyond her control, aspects of which can be shaped to an extent through conscious or subconscious action. For reasons such as financial compulsions, the instinct for self-preservation and sheer commitment to the job, and values at an individual level around the appropriate role of women, these individual
women have construed the workspace in a manner that is most suited to them. Whether or not this interaction with the workspace and its construction within a particular individual understanding entails any positive changes for these individuals is debatable, but each such experience redefines the workspace and its non-traditional nature.

While their individual perseverance is no doubt commendable, the lack of recognition of certain kinds of behaviour of passengers as sexist, the problem of lack of toilets on bus routes or separate resting rooms in their depots or the scrutiny of these women's relationships with their male colleagues as a specifically gendered problem inhibits the potential for collectivisation of demands to make their workspace more women friendly. Instead these women choose to adjust and adapt in whatever manner possible, and stress on the need for individual resolve, determination and self-sacrifice to work well. Hulme (2006) in her study of women making the transition from pink collar to blue collar jobs in Canada shows that these women had a tendency to “de-gender” the workplace, i.e., they viewed their success at their jobs as a consequence of individual choices, skill and determination and did not identify any structural barriers they might have faced in entering male-dominated spaces because of their gender. This was despite the fact that many of their problems at the workplace and their choices were actually shaped as a result of their gender.

While these individual women may act as role models for other individual women, the author concludes that isolated women in isolated workspaces, who have chosen to conform and adapt to workplaces so as to undermine the significance of their gender identity as a crucial factor, will not have any major implications for change in the highly resistant sex-segregated workplaces that currently exist and the systematic barriers they create for both men and women wishing to enter such non-conventional occupations.

While the respondents do not consciously associate or identify any gendered aspect to their jobs, their sheer commitment to their work and responsibilities allows them to find avenues to overcome whatever sexist behaviour they might encounter, whether it is in direct forms of speaking up against misbehaviour or simply in adjusting to their problems to minimise its effects. A distinction needs to be made here between overt and covert forms of feminist resistance. As Nielsen and Waldrop (2015) explain, overt feminism involves an active mobilisation of people, with clear intentional goals of subverting patriarchal practices, while covert feminism need not have any such goals and is often carried out through individuals navigating through their own perceptions and experiences.
Covert practices can be said to be a spontaneous expression of human agency within the constraint of overarching structures. The kinds of avenues, overt or covert, available to women from different socio-economic settings will differ. Hence women opting for an unconventional job, even if it is due to financial constraints, and overcoming barriers they encounter in sub-conscious ways can be seen as an example of a covert form of resistance. While the women conductors themselves do not give too much importance to these practices, they are perceived externally by many women as figures of inspiration, as is clear from their interaction with female, and even male, passengers. One of the respondents herself made the observation, that at least for women coming from economically poorer backgrounds, simply the knowledge that there are other women engaged in this profession acts as a motivating factor to enter the field. The general sense from talking to the respondents as well as other DTC officials was that more and more women are beginning to apply for the job of a bus conductor.

However, one cannot assess yet whether an increase in the number of women in this profession would be sufficient to eliminate gender-specific discrimination. As Zimmer (1988) points out, there is much literature that attributes the problems and barriers faced by women in non-traditional workplaces to their numerical minority or their “token” status. She, however, observes that the concept of a gender-neutral tokenism as an explanation is inadequate since undoing tokenism by simply increasing the number of women employed in a male-dominated occupation does not necessarily eliminate inequality at the workplace. Some of the evidence cited gives examples of the differences that men in female-dominated professions face, which are not found to be as disabling as women’s experiences in non-traditional jobs, and in fact at times privilege them over other women at their workplace. The concept of tokenism precisely ignores this aspect of gender inequality, and it needs to go beyond numbers within an isolated workplace to look at the larger structural inequalities and notions of sexism that exist in society within which the occupation is embedded. It is suggested that eliminating the practice of tokenism will not significantly improve women’s occupational status at the workplace, which would require a more holistic attack on sexism in every sphere of society.

The DTC, for example, has rules in place precisely so that women working with them can be home safely before evening and can also balance housework with the job. While these are well meaning rules to encourage more women to take up the job, it might also inadvertently end up justifying the notion that women are responsible for housework or that they should not be out
after dark. Tackling such conceptions obviously require a larger and more holistic approach, but it could begin at the workplace with provisions to allow women to safely work evening shifts and actively encouraging them to do so, and providing facilities that make them feel comfortable at the depots. Instituting formal grievance redress mechanisms will be another crucial step towards this end. Aside from the construction of toilets, the additional creation of spaces such as separate resting rooms within depots would enable women to feel more at ease within the depot while not on line duty and may also offer opportunities to foster relationships and support networks through a common physical space for interaction.

References


Perspectives and Practices
The Supreme Court of India in the landmark judgment of National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India¹ (referred to as the NALSA judgment) recognised the right of transgenders to identify themselves as the “third gender”, thereby intending to put an end to the persisting discrimination leveled against them in society. The Supreme Court interpreted various international conventions and the Yogyakarta Principles to reach at this judgment. On one hand, the Supreme Court has held that fundamental rights are not a negative duty alone but require positive interventions by the state to ensure that its citizens enjoy a better life of dignity. On the other hand, it has refused to declare Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860—provision that continues to violate the rights of lesbians, gays and bisexuals—as unconstitutional.²

The cultural relativism debate seems to form an overarching part of the reasoning in the Koushal judgment. Non-admissibility of foreign law and, more so, the principles of international human rights law, which have received a near universal status, not only defies the progressive human rights movement world over but also India’s obligation to the international framework under Article 253 of the Indian constitution.

An Incomplete Saga: The Koushal Case versus the NALSA Case³

The apex court in the judgment of Suresh Kumar Koushal v. NAZ Foundation⁴ reversed the Delhi High Court judgment⁵ that had decriminalised private consensual sexual intercourse between adults of the same sex. Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code was under challenge before the Supreme Court and it was held to be constitutionally valid. The constitutional validity judgment coming from the apex court has not gone well down with the lesbian, gay and bisexual community (Baxi 2013). In the Suresh Koushal case, the court decided to stick to the presumption of constitutionality, leaving the ball in the legislature’s court to address changing social demands, and showed restrain.
There appears to be an incongruity in the views taken in both these cases by the Supreme Court and, therefore, there is a need for an analysis.

While recognising the rights of transgender persons, the apex court welcomed India’s obligation to international conventions and validated the Yogyakarta Principles, thus recognising the rights to sexual orientation and gender identity, which are accepted universally. However, in the case of *Suresh Koushal v. Naz Foundation*, the court seems reluctant to recognise the same international principles. The NALSA judgment is an example of granting rights to minorities and recognising individual rights that do not harm any public good but lead to attainment of individual perfection. Reluctance to read down Section 377 to preclude an act of consensual sexual intercourse between same-sex adults on the ground that only a miniscule population is being affected by it mocks at the universal recognition of human rights that guarantee equal status, opportunities and protection under law to each individual.

The apex court’s unwillingness to hold Section 377 as violative of Article 14 and thereby declaring the classification between natural and unnatural sexual intercourse as valid and reasonable, as it does not affect any class of people but only punishes certain acts as offence, is against the jurisprudence it adopted in the NALSA judgment. In the judgment of the case, under paragraph 55, the court has held that right to equality means equal and full enjoyment of all rights and freedom by each individual and has subsequently held that discrimination based on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity to be violative of Article 14.6

It is surprising that the court uses the terms “sexual orientation” along with gender identity while rejecting to read down Section 377 being discriminatory on the grounds of sexual orientation in *Koushal*. The root cause of discrimination is generated from the presence of Section 377, which distinguishes between natural and unnatural sexual intercourse based on colonial Judeo-Christian values. Section 377 targets a particular class of persons solely on the basis of the nature of their sexual acts, irrespective of whether it is consensual or not. The argument for striking down section 377 revolves around consensuality and not whether particular sexual acts are natural—it in fact questions the natural–unnatural dichotomy.

The judgment is also blind to the fact that gender identity cannot be fulfilled without freedom to choose one’s sexual identity. Persons who identify with a gender other than their biological sex and refuse to undergo sex realignment can also be penalised for their sexual orientation under
Section 377. This forces members of the transgender community to undergo sex realignment or continue to live discreet lives. The NALSA judgment perpetuates discrimination against the third gender/transgender persons without understanding the realm of rights it deals with.

In the NALSA judgment, the focus is on “right of choice” in this “age of rights”. The Supreme Court speaks about respect for the human rights of individuals as the root for development and explains that the concept of democracy is based on recognition of individuality and dignity of man. Protecting each individual’s dignity is held to be the true measure of development and not mere economic progress. On the other hand, in the Suresh Koushal case, the apex court refuses to read down section 377 on the grounds of misuse of the provision by the police and other authorities leading to harassment of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, by arguing that since the number of such cases recorded are a few, it cannot be a sound ground to decide the constitutional validity of a provision. This hits at the concept of individual protection of human rights and exposes the contradictory interpretations made by the court in both these cases. The upholding of dignity and human rights in the NALSA judgment is turned on its head in *Koushal*. How the apex court will reconcile both these stands is unclear till date.

The decision in *Suresh Koushal* brings forth a restraining attitude of the judiciary, which comes after an era of social judicial activism. Restricting individual freedom of choice and realisation of individual self by expressing one’s sexual orientation do not stand the test of time and the changing values of the society. The apex court’s reluctance to interpret foreign cases and international principles in favour of the LGBT community, branding them as not standing true in the Indian context is a stark refusal to open one’s eyes to the changing contours of society.

Whether, a few or a large section of the population is affected by Section 377 should be immaterial because as a modern welfare state, there is a positive obligation on the state and all its wings to uphold the rights and freedom of each individual. The obligation is enshrined in constitution and in the international human rights framework. There cannot be cherry picking by the apex court so as to accept the framework as and when it pleases them. The cultural relativism debate is being used with impunity to violate the rights of the citizens. The next section highlights the human rights frameworks and discusses how the apex court uses it for its convenience.
The Contours of Right to Gender Identity without Right to Sexual Orientation

Gender identity in India has been perceived in binary terms of male and female. Variance from the established notions of gender has been met with stark refusal and non-recognition. For years, as a society, we have condemned transgender persons, refusing them social identity and leaving them prone to discrimination in all spheres of society like in education, employment and healthcare. They have also been denied equal access to public places like hotels, cinemas and public toilets, thereby leaving them vulnerable to harassment, violence and sexual assault in public spaces, at homes, in jails and also by the police. This violates Article 14 of the Indian constitution, 1950, which guarantees equality to all its citizens irrespective of their gender identity.7

Transgender persons in India, as explained by the two-judge bench in the NALSA judgment, are neither male nor female. Their biological anatomy or their own perceived gender identity does not correspond with the biological gender attributed to them at birth. The term “transgender” means “beyond the gender”. Among the communities that have traditionally played the role of serving deities are some transgender communities such as hijras, eunuchs, Jogtas, Aravanis, Shiv Sakthis and Kothis. Gender identity comprises both a biological element and a psychological element. Identifying with a gender is a question of self-identity and perception.8 The honorable Supreme Court has explained gender identity as each person’s deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body which may involve a freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or functions by medical, surgical or other means and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.9

Gender identity is, therefore, integral to one’s personality and is one of the most basic aspects of self-determination, dignity and freedom. The Supreme Court while interpreting the rights of transgender persons has delved into various international conventions. The two-judge bench of Supreme Court held that India has certain responsibilities to fulfill the international obligations as a result of being a signatory to such conventions and declarations. Some of the relevant provisions are discussed hereunder.

Article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 (UDHR) and Article 16 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966 (ICCPR) recognise that every human being has an inherent right to live,
which cannot be arbitrarily taken away. Every human being has a right of recognition as a person before law. Similarly, Article 17 of ICCPR states that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, or to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation and that everyone has the right to protection of law against such interference or attacks. Article 1 of the UDHR also states that every human being is born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Para 21 of the United Nation`s Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (dated 24 January 2008) states that states are obliged to protect from torture or ill-treatment all persons regardless of sexual orientation or transgender identity and to prohibit, prevent and provide redress for torture and ill-treatment in all contests of state custody or control.

The Yogyakarta Principles (2010) known as principles on the application of the international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity are persuasive guidelines for states to incorporate in their legislations to secure equality and non-discrimination and to protect the human rights of the LGBT community and individuals having different preferred sexual orientation or gender identity. The Yogyakarta Principles clearly outline that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that sexual orientation and gender identity are integral to every person`s dignity and humanity and must not be the basis for discrimination or abuse.

The objective behind the Supreme Court interpreting these human rights principles is that they are being followed by various countries in the world and are aimed to protect the human rights of transgender people. Transgender/transsexual persons often face serious human rights violations, such as harassment in workplaces, hospitals, places of public conveniences, market places, theatres, railway stations and bus stands. In absence of any legislation in India to protect the rights of the transgender community, the apex court was of the opinion that the international conventions, whether binding or not, should be given respect.

In absence of such legislation, courts cannot be mute spectators to violation of the rights of transgender persons, who though a minority, have attained universal recognition and acceptance of their rights. Therefore, by virtue of reading together Article 51 and Article 253 and relying on earlier precedents of Visakha v. State of Rajasthan and Apparel Export Promotion Council v. A. K. Chopra, the apex court stated that any international convention not inconsistent with the fundamental rights and in harmony with its spirit must be read into the
provisions of Articles 14, 15, 19 and 21 of the constitution to enlarge the meaning and content thereof and to promote the object of constitutional guarantee. International conventions and the Yogyakarta Principles, as discussed in the context of transgender persons, were not found inconsistent with the various fundamental rights guaranteed under the Indian constitution and, therefore, must be recognised.\textsuperscript{13}

The same Supreme Court in \textit{Koushal} refuses to look into the Yogyakarta Principles and its own human rights obligations by stating inapplicability of foreign law because of its inappropriateness in the Indian context. The stand is so confusing that there is no clarity as to the future use of foreign law in Indian jurisprudence. The court refuses to even acknowledge its treaty obligation, which the Naz Case had dealt with. International human rights obligations find no place in the Koushal judgment even when the respondent argues them.

In its anxiety to protect the rights of LGBT persons and to declare that Section 377 IPC violates the right to privacy, autonomy and dignity, the High Court has extensively relied upon the judgments of other jurisdictions. Though these judgments shed considerable light on various aspects of this right and are informative in relation to the plight of sexual minorities, we feel that they cannot be applied blindfolded for deciding the constitutionality of the law enacted by the Indian legislature.

The court then cites extracts from a case based on the legitimacy of death penalty back in 1973\textsuperscript{14} and on an undue influence case in marriages,\textsuperscript{15} which had earlier dismissed the use of foreign law, thereby stating the inappropriateness of the use of foreign law in this case (\textit{Koushal}) without citing any reason in relation to the facts of this case. Unlike the NALSA case, the court refuses to even mention human rights obligations and international treaties or the universal character that the rights of LGBTs has achieved in the past years. The Naz Foundation case discusses the international obligation and the United Nations (UN) framework in support of LGBT rights, which is discussed next.

The Delhi High Court expanded the fundamental rights of LGBT persons, taking into account international human rights obligations and the universal recognition that LGBT rights have achieved. The court cited Article 12 of UDHR, which refers to privacy, and Article 17 of ICCPR, which again India is a party to and which restricts arbitrary and unlawful interference with privacy, family, home and unlawful attacks on one`s honour and reputation. The court also recognised the growing jurisprudence and law-related practices
that recognise the application of human rights law for the protection of rights of people with diverse sexual orientations primarily through the UN and its treaties.¹⁶

The minimal standards that these human rights legal doctrines identify are: non-discrimination, protection of privacy rights, and ensuring human rights protection to all regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity. The court also recognises global trends in the protection of privacy and dignity rights of homosexuals. It relies on the statement endorsed by the UN General Assembly at New York, 18 December 2008, wherein 66 states around the world called for an end to discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, condemning torture, harassment, exclusion, stigmatisation, arbitrary arrests, and deprivation of economic, social and cultural rights. The court reasons that such statements indicate a trend towards reaffirming the existence of protection for sexual minorities under human rights in international law. Along with judgments which uphold equal rights for sexual minorities from across various jurisdictions like Lawrence v. Texas (US), Canadian courts and the European Court of Human Rights and National Coalition (South Africa), the court placed reliance on the decision of the Human Rights Committee under the ICCPR in the case of Toonen v. Australia.¹⁷ Though India has not ratified the optional protocol under which the jurisdiction of the committee exists, still being a signatory to ICCPR makes it mandatory for India to not act in contradiction to the established standards of human rights required by the treaty. In the Toonen case, the committee held that the continued existence of anti-sodomy laws was violative of the privacy clause under Article 17 of ICCPR.

Even if it was unenforced like it was argued in Koushal’s case, nevertheless the existing fear of prosecutions among sexual minorities is a direct and continuous interference of privacy. In the same case, the committee clarified that Article 2 of ICCPR, which states that “the law shall prohibit any discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social region, property, birth or other status”, prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation which was read into ‘sex’ for purposes of Article 2, paragraph 1, and Article 26.¹⁸ The committee also notes that non-interference in domestic matters on morality grounds cannot be an exception to Article 17 of ICCPR.

In the name of morality and cultural relativism, nation states cannot do away with their obligations under the International Bill of Human Rights to protect the basic human rights of sexual minorities. The Indian Supreme
Court goes cherry picking, wherein it embraces all treaty obligations and universal trends in the NALSA case, while rejecting or overseeing those in the Koushal case. Human rights obligations are not open to cherry picking or seeking light whenever one wants—these are obligatory across rights, jurisdiction and persons.

**International Human Rights Law and LGBT Rights: Does India Have an Obligation to Conform?**

The LGBT rights movement has been active differently across various jurisdictions. While in USA, it has been a civil rights movement, across Europe, it has been a human rights issue (Mertus 2007). This paper argues that a movement towards universalisation of human rights without classification of rights/negative exceptions for any group or class can be the only framework to ensure non-discrimination and end this targeted violence of sexual minorities.

As discussed earlier, in the Toonen case, there exists no international obligatory document that recognises the right of sexual orientation other than the International Bill of Human Rights, whose provisions have been expanded to accommodate right to non-discrimination, right to privacy, and right against torture and cruelty on the grounds of sexual orientation. Post-Toonen in 1994, the conversation regarding LGBT rights did not spark off any debates in the UN till 2004. The issue was discussed in the garb of sexual rights and reproductive rights with the omission of the term “sexual orientation” in the final written documents in the Cairo and Beijing World Conferences.19

In the meanwhile, a series of statements were issued by General Assembly to end extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions by member states, which included a reference to sexual orientation.20 In 2003, Brazil moved a resolution in the UN Commission on Human Rights to discuss the universal application of human rights regardless of sexual orientation. The resolution was stalled, being unable to gather the required votes. Next, Norway presented a joint statement on human rights violation on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity on behalf of 54 states, which was followed by an opposition statement backed by more than 60 states in 2008.21

It was in 2011 that a resolution was passed to enable the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights to draft a report to document the discriminatory practices and violence perpetrated against individuals based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Two reports in 2012 and 2015 have been presented
with recommendations for member states to protect individuals from homophobic violence and investigate all cases, prevent torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, repeal laws criminalising homosexuality, prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and safeguard freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly for all LGBT people.  

An independent expert has been mandated through Human Rights Council resolution 32/2, 2016, to assess the implementation of existing international human rights instruments with regard to the ways to overcome violence and discrimination against persons on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity and to identify the root causes of violence and discrimination. Country visits are also mandated along with annual reports submitted to the General Assembly.

With no binding resolutions or treaties on rights of sexual minorities, the core human rights obligation lies in the International Bill of Human Rights and under other treaties as interpreted by various resolutions. In such a scenario, claims of member states like India are often on the legality of these rights and their existence in the core international law instruments. Often, sexual orientation is argued to be a matter of “cultural sovereignty” and of traditional values. It is also seen as a Western imposition on local cultural values (Saiz 2004).

There is, however, an effort to recast the rights of sexual minorities in the language of universal human rights by advocacy groups. UDHR, ICCPR and ICESCR (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) have laid down the foundations of human rights law that are non-negotiable. Violence, torture, imprisonment, arbitrary arrest, and so on, based on any ground is impermissible under these treaty obligations. There is an implied obligation on all states to protect their citizens irrespective of their orientation or identities. Culture and moral values do not triumph human rights. Violence, torture and cruelty based on sexual orientation are a violation of the minimal standards of human rights agreed upon under the international framework. However, states violate these with impunity. With no compulsory adjudication mechanisms, all violations go unpunished.

**Conclusion**

Much of the human rights framework works on consensus by member states and the political will of other member states to enforce the standards and call out tyrant states. Unfortunately, there has been no consensus on the human rights of homosexuals. Most countries, like India, deny their obligation to
human rights and will continue to do so with impunity unless there is a binding responsibility for the protection of LGBT, with mechanisms for enforcing adjudication and dispute resolution.

A curative petition has been filed against the judgment of Suresh Kumar Koushal v. NAZ Foundation and is pending in Supreme Court since 2014. The Supreme Court in 2016 agreed to hear the arguments afresh by a five-judge constitutional bench. The positive judgment in the National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India has hopes still alive for the LGBT community for the recognition of their rights and breaking away from the archaic notions of the “unnatural” theory imposed on them. The inconsistency of the Koushal judgment with the NALSA judgment has been argued at the admission stage. It is hoped that this time around, the apex court values individual rights over popular cultural and morality questions. In recent hearings before the nine-judge bench of the Supreme Court deciding whether right to privacy is a fundamental right, J Chandrachud has observed that the Naz Foundation judgment would be vulnerable if privacy was held to be a fundamental right (The Telegraph 2017). The judgment will have a lot of repercussions on the rights of LGBTs in India if privacy were upheld to be an aspect of Article 21. With little hope in international politics to reach any binding obligation soon, it is the judiciary that has hopes hooked on it in India.

End Notes

1 Decided by the two-judge bench of J Radhakrishnan and J Sikri. W. P (Civil) No.400 of 2012 (Supreme Court, 15/04/2014).
2 Suresh Kumar Koushal v. NAZ Foundation, Civil Appeal No. 10972 of 2013 (Supreme Court, 11/12/2013).
3 National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India, W. P (Civil) No.400 of 2012 (Supreme Court, 15/04/2014).
4 Civil Appeal No. 10972 of 2013 (Supreme Court, 11/12/2013).
5 Naz Foundation v. Govt. of NCT of Delhi, 160 DLT 277 (Delhi High Court, 2009).
6 The court has in many instances used the phrase “sexual orientation and gender identity” together. This seems very intriguing as the Suresh Koushal judgment was delivered in 2013.
7 See para 55 of the judgment in National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India, 2014.
8 Secretary, Department of Social Security v.“SRA”, (1993) 43 FCR 299.
9 See para 19 of the judgment in National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India, 2014.
10 See para 48 of the judgment in National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India, 2014.
13 See para 53 of the judgment in National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India, 2014.
16 See Para 42 of the Naz Foundation judgment.
18 See Toonen v. Australia, Para 8.7.
19 Mention of “sexual orientation” was not agreed even in paragraphs that were merely statements of fact about the barriers women face to the realisation of their rights. See Girard.
20 Available at http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Discrimination/Pages/LGBT.aspx
21 Available at http://www.reuters.com/article/us-un-homosexuality-idUSTRE4BH7EW20081218

References
Girard, Françoise “Negotiating Sexual Rights and Sexual Orientation at the UN”. Available at: http://www.sxpolitics.org/frontlines/book/pdf/capitulo9_united_nations.pdf
Recently, the Uttarakhand High Court ruled that the Ganga and Yamuna, and their tributaries, have rights as a “juristic/legal person/living entity”. An interesting judgment, I thought, and I decided to spend some time reading about it. I came to a point where I found that the recognition of the rivers’ rights is based on its value for “socio-political-scientific development”, and due to the spiritual significance of the Ganga and Yamuna, especially for Hindus. The understanding that follows this is that rights do not stem from an intrinsic identity or status of the rivers but more from their use for humans, making the judgment human centric (Kothari 2017).

Do we really ever place an intrinsic value on the environment when it comes to politics? Where environment fits in in the political context is something that I have tried to trace through this paper, with a focus on the manifestoes of four major political parties in India. This paper is not a normative comment on political party manifestos in India or a judgement on whether they need to be greener than present or not. It is an analysis of where aspects of environment find a place in the manifestos and what role do they play in the political document.

For the purpose of this paper, I analysed the 2009 and 2014 national manifesto of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian National Congress (INC), Communist Party of India (CPI) and Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) and the 2014 manifesto of Aam Admi Party (AAP). The paper analyses the context of the presence of “environment” in the manifestos as: (a) an extension of economic development, (b) a reflection of nationalist values and (c) as a result of external developments on sustainability. It will first illustrate what space the term “environment” occupies in the manifestos and the changes it has seen from 2009 to 2014. The paper then goes to explain the three aspects and reflects upon the nature of green politics in India.

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Occupied Space: Spaces occupied by “Environment” in Manifestos

A manifesto for a political party is a public declaration of policy and aims. The space that all terms and subheadings involve reflects the priorities that the party may hold. I did a quick analysis to see after how many sections, does one arrive at a section dedicated solely to environment or ecology. Table 1 shows the results, with the second column showing in percentage how much of the manifesto is read to come across a section dedicated solely to environment or ecology. Apart from AAP, all the other party manifestos mention a heading on ecology only in their last five to seven pages of the manifesto is read. In other words, the priority given to environment in the manifests is quite low.

Table 1: Where Does “Environment” Find Space in Manifestos?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party (for 2009 elections)</th>
<th>Percentage of manifesto read before coming to a section on “Ecology”/ “Environment”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>85.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INC</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI-M</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party (for 2014 elections)</th>
<th>Percentage of manifesto completed before coming to a section on “Ecology”/ “Environment”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>85.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INC</td>
<td>81.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI-M</td>
<td>93.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAP</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, an interesting thing to note is that with the 2014 elections, even though a section completely dedicated to these terms comes later in the manifests, environment in particular ways still features earlier. In the 2014 BJP manifesto, the very first page of the manifesto is dedicated to a 17-lines pledge, of which the third line mentions, “inclusive and sustainable development”. The INC 2014 manifesto also shows a similar trend. It has a page layout of landmark legislations, of which point 8 says, “The Indian National Congress, which has firmly dedicated to the cause of protecting our nation’s environment and forests, created the National Green Tribunal Act,
2009 to establish a special fast track court to hear disputes related to these issues.” Before 2014, in none of the party manifestos did environment feature earlier on in the document as a separate sub-heading or in any other way.

Figure 1 is a pictorial representation of the most popular terms used in all the manifestos combined. As can be seen, the terms “environment”, “ecology” and “sustainability” are not represented in the image due to the almost negligible usage of these terms. The terms that dominate are the expected ones—“national”, “Congress”, “government”, “development” and “Education”.

![Figure 1: The Most Popular Terms in Manifestos](image)

**The Anthropocentric Angle: Environment as an Extension of Economic Development and Agriculture**

The previous section looked at the direct mention of the term “environment” through separate headings. However, the term “environment” or “ecology” also features indirectly under other headings. The trend that I observed was its implicit presence under the headings of “economy” and “agriculture”. Environmental issues many times become vehicles to carry forward a particular politics and hence become one of the important planks through which a party’s broader socio-political goals are articulated (Sharma 2012).

CPI-M’s 2009 manifesto mentions, “making the Environment Impact Assessments (EIA) process transparent, accountable, and independent of vested interests”. Similarly, in the 2014 BJP manifesto, environment clearance
finds place under the subheading of “Industry—Modern, Competitive and Caring”. It states, “decision making on environmental clearances will be made transparent as well as time bound”. Environmental clearances and EIAs are both beneficial tools to be used to evaluate the likely environmental impacts of an economic project before adopting it. So environment does feature in instances such as these but only because economic development is considered significant.

In fact, AAP in 2014 reflects this thinking explicitly with one of their subheadings titled “Economy and Ecology”, which begins with, “AAP envisions a balanced development model for India that fosters a dynamic, equitable and ecologically sustainable economy” and further lists eight points of which only one point mentions “where human and ecological capital are continually enriched”. Further, section 9 of the manifesto titled “Facilitating robust economic growth with holistic well-being” that states “integrating economic and environmental policies, to render them increasingly consistent over time; in maximising the well-being today, without compromising the ability of future generations to do so”. These statements from the AAP manifesto clearly indicate the party’s focus on environment only to the extent that sustained economic growth is necessary.

A theme that emerges from this integrated approach of economic development and environment protection is an anthropocentric view of nature. The political sovereignty that the state possesses reproduces a world in which humans are elevated over nature and in which nature is reduced to a mere resource (Backstrand and Kronsell 2015). Therefore, other than as a part of economic development, traces of environment also feature under the heading of “agriculture”, thereby reflecting the importance of protecting nature as a part of protecting the livelihood of humans.

The 2009 BJP manifesto under the subheading of “GM seeds” under the heading “agriculture” states, “No genetically modified seed will be allowed for cultivation without full scientific data on long term effects on soil, production and biological impact on consumers” (emphasis added). Hence, while long-term effects on soil are a concern, it is only a concern for the activity of agriculture and not for the degradation of soil itself.

The 2009 manifesto of INC also makes a similar claim under the subheading of “agriculture” when it states, “A renewed emphasis will be placed on wasteland development and afforestation”. It is this connection between the metaphysics of humanity’s place in the world and political sovereignty that is one of the reasons behind the ecological predicament modern society has
created for itself (ibid.). Under the same anthropocentric theme, environment also finds space under development activities in an attempt to reduce poverty. The CPI-M 2009 manifesto invokes the sustained interventions by the party that led to the enactment of the Forest Rights Act, 2006. It was this Act, the manifesto states, “which included the other traditional forest dwelling communities as beneficiaries, included expanded rights to minor forest produce, right to development projects in forest areas within a limited area” amongst other things.

Similarly, in the 2014 INC manifesto, tribal and forest dwelling communities are proposed to be “engaged more centrally in forest management and ensure they get benefits from the forest produce, including bamboo and other non-timber produce”. This thinking runs parallel to the belief that poverty is the worst form of pollution and is a major cause of environmental degradation. When such thinking enters mainstream discourses relating to development, poverty and the environment, it is deemed important to submit to the development agenda for environment protection, which in turn is believed to be necessary to alleviate poverty (Desai 2016).

Through the subjects of economic growth and social development, the environment is invoked to carry forward this kind of development, which is considered important through the anthropocentric view of nature by the state. Thus, the effect that takes place is that agendas do not always get translated into concrete political solutions to environmental problems. Nature only becomes a vehicle to bring larger economic and social agendas into the purview, which is thought as significant, and becomes an entity that requires protection only because the economic and social agendas are important.

**Sanctity And Pollution:Hinduisation of Environmental Concerns**

Another theme that commonly ties the manifestos together when it comes to “environment” being invoked is the narratives of Hindu nationalism and patriotism. Traditional environmental terms tie in nicely with the religious repertoire of sanitation, pollution, sacredness, purity and purification, and politics, especially right-wing politics, find a comfortable link with protecting the environment (Sharma 2012). This is how Hindutva’s political agenda often articulates itself via weaving environmental issues into popular discourses (ibid.).

One way that environmental issues find way into the political discourse is through the concept of purity. A common running theme shows India in the light of a holy land whose earth, air, water, hills, forests and fauna all are
sacred. And all that is sacrosanct needs to be kept pure. The pollution of water, air and the environment is inextricably tied to the pollution of Hindu identity: the pollution of external and internal nature thus stems from the same violation of a natural and culturally rooted order (ibid.). A reflection of this ideology can be seen in 2009 manifesto of the BJP, which states the following:

Ganga occupies a special place in the Indian psyche...It is a pity that even after six decades of independence Ganga continues to be thoroughly polluted and is drying. The BJP will ensure cleanliness, purity and uninterrupted flow of Ganga, and will take all measures, legal and administrative in this regard.

Another way in which tradition and patriotism find way into political agendas is through the concept of “heritage”. As opposed to the modern environmental sense of pollution, which relates to material conditions of our natural surroundings, the right-wing discourse sees pollution as the 'defiling' of our natural, social and cultural worlds by perceived unwanted, unwelcome or alien elements. It is this heritage or our country’s uniqueness that this discourse seeks to protect.

One such result of this ideology can be seen in the 2014 BJP manifesto, where apart from a section dedicated to “flora, fauna and environment—safeguarding our tomorrow”, a separate subheading is attributed to the Himalayas, which claims that a National Mission on Himalayas will be launched. It is interesting to note that this subheading is found under the section of “preserving our cultural heritage” as opposed to the expected heading of “environment”.

The INC too in its manifesto of 2009 declares the Ganga as a “national river”. With this, the manifesto informs of the Ganga River Basin Authority for ensuring that development needs are met in an ecologically sustainable manner. The tying together of heritage, patriotism and Hindutva traditions in politics becomes a way of bringing the personal into the political. This variety of environmentalism with metanarratives of Hindu nationalism, Hindu superiority and national purity becomes a platform for the parties to extend their appeal beyond their defined constituency and to forge an expanding public sphere.

The Global Web: Influence of “Sustainable Development” in the Manifestos

The modern understanding of the term “sustainable development” is derived from the Brundtland Report of 1987, which by joining two positive sounding terms—sustainable and development—sought to resolve at a stroke the conflict between an economy based on everlasting growth and a planetary
environment of permanent high quality (Adams 2009). It was only after this global exchange of ideas that India saw not only a reflection of this new buzzword in policies but also inclusion of environment pollution in election manifestoes. Initially led by Congress-I in 1980, all major parties during the seventh general elections in 1980 and the years after that have had something to say on environmental protection (Singh 2007). This term thus features in almost all political manifestoes.

International UN conventions thus have had an impact on policies, political mandates and agendas within India, which is reflected in my reading of all the manifestoes considered in this paper. To give an example, in the BJP manifesto of 2009, it is stated that the party endorses the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” as enshrined in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Similarly, the INC 2009 manifesto commits “itself to strengthening people’s movements whose objectives will be to protect and preserve our bio-resources and ensure their sustainable use”. It also mentions that the Congress led-United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government unveiled a National Action Plan for Climate Change.

Even though sustainable development features so generously in most of the manifestoes, it should still be kept in mind that the concept in itself does not provide the policymaker with a set of action-oriented goals, thereby risking action-guiding capacity (Backstrand and Kronsell 2015). This has led many observers to conclude that goals and visions need to be decided in a more reflexive, deliberative, interactive and inclusive manner, involving diverse groups of societal actors. Another outcome of this use of sustainable development narrative is the absence of an understanding of social dependence on ecological foundations. In the ambit of global economic and political governance, ecological considerations or understanding environment–society relations are sidelined. As a result, when World Bank has a strong environmental message, this has been done in the framework of sustainable development framework, which assumes unlimited growth and denies the basic realities of environmental equity and resource necessities (ibid.).

The Case of Limited Representation: The Role of the Middle Class

The natural question that followed after I did my analysis was why does environment still occupy only a limited space in the manifestos? I found an interesting answer to this in the form of the role of the Indian middle class. Political parties in a majoritarian democracy choose those policies or
outcomes what are most preferred by a median voter, which is known as the “median voter rule” (Lahiri 2015). In most countries, the middle class forms the median. In India today, the middle class is still not the median voter, but they are nevertheless the opinion makers. The role of the middle class gets even further heightened in the sphere of “new politics” (Harriss 2007), which is the term given to a more genuinely participatory rather than representative democracy, answering people’s needs and interests by addressing their problems directly. In this “new politics”, there is a stronger tendency for wealthier and particularly for more educated people to be involved, as research suggests. The middle class then becomes a larger part of the new politics, which results in a “stratification of associational activity”, where this middle and upper class is mostly concerned about problems of urban environment—unsafe and inadequate water supply, poor air quality and sewerage—issues that directly find a place in party manifestoes or political agendas (ibid.).

Apart from this stratified associational activity, environmental concerns do not find space in the consciousness of the middle class. But when issues do come in the open with demonstrations or protests, they are generally the people at the margins—peasants, tribal communities, fishermen or “empty-belly” environmentalists in Ramchandra Guha’s (Lahiri 2015) words. However, in the INC 2009 manifesto, I was pleasantly surprised to see the following statement: “The Indian National Congress commits itself to strengthening people’s movements whose objective will be to protect and preserve our bio-resources and ensure their sustainable use.” This concentration on people’s movements is something that I did not find in any other manifesto that I read for the purpose of this paper, and it was a refreshing change.

Raghav Sharan Singh (2007) argues that the environment is not a concept that can be conceptualised by some decision maker, bureaucrat, administrator or politician; this has to done by the people. Maybe in India, the opinion-making middle class has still not been able to conceptualise the environment. The Indian middle class today is neither rich nor poor, nor ecological refugees, nor ecosystem people (Lahiri 2015), which has given political parties cues for framing environmental policies and adapting them suitably into their manifestos.
Conclusion

Thus in India, while environment has found place in the manifestos of political parties, it has largely been invoked under a larger theme of economic growth and development, Hinduism or sustainable development. Hence, the decisions that emerge out of these are rarely homogeneous, and they emerge as a part of political advantages or of commercial and business concerns. The middle class’ role as the opinion maker is one understanding of the limited and streamlined representation of the environment in manifestos. But even then, the environment, for the sake of environmental concerns, has not found much space, which reflects the anthropocentric nature of our politics. Having said that, it is important to understand that to mobilise people for environmental concerns alone is difficult due to the abstract nature that most environmental concepts have, and this makes it easier to understand why concepts of Hinduism or economic development become ideas on which environmental concerns then ride. Until a truly green party is formed, the way the environment is represented will continue to be the same.

End Notes

1 For this calculation, I marked the page number on which a heading of “environment” or “ecology” began and then converted it into percentages. For example, if it occurred on the 42nd page of a 49-page manifesto, I converted the score of 42/49 into a percentage, thereby arriving at a figure of 85.71%.

References


Kothari, Ashish and Shrishtee Bajpai (2017): “Can the Ganga Have Human Rights?” *The Indian Express* 1 April.


Introduction

Education is a not an alienated activity which happens through institutional forms of schooling and structured classrooms only. To understand education through a holistic approach, one has to think beyond these formal ways of schooling and classrooms. In this sense, education is a relative process which involves various aspects including power, knowledge, ways of living, curriculum, and engagement with the self and outside. Power dynamics play an important role in determining what to educate, how to educate and whom to educate. The authority that provides education, which could be the state or any other agency, has a significant role in defining and moulding the rationality of “educating”.

When we talk about modern educational philosophy and institutions, the important question to ask is who has defined and moulded this system of “modern education”. Who has the control over defining it? Who are the people excluded from that power structure’s rationality and worldview? Engaging with such questions will lead us to the concept of “modernity” itself, which developed in the Western world from 16th century onwards. The “White men” who developed modern rationality have left their legacy in all fields including education. The Eurocentric educational system has been oppressive towards other cultures, those of Blacks, indigenous peoples, women, and Asians. The current education system, institutional forms such as schools and universities, classroom testing methods, and so on have developed and expanded through the oppressive colonisation of “Others” by the Western world.

This paper starts by critically analysing the Cartesian philosophy of Rene Descartes, which is considered as the one of the foundational epistemic sources of modern rationality and worldview. It makes an argument for the necessity
of thinking beyond this Eurocentric rationality, which is deeply rooted in all educational systems in the world. The paper next deals with the question of freedom from this oppressive European educational model. Here, it proposes the idea of “trans modernity” developed by Enrique Dussel to think beyond all forms of modern epistemic structures in our educational platforms. Finally, the paper tries to put forward Franz Fanon’s idea of decoloniality as one of the best forms of transmodernity to celebrate the knowledge traditions of the “Others”, which have been suppressed by White racist men. The paper also tries to search for new decolonial pedagogic possibilities from the thoughts of Franz Fanon that are basically anti-Cartesian and transmodern.

**Cartesian Philosophy: A Critique**

Ramon Grosfoguel (2013) in his work argues that the canon of thought in all the disciplines of social sciences and humanities in westernised universities are based on the knowledge produced by few men from five countries of Western Europe (Italy, France, England, Germany and USA). The knowledge these men produced achieved such an epistemic privilege over the rest of the world. The authority of knowledge has centred among them and has created an epistemic inferiority among other parts of the world. What we celebrate as “modern philosophy” and “modern rationality” has a major role in creating the Eurocentric superiority over others. To answer the question of how this “epistemic power” centred in certain Western countries is considered as “universal” and is accepted in the modern education system, we have to check the foundational theories of modern philosophy itself. Since Cartesian philosophy has a legacy in the contemporary world in defining modern rationality and epistemology, the epistemic superiority of the West can be understood from this.

Modern philosophy is believed to have been founded by Rene Descartes. Descartes’ famous quote “I think, therefore I am” paved a new way of defining the world by challenging the authority of Christianity in knowledge creation since the time of the Roman Empire (Descartes 2013). The new foundation of knowledge produced by Cartesian philosophy replaced “God” with “I” as the authority over knowledge structures. For Descartes, “I” can produce knowledge irrespective of any time or space. Descartes’ philosophy is largely based on two arguments: one ontological and the other epistemological. These form the main conditions for creating an authority of knowledge production through “I”, which is equivalent to God. The main concepts under both these arguments are:
Ontological Dualism: Descartes claimed that mind and body are two separate substances and the mind cannot be controlled or determined by the body. By this Descartes put the human mind as the superior power over everything and argued that it can produce any knowledge that is universal, in the sense not produced by any particular conditions.

Method of Solipsism: This is an epistemological claim by Descartes about how “I” produces knowledge. According to him, it is through the method of solipsism, in other words, by communicating with oneself or one’s own mind. So knowledge production can happen through an internal monologue of the subject himself (Herring 1996; Descartes 2013; Grosfoguel 2013).

Cartesian philosophy is mainly rooted in these two arguments and it is highly influential in Western projects of knowledge production till now. But the whole idea of this ego politics of knowledge which put “I” as the producer of knowledge will fail if we find the two arguments to be false. So the question is, can the mind only produce knowledge without the influence of the body or the geographical and cultural area where the body is situated? If yes, then the idea of Descartes might be right. Here Grosfoguel (2013) asks, what would happen if human subjects produce knowledge dialogically, that is, in social relations with other human beings? If this is the case, then we cannot argue that the mind is undetermined and uncontrolled, and accept that it is situated in some socio-temporal backgrounds.

But even now Eurocentric notions of knowledge and Westernised universities are carrying forward the legacy of Cartesian philosophy for validating science and knowledge productions. The notions of “unbiased” and “universal” knowledge actually comes from the same Cartesian rationality that rejects knowledge claims situated in body politics.

Enrique Dussel (2008) criticises the historical quote of Descartes “I think, therefore I am” by arguing that:

Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am” is preceded by 150 years of “I conquer, therefore, I am”. Cartesian philosophy is coming from the perspective of someone who thinks of himself as the centre of the world because he has already conquered the world. He is the Imperial Being.

So what is universal and authentic in modern epistemology is developed by this “I”, which is synonymous with the White man who colonises other worlds. Ramon Grosfoguel strengthens his arguments by pointing to the four genocides or epistemicides (extermination of knowledge and ways of knowing)
that led to the formation of the racist/sexist “I”. The four epistemicides that happened in the 16th century under White men are:

1. against Muslims and Jews in the conquest of Al-Andalus (Old Spain) in the name of purity of blood;
2. against indigenous people, first in America and then in Asia;
3. against African people, with captive trade and their enslavement in the Americas; and
4. against women who practised and transmitted knowledge in Europe and were burned alive for being witches.

The canon of world systems of knowledge that developed after 1492 internalised this Eurocentric authoritative knowledge and modern rationality across systems including education. Even the “rational” ideas put forward by Immanuel Kant in late 18th century were also basically rooted in this same racist idea without urging for any transformation (Herring 1996). So, here, we have to think about the epistemic base of the “Others” excluded from this Eurocentric canon. In this scenario, the concept of “transmodernity” put forward by Enrique Dussel has relevance and significance.

Transmodernity: A New Lens to Decolonise the Eurocentric Epistemology

Enrique Dussel’s historical and philosophical work on Cartesian philosophy and the conquest of the Americas proposed the new concept of “transmodernity” to think and go beyond Eurocentric modernity. Many critical philosophies from the viewpoints of Muslims, Jews, Blacks and women have emerged for decolonising knowledge and power. Dussel believed that most of these projects are again trapped in the internalised Eurocentric epistemic stances, which is why they could not create a strong cultural and knowledge tradition outside the Eurocentric world. But the transmodern world dreams about a world where many worlds are possible (Tamdgidi 2013).

The idea of “transmodern” proposes to create diverse epistemological platforms against the monopolised world order of the West. By gathering diversified epistemic stances, it redefines the “universal” meaning articulated by the West on human rights, rationality, knowledge, economy, liberation, women rights, and so on. According to the idea of transmodern, there should not be any “universal” definition for anything—definitions will differ according to the subjects and geopolitical differences. So it basically transforms the Cartesian idea of “universalism” into “pluriversalism” and the
idea of zero space and time into embodied realities of body politics and spacio-temporality.

The idea of transmodernity by Dussel is totally different from the idea of postmodernism. When Dussel (2008) speaks of Trans-modernity, he refers to a global project seeking to transcend European/North American modernity. Unlike postmodernism that goes back to the Eurocentric canon for the transformation of modernity, transmodernity looks for a global platform to bring all the oppressed voices together. It is against the universal concept of modernity, which has meant “one defines for the rest”, and proposes a new pluriversal world where “the many define for the many” (Tamdgidi 2013).

**Franz Fanon: Transmodern Decoloniality and Pedagogic Possibilities**

Enrique Dussel’s transmodernity is a proposed project, and how to implement it is a major question to be answered. At this point, we are reading the Algerian freedom fighter Franz Fanon as a transmodern decolonial thinker who rejected the rational idea of Eurocentric modernity by asserting the lived experiences of geopolitically embodied subjects. Fanon could not directly propose any “critical pedagogic content” or transformation of Westernised education, but his idea of decolonising the mind and body of the oppressed people has larger possibilities in the transmodern project.

Fanon strongly argued for getting out of Western hegemony by forming a new thought process, which is free from the racist West. He argues that Europe has lost her sense of humanity, and that now the oppressed must find something different; the imitation of Europe has to cease and a new direction needs to be sought (Fanon 1963).

How can we find a new direction which is antithetical to the Eurocentric legacy of knowledge? How can we implement it in our daily classroom process? We ought to instil pedagogic practices that subvert the dominant Eurocentric paradigms or rupture historical “master narratives” instilled through colonial will.

According to Fanon, liberation from this colonial legacy can only happen through decolonisation. There are many anti-colonial philosophers who talk about overcoming epistemic violence through liberation. But Fanon rejects the full liberation of body and mind without decolonising it first (Dei 2010). This means that while political liberation can happen by opposing the colonisers politically, the larger structures that have ruled over centuries
would continue to be there in the everyday life of the oppressed even after they are politically liberated.

To decolonise, Fanon suggests that we need “to extricate ourselves” (Dei and Simmons 2010). According to Fanon, each generation has to extricate itself out of its relative obscurity so that it may discover its mission (Fanon 1963). So the colonised people have to critically think about their own intellectual, political, spiritual and mental behaviour; and have to understand whether it is rooted in their own geopolitical surroundings or in the Eurocentric colonial knowledge tradition. In a pedagogic context, how can a new-generation learner realise this? Here, the role of the past history of their own struggles against the colonisers has to be included in the curriculum. For Fanon, the colonisers control the psyche of the oppressed, transforming the oppression into a normalised everyday process. Understanding one’s self-identity by realising the past is a good way to breakdown this normality of oppression. So learning one’s own geopolitical history and the struggle of one’s forefathers will bring a sense of subjective identity and knowledge, which is completely different from the Eurocentric rationality.

Fanon teaches us that colonialism and oppression damage the human psyche by internalising racism. A critical pedagogy of Fanon will have to focus on the basic questions of oppression, exploitation and alienation (Dei 2010). To understand collective oppression, one has to know first about the alienation of the self. Fanon connected alienation of the self to collective oppression.

How can we reflect on power dynamics and oppression in an educational set-up? Simpson argues that

Educational change is about power and dominance. It is about who controls our learning institutions. It is about how issues of staff representation are [un]addressed, and how the representation of knowledge in curriculum and texts is understood and responded to. It is about how we utilise knowledge and power to challenge or maintain Eurocentric/Euro-American dominance. (Simpson 2006)

Critical analysis of the dominant knowledge, diverse spaces for children to think and question themselves and others, open spaces for different dialogic engagements inside the classroom, and so on, will help children to assert their own political identity and understand collective identity and its overlaps with self identity.

Fanon’s decolonial project of education can enable students to realise how power works in both visible and invisible ways. Power structures are insidious, systemic, cultural, emotional and symbolic. Fanon acknowledges
the double sidedness of power and shows how it works through social structures and social relations. We cannot see the coloniser and the colonised as distinct but as connected in power relations (Dei and Simmons 2010). Understanding invisible structures of power will help the students locate the spaces where oppression takes place and dismantle the social structures that impose oppression in an insidious way. Contemporary education must involve genuine dialogue and critical discourses in everyday conversations about power to understand if linkages with ethnicities, cultures, histories and spaces. This can assist learners in their schooling engagement to promote liberation and decolonisation.

One of the main ideas of transmodernity is to provide the space for pluralistic views from diverse contexts. Unlike colonial rationality, decolonialism focuses on lived experiences and geopolitical contexts as the major source of knowledge. Fanon seeks refinement of the concepts of “Blackness” and “Whiteness”, which have merely developed from a colonial rationality. In his chapter “Fact of Blackness” in the acclaimed work *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), Fanon points to the importance of “embodied knowing”. He asks us to redefine the idea of “Blackness” that has been defined from the context of white supremacy (ibid.). Knowledge traditions that developed from “anti-Black” contexts are a significant part of the Eurocentric education system. To counter these anti-contextual fallacies, decolonial pedagogy has to encourage “embodied knowing”, which is developed from one`s own lived experiences and geopolitical scenario. Anti-racist and anti-sexist knowledge traditions should be linked with the cultural context of the learners.

One critique of Fanon has projected him as a sympathiser of violence. But the concept of violence has to be understood differently in the contexts of the “oppressor” and “oppressed”. If the coloniser is using violence to dehumanise the colonised, the counter-violence of an oppressor is to resist that dehumanisation process. According to Fanon, colonisation makes the colonised internalise a sense of inferiority through violence, getting dehumanised in the process. Counter-violence is necessary in achieving decolonisation and regaining a sense of pride and humanity. Fanon emphasised that:

Decolonisation (fighting against colonialism) can only be understood as a historical process that ultimately culminates in changing the social order. It is an initial violent encounter of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature, which in fact results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies (Fanon 1963).
The same violence of dehumanisation can be seen in Eurocentric notions of curriculum and textbooks, which portray Blackness as an inferior colour and Whiteness as a superior one. Fanon’s idea of decolonialism shows a way to counter-question such knowledge forms and protest against these. Usually, oppression and alienation happening to the oppressed classes in school contexts are normalised and silenced. But decolonial pedagogy suggests the need to break that silence and shout against that oppression through the organisation of certain identities together. It is not a call for bloodshed or taking up arms but for coming out of “inferior minds” and asking for the right to be a human. Unless there is a social concern of counter-violence in students’ minds, the same oppression will continue in different insidious ways through institutional structures.

The ultimate aim of decolonising is the search for true humanism. Since the concept of humanism itself is defined by White male supremacy, redefining it and finding true meaning for each subject is the sole objective behind Fanonian critical pedagogy. For Fanon, the search is about “Indigenizing (Africanizing) the West (European)” (Fanon 1988), that is, humanising the West through the pursuit of interconnections, mutual interdependence and respect for shared/basic values of humanness. For him, the coloniser’s denial of the humanity of the colonised subject is a denial of the coloniser’s own humanity. Colonialism is also in an interlocking relation given the ways in which it is produced and reproduced at the material, psychological and discursive levels. So the agency of “humanising” or “knowledge production” is not attributed to external forces but to the internal self itself. If education can give this self-agency to individuals to define themselves, produce knowledge and express their identities without any colonial influence, then the process of decolonisation can meet its needs. But as this agency has been centred in external powers, oppression will continue in various forms including visible and invisible ways.

**Conclusion**

Cartesian philosophy, Immanuel Kant and Alexander von Humboldt’s Eurocentred modern racist/sexist epistemic projects, and the four major epistemicides that happened in the 16th century, formed the foundational basis of modern epistemology and knowledge production. This created a wide range of exclusions of “Others” by emphasising the superiority of White men through colonisation. Modern rationality developed through the ego politics of Descartes and structured the education system into a “universal” form, which actually rejected all other indigenous contexts of plural forms.
The colonial legacy of Eurocentric rationality is widely normalised in our current educational institutions in various forms. To think beyond this Eurocentric modernity, it is necessary to make education more equitable and diversified. The theories that emerged to challenge the concept of modernity, including postmodernism and postcolonialism, were actually relying upon the same Eurocentric texts and rationality to find solutions. The project of decolonisation actually rejects all the discourses that have developed through Eurocentric epistemic narrations by emphasising provincialisation and indigenisation of knowledge and rationality.

“Transmodernity”, an idea developed by Enrique Dussel, pushes forward the decolonial project in a more effective manner. It replaces the Eurocentric “universal” form of epistemic structure into a “pluriversal” form, where the authority of knowledge production shifts from White men to the hands of the real people who are engaging with it. This paper started with a critique of Cartesian rationality, moved on to the concept of transmodernity and then looked at the ideas and empirical experience of a decolonial thinker who served his thoughts and writings towards the decolonial agenda. Liberation from colonisation involves more than just changes in political power—it requires long-term changes in all structures of society. Franz Fanon has proposed one of the sharpest ideologies of decolonisation. The Fanonian decolonial project has a wide range of implications even now. Decolonial projects including “transmodernity” fundamentally require decolonising knowledge production and reorienting the new generation towards it.

The role of education starting from school to universities is crucial to the decolonial project. The pedagogies used in many erstwhile colonies still have a colonial legacy. The implications of Fanon’s idea of decolonising the psyche of natives, the need for counter-violence against the violence of colonisers, the emphasis on native culture and history, questioning the mainstream stereotypes developed by colonisers including the perceptions of “Blackness” and “Whiteness”, all these have wide implications for indigenous education seeking approaches to teaching–learning and schooling. These can go a long way in promoting decolonisation and leading to a re-centring of indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.
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Notes
THE TRUTH ABOUT FICTION: CASTE, CLASS, GENDER AND DISSENT IN URMILA PAWAR’S SHORT STORIES

Introduction
This paper engages with Dalit feminist fiction by Urmila Pawar, focusing on her select short stories and how these stories draw from her celebrated autobiographical work *Aaydaan* (Marathi original) translated as *The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman’s Memoirs* by Maya Pandit.1 Pawar`s autobiography is one of the remarkable books written in the canon of dalit literature on life lived as a dalit woman, but her short stories have also equally attracted a lot of attention. This paper seeks to understand how fiction writing has been descriptive of the historical oppression the women of the dalit community have been subjected to, through the lenses of gender, caste and class. Pawar`s *Motherwit* (2013) is a collection of selected short stories translated by Veena Deo.

For locating Pawar`s work in its social and historical context, it becomes important to understand the dalit literary movement and the dalit feminist movement. This paper, therefore, provides a conceptual understanding of these movements that inevitably shape Pawar`s work. For this very reason, before delving deeper into Pawar`s world, the first part of the paper gives a brief account of these movements. The second part has detailed discussions on her stories, especially referring to “Aaye” (“Mother”), “Nyay” (“Justice”), “Vegli” (“The Odd One”), “Kavach” (“Armour”) and “Cheed” (“Anger”).

Dalit Feminism
The dalit feminist struggle in Maharashtra can be divided into three significant parts: activism, dalit women`s literature in the form of autobiographies and fiction, and academic formulation of dalit feminism.2 In this paper, we focus on the second category to understand caste and gender, through Urmila Pawar`s short stories. The paper explores how the axes of caste, gender and class are portrayed in Pawar`s works of fiction. The upper-caste women`s movement discarded caste as affecting women`s position, claiming that caste

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has been transcended by category of 'women'. Dalit women`s issues did not find a place in that narrative. The exclusion of dalit women in decision making from the women`s movement gave rise to dalit feminism remarked Pawar in our discussion about the beginnings of what Sharmila Rege (1998) calls a 'dalit feminist standpoint`.

The 1990s became a crucial decade for feminist politics in India. There was a radical shift in feminism when dalit women vehemently questioned Indian feminism`s exclusive focus on the issues of upper-caste/middle-class women (Rege 2013). This paper looks at the dalit feminist fiction writings of Pawar to explore how she deals with the question of gender and caste, a question which I believe is at once indenty-based and political.

**Dalit Literature**

The dalit literary movement in Maharashtra is closely associated with the Dalit Panther Movement, which began around the 1970s. Writing as an essential instrument for reinforcing and spreading the political message was an important aspect of the movement. Baburao Bagul, Namdev Dhasal, Anna Bhau Sathe and numerous others gave dalit Marathi writing the truly necessary force in this sense—it was about bringing into light the political and personal experiences of violence and oppression. Thus I would argue that the dalit literary movement is inherently a political project. Dalit literature and the Dalit movement go hand in hand, each feeding into the other.

Dalit literature in Maharashtra is characterised by angry, self-assertive voices. It narrates the historical injustices and looks at the ways in which the social structure has marginalised populations on the basis of caste. It is about seeking what has been denied to dalits historically. Above all, it is about self assertion and is influenced by Amedkar`s work. The roots of dalit literature can be traced back to Phule and then to Ambedkar who furthered Phule`s thought—both of them were anti-caste social reformists.

While dalit literature is characterised by anger and revolt, Pawar`s fiction writing, I argue, is not necessarily marked with an upfront protest and anger. I argue that her work is sociological in some sense in that it explains lived experiences. Her autobiograpy and short stories, the former informing the latter in parts, provide a different imagination of dalit lives, one located in a woman`s perspective.

While dalit men have written evocative works on the question of caste, their works have missed out on the gendered living experiences of women. Although they do allude to some such experiences, the criticism of dalit
male writers has been that they speak on behalf of the women, resulting in miscomprehensions of women’s position. In our discussion, Pawar said, “Male dalit writers write truth about their lives but miss out on certain aspects of dalit lives, the gendered aspect.” This has meant that dalit women’s voices have been inadequately represented or sometimes even rendered completely absent from male narratives. At other times, there are romanticised narratives about women without really engaging with their extremely low position in the hierarchy of caste and gender. The men put forward their own views as those of dalit women in a manner similar to how the upper-caste women’s feminist politics had failed to account for caste atrocities by claiming that the category of “women” surpassed that of “caste” (as an identity).

Dalit literature is rooted in dissent. It is a space where the conditions of life of dalit men and women are portrayed as lived by them, thus making allusion to the pathological and violent social structure that colours every aspect of their lives. The literary movement provided a voice to dalit consciousness and hence autobiography became a favoured genre within it, though poetry and fiction writing in the dalit literary movement were not far behind. While there have been diverse literary forms, the evocative voice of dissent and political rigour has continued.

**Of Mothers, Daughters and Women’s Wit**

This section provides a detailed analysis of the selected short stories as an attempt to unravel these extraordinary stories of ordinary women. The title *Motherwit* alludes to a certain wit, agency and strength these women possess and exercise when faced with difficult situations. While we begin this quest of unfolding the stories, it is important to keep in mind what is at stake for Pawar when she writes these stories. These are not mere fictions, but each story has a trace in the life experiences Pawar struggled through and questioned. The stories in *Motherwit* are written by a woman who at the very root of this endeavour wills to write about the glimpses of the past she has lived through or what she has seen in people around her struggling against a harsh reality. The act of writing here is the very will to speak for or on behalf of those who cannot and to let them be heard. For Pawar, it is the important, fundamental will to be heard that drives these stories.

The translator of the book *Motherwit*, Veena Deo argues, “Of the numerous dalit women prose writers in Marathi, Urmila Pawar’s short stories stamp a vital developing voice in Marathi short fiction” (2013: xviii). Deo’s introduction to the book also speaks about the question of language and
how this distinct voice is formed. This allows us to look at the short stories as windows into the lives Dalit women live on the ground.

Pawar weaves together Dalit women’s narratives and systematically unpacks each of the ties—caste, gender and class—to portray the historical subordination of her protagonists. Women in her stories do not write slogans or march in movements, but they fight everyday discrimination within the circumstances they find themselves in. Pawar’s protagonists sometimes completely overthrow the patriarchal structure and at other times mend and bend it in ways that works for them. The women are portrayed as stoic, and they voice dissent in the light of their own agency. There is a heightened sense of their location, and they are constantly trying to mitigate their inescapable subordination. For example, in case of “The Odd One” (originally “Vegli”), the protagonist Nalini is portrayed as being acutely aware of her location. She is as the title depicts always the “other” everywhere—at office, amongst her in-laws, in her locality. She can change her life by shifting from the chawl to the new house, and the story shows how in doing so, she aspires to move away from historical markers of identity and create a new one for her family. There are remarks on dressing as a marker of caste and class. She works in a government office where she has to hear about how “Dalits...have it good...the government pampers them” (p. 57).

Nalini after getting a government living quarters is determined to move out, and her husband assures her that he will persuade his parents. Eventually her husband gives in to his mother’s persuasion in spite of wanting to move away into the government quarters himself. But the climax of the story is astonishing when we see Nalini pick up her baby and leave without waiting to persuade anyone or seek anyone’s approval. She just leaves. This act of walking away without waiting for her husband’s answer, knowing that he has already given in to his mother’s pressure, is both a stoic acceptance of reality and the stubbornness to overcome it and act.

In another story “Justice” (“Nyaya”), the woman Paru asks the people of her village to let her keep her child, and in doing so, she exercises her own agency. This story is interesting because it is narrated by a man who belongs to the village but now lives in the city; he considers himself modern, but we know little about him except that he is here to get his land deal signed and is a lawyer. He walks us through the story, and we see Paru through his gaze. He questions Paru and is sympathetic to the villager who is rumoured to be the alleged father of Paru’s child. Paru is very well aware of her location as a widow and looks at the child as someone who belongs to her, someone she
can bring up on her own without a man to support her. She has no qualms about being able to do so. She acknowledges that she was assaulted, but now what she seeks is the choice to decide the baby’s fate, and in doing so, she seeks justice.

It is also important to note that Pawar’s autobiography mentions a similar incident happening to a woman of her community—in the autobiographical version, the woman is made to abort her child, with two other women kicking her womb. In this account, the woman is not asked if she wants to keep the child. But the same incident is weaved into a different fabric for the readers in the short story and we see the woman choosing to keep the child. She says, “This child is mine and I want it. I’ll raise the child myself” (p. 38). She has a “voice that was unexpectedly firm and fearless” (p. 36), questioning the village authority and its ways of imparting justice.

Pawar’s stories are not just about recording historical injustices but also about the gendered relations of the everyday. In the story “Kavach” (“Armour”), Gaurya, Indira’s son, is trying hard to protect his mother. He compares her with the teacher in school and feels ashamed about the way she dresses when she goes to the market to sell mangoes or how she lets the customers misbehave with her without answering back like the teacher does with the male teachers in school. The story beautifully brings out the implicit sexual undertones of language itself. The men in the market say “Where are your mangoes from? Choli (blouse and also the name of Gaurya’s village) mangoes?...let me try with my own hands” (p. 85).

Gaurya is ecstatic when he hears his mother talk back to these men, bravely standing her ground, when he himself is frightened and feels helpless in their presence. He ponders over how “words had a way of changing meaning quickly” (p. 86.) The boy’s way of looking at his mother shifts from being weak and sticky (like a mango) to strong and hard like the mango seed. Here, the lost-in-translation problem persists even after the lucid translation of Veena Deo—something about the language slips, making an important metaphor in Marathi sound plain once translated into English.

I do not believe this story is necessarily drawn out of Pawar’s own life experiences, but it comes from a general observation of her milieu. On the other hand, the stoic, silent and persistent mother in “Aaye” (“Mother”), is a character modelled after her own mother, someone we are introduced to in her autobiography. The short story is a classic example of what the death of the patriarch does to a family in a patriarchal system and how a woman is not deemed fit to decide for her family.
The mother continues to work on basket weaving to sustain her family, and the only thing on her mind is to educate all her children, a promise her husband takes from her on his deathbed. She is slender, a bit bent and has a worn-out expression on her face, but nevertheless her hands constantly work on weaving. The mother (her name never mentioned) fights her in-laws and chooses to stay where she is so that she can continue to send her children to school even though the village relatives are insistent on taking the family back to the village house. Here the commonality with her autobiographical account is bare.

A very interesting story in this collection is “Cheed” (“Anger”). As a story of female friendships, it is a topic, I would argue, that is not generally dealt with, and Pawar agreed and exclaimed in our discussion that she really enjoyed writing this one. She said it was something she always wondered about—how female friendships change once the husband enters the bond that was earlier shared by only two people. In a way, I would argue, it questions the social structure which makes a vertical hierarchy out of our personal relationships and always puts the husband on a pedestal. This story also questions the norms by which the woman ends up accepting the husband’s opinion as the right one and does not assert her own thoughts. The story has many layers and also talks about the woman’s agency and how every time she meets her husband she changes her opinion and adapts to his.

**Conclusion**

Pawar’s fiction is a place where she imagines different, better and more gender-sensitive outcomes to events she came across in her real life. Dalit literature is also characterised by a peculiar language that is layered with implicit caste and gender connotations. Dalit writing is a way of fighting structural injustice by writing about the historical in the first instance and then taking the historical thread to trace its continuity with how discrimination manifests itself in the present times.

Pawar’s short stories, I would argue, are a space of bringing into light the atrocious social positions of caste, class and gender and its cumulative effects on the lives of the women—their intersections but also the isolation that comes along with these axes of difference. Given the complexity of lives lived with the burdens of caste, class and gender, how do women dissent? Are they protesting? What is the form of their protest? Pawar’s fiction is an important revelation or entry point to these questions. She makes strange rebellious acts imaginable through her short stories. Each of her characters is a real person.
that Pawar has come across. Her characters escape the pages of her book and the realm of fiction—they become living, breathing human beings who we come across every day.

End Notes

1 Pawar (along with Meenakshi Moon) is well known for her work *Amihi Itihas ghadavla*, translated into English as *We Also Made History: Women in the Ambedkarite Movement* by Wandana Sonalkar, on dalit women’s participation in the historical anti-caste movement (Dalit movement) led by Dr B R Ambedkar.

2 I would hold that dalit autobiographies and fiction assume greater importance as political work, as works of protest. Even though dalit feminism is understood to be the ideas of dalit women activists and writers, the theoretical formulation of this discourse has been mostly shaped by a few non-dalit feminists and dalit intellectuals. For example, Sharmila Rege has been considered to be one of the important figures in dalit feminism. See http://feministsindia.com/tag/dalit-feminism/

3 I would locate dalit literature as a literature of self-assertion. Within dalit writing, women’s writing brings in even more layers of dissent and protest because the post-independence women’s movement, unlike the movements started by Phule and Ambedkar, excluded dalit women. The dalit women’s literary movement in Maharashtra was a result of the double oppression these women faced.

4 Here and subsequently in the paper, “discussion” refers to the interview I did with Urmila Pawar at her home in Mumbai on 13 January 2017. It was an opportunity I am immensely grateful for. Even though I have seldom quoted her directly, the entire reflection in this paper was possible in the manner it is because of her willingness and patience to listen to my questions and discuss the stories broadly with me.

5 Pawar confirmed this in our discussion.

References


Classics Revisited

“If someone you loved was dying, what would you do?” (p.441.) Some 400 pages into the book, somewhere in the middle of a conversation revolving around butterfly genetics, super insects, migratory behaviour and volunteers who were slowly beginning to lose hope in the cause and leave, Dr Ovid Byron, ecologist and entomologist, poses this question to Dellarobia Turnbow, high school passout, housewife, mother and daughter-in-law. I begin the review of *Flight Behaviour* with a quote so far into the book because it is at this point that a question jumps up at the reader, suddenly and impactfully, and the question is not just something one fictional protagonist in the book asks another but a real answer that the book demands of its real readers from their real lives.

Herein lies the beauty of the book and the ingenuity of its plot. *Flight Behaviour*, even as it deals with what most in the book hope to believe to be a “miracle”, at no point seems to paint a distant, imaginary world or events but instead recounts a real, relatable, scary, sad, frustrating yet hopeful set of narratives played out by everyday characters in an everyday setting. This review essay first provides a brief introduction to the author and an overview of the book’s broad storyline. This is followed by a more detailed discussion around the key characters, their background stories, their journeys, their hopes and its lack thereof, while we delve into some of the key issues and themes the book superbly brings to light, sometimes subtly, sometimes blaringly directly. The essay concludes with a discussion of points of personal connect with the book and the possibilities of the advancement of environment sustainability through literature such as *Flight Behaviour*.

Barbara Kingsolver was born in 1955 and grew up in rural Kentucky. Having received degrees in biology from DePauw and Arizona University, she began her career as a freelance writer and later as a full-time novelist and

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poet. The key themes that run through most of the award-winning pieces of work she has produced are those of human–nature relationships and the place of justice, class, gender, education and communities in shaping such relationships. Two of her most acclaimed works include *The Poisonwood Bible* and *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*. *Flight Behaviour* came out in 2012 and has been on various bestseller lists.

The novel is set in Southern Appalachia, in a place called Feathertown in the rural hinterland of Tennessee. Feathertown is the typical American countryside county, farming and cattle its economic mainstay, small markets areas its recreation, the bank and post office its amenities and forested living hills an ignored, taken-for-granted, everyday affair. The nearest city is one called Cleary where, the book keeps stressing as its main distinguishing point, there is a college for after-school education. The county and the state in general have been shown to be undergoing the strangest of all winters (the story spreads over a winter season beginning in November and ending with the arrival of spring in March), with non-stop rains and erratic temperature rises and falls, with farming having taken a severe hit and whole harvests having gone bad.

Dellarobia couldn`t remember a sadder-looking November. The trees had lost their leaves early in the unrelenting rain. After a brief fling with coloration they dropped their tresses in clumps like a chemo patient losing her hair. (p.67) Summer`s heat had never really arrived, nor the cold in its turn, and everything living now seemed to yearn for sun with the anguish of the unloved. The world of sensible seasons had come undone. (p.67)

The town, its people and one particular family, the Turnbow family, comprising Hester and Burley (affectionately called Bear) Turnbow, their son Cub and his wife Dellarobia and their grandchildren, Preston and Cordelia, are caught in this lull of ordinariness until one day a married, exhausted, simultaneously confused and certain mother of three (one an unborn child), Dellarobia Turnbow, set out up the hill on her in-laws` family farmland to break away from a life she had resented for too long, hoping to find the passion she had lost way back, in another lover. Upon nearing the top of the hill, what she encounters marks the end of everything ordinary. She walks into a forest full of clusters of fiery orange “things” loaded up on every branch of every tree. Right there, in that moment of witnessing the glittering forest of orange and gold, Dellarobia feels something of a wake-up shake-up, the realisation of some new purpose, the horror of the mistake she had climbed up here for and, most of all, the assurance that once she went back to the home and life she had thought to abandon, nothing would be the same again.
Unearthly beauty had appeared to her, a vision of glory to stop her in the road. For her alone these orange boughs lifted, these long shadows became a brightness rising. It looked like the inside of joy, if a person could see that. A valley of lights, an ethereal wind. It had to mean something. (p.21) Nothing had changed except every conscious minute and a strange fire in her dreams. (p.68)

After her encounter with the fire creatures in the mountain, Dellarobia discovers her in-laws had plans to cut off the entire forest stretch along the mountain in the parts that fell within their farmland area, which would mean bringing down the trees with the orange world up there. She tries to convince her husband of the value of the forest, her only argument being they should know what all there is on their land before they give it up, since she cannot reveal her prior visit and her intentions behind it. The family then goes up the mountain and encounters the same magical view, unsure now about chopping off the trees. This is followed by the church and the entire county getting involved in discussing what a miracle they had been blessed with.

Dellarobia becomes famous overnight because of her husband’s claim that she had miraculously foreseen the miracle up in the mountain. What is important at this point, however, is that everybody, the church, the county folk, Dellarobia and the rest of the Turnbows, thinks of the scene up there as a miracle, and the only reason they do not want to allow the logging of the trees is to protect the miracle, to not defy something the Lord has wished. The Turnbow farm becomes a spot for curious tourists and miracle-seeking churchgoers.

An encounter with a Mexican family, whose kid went to school with Preston, leads Dellarobia to understand that the creatures up there are butterflies. They are called monarch butterflies and are orange, black and white in colour. She also comes to know that the butterflies were not supposed to be there, but in a place called Angangueo, Michoacán, in Mexico, where a fatal landslide on the mountains in the course of an expedition to count the monarch butterflies had left it empty of people, trees and butterflies, leading to a loss of lives, livelihoods and beauty. Adding to this knowledge is the information she gets from her encounter with and later employment under Dr Ovid Byron, an African-American scientist who has studied monarch butterflies all his life.

It is with Dr Byron and his team, who set up a lab in her family barn, that Dellarobia learns the truth behind the butterflies, a truth she grapples with through the book. She learns of feedback loops, legacy effects, community interactions, and the difference between cause and correlation, all brought
out through wonderfully engaging conversations between Dellarobia and Dr Byron, where science is broken down through simple daily life examples and explanations. The butterflies are no longer the miracle that had saved her, nor are they a pretty sight to be seen as tourists, but are instead symptoms of a larger systemic disturbance in the world. Butterflies are, what Dr Byron calls, “complicated systems”, a community that has learnt its ways of survival over millions of years since it first appeared.

Monarchs are tropical insects that migrate to the warmer, steadier winters of Mexico, where after a period of hibernation up in the Mexican mountains, they break into a flurry of mating during spring, after which the female monarchs fly millions of miles north to lay eggs where the milkweed plant grows, and this cycle continues as these butterflies have charted this map over millions of years of interactions and community dynamics. That they were up on a mountain in South Appalachia, where winters are much more severe than Mexico (though this year particularly erratic), was hence neither beautiful nor the Lord’s wish but a result of climate change or man’s wish. The story goes on to show Dellarobia’s journey of knowledge, her struggle with the knowledge, her struggle with trying to pass on the knowledge to a world where people believe whatever makes them happy, her changing relationships with family and friends, ending ultimately in a spring flood with the thawing of the snow.

The book ends with Dellarobia squatting against flood waters, while above her the surviving monarchs fly away to an unknown destination, what Dr Byron once called “a new Earth”. The ending can be interpreted in different ways, either as the biblical floods of destruction or a symbol of hope where both humans and the butterflies set out to ward off the floods and chart out new ways, with Dellarobia heading off to college (signifying education and the hope of a better world through it) and starting a new life with the realisation that her marriage was keeping two good people unhappy.

The larger theme of education, its value and the consequences of the lack of it or a lack of proper quality of it runs through the novel in several ways, whether it is through the sense of self that education creates (and its absence prevents), the challenges the poor have to face in accessing it, the honesty with which a child is capable of loving and understanding nature or the sad disbelief people develop in things that sound like bad, uncomfortable news. What is striking through the book is the constant suffocating discomfort that Dellarobia carries around with herself. Reasons for frustration with her life are unclear in the beginning, and it might appear to the reader to be rooted
in the poverty that the family lives in or in the drudgery involved in being a mother. However, through the course of the book, one realises that even as poverty is not pleasant in any way and has held Dellarobia back, it is not the lack of money per se that makes her uncomfortable in the life she is living. It is instead the longing of the life that could have been, had the pregnancy and marriage not happened, had her parents not been taken away so young, that is killing her. She craves to know who she could have been had she gone to college; it is the lack of ambition, the lack of a goal, in both her and her husband that frustrates her. She does not mind being a mother and loves her children, but it is the possibility of being both a mother and whatever an education may have led her to become that keeps her unhappy.

Dellarobia displays an earnest desire to know and learn, and her anger at having missed that chance is apparent in multiple places when she mentally compares herself to the city helpers of Dr Byron, to the city-educated wife of Dr Byron. This is particularly apparent in her outburst during the interview with Dr Byron for a position in the lab, where she tells the story of how getting to the exam hall was itself a difficulty, let alone the science and maths that she was taught by the football coach at school in Feathertown.

Another theme that runs through the novel is the tussle between science and religion. Here is where the characters of Hester Turnbow and Pastor Bobby Ogle come in. Hester is a loyal churchgoer who looks down upon anybody who misses Sunday church as doomed. Pastor Bobby Ogle is a dynamic, charming person, who leads everyone to leave behind their sins outside the church and to catch up right back on them once outside. What is interesting, however, is the different kinds of results religious beliefs or the lack thereof produced. On the one hand, belief in the Bible led people of Feathertown, people such as Hester and Cub, to deny climate change and call the rain, the snow, the heat, the flood, the butterflies all simply as the Lord’s wishes—“Weather is the Lord’s business” (p.361)—and accept not having to do anything about it. On the other hand, the belief that the Lord’s creation has to valued and protected led protesters (local, city and national) to turn against Bear Turnbow’s plan to cut down trees. Bear himself being non-religious did not believe there existed a connection between cutting trees and landslides or erratic rainfall.

The question that was constantly tugging at my mind through the book, particularly in parts where Dr Byron expresses disbelief at the condition of school education in Feathertown and when Dellarobia thinks of herself as “uneducated”, is whether education is only of the kind that is provided by
formal schooling and college? Is schooling and college education a guarantee of producing an educated person? If yes, then what would explain the millions who go through the education system but deny climate change and their role in it? Why did the people from Cleary (a town with a college and educated people) come to simply to look at the butterflies as a source of beauty? And following from this, does a lack of formal education imply an uneducated person?

What then will we call Dellarobia, whose negligible knowledge of science was no barrier to her earnest quest to know more about monarchs, to worry for them, to hope for their survival, to accept the ugliness behind their beauty and to fight her own family for them. Dellarobia’s concern for the monarchs was rooted in how they had made her feel, and not in her knowledge of them, while Dr Byron’s was rooted in his research and understanding of the systems of which the butterflies were a part. The outcome in both cases was concern. This implies that knowledge can be of multiple types, each interacting and strengthening the outcome of concern.

“One of God’s creatures of this world, meeting its End of Days,” she said after a quiet minute. Not words of science, she knew that, but it was a truth she could feel. The forest of flame that had lifted her despair, the migratory pulse that had rocked in the arms of a continent for all time: these fell like stones in her heart.(p.315)

I don’t know. I was so focused on my own little life. Just one person. And here was something so much bigger. I had to come back and live a different life. (p.288)

Another important idea running through the story is that of the conflicts scientists face, the helplessness they feel at having to be harbingers of hope and good news as well as conveyors of bad news to a bunch of people refusing to believe what they do not wish to. The book shows different sides of Dr Byron, one which aches with despair at having to see the beautiful creatures he almost considers as family perish, while the other puts faith in the objectivity of science and sets aside emotions to gather information on not how to save them (this is something Dellarobia focuses on) but what their story can tell to understand and prevent future extinctions. On one hand, he is empowered with knowledge and, on the other, he is helpless to the point of tears at not being able to convince a news reporter (someone with the ability to influence millions) about the reality of climate change. The media and its role as an institution that immensely guides and shapes public opinion is also adequately and directly brought to light, wherein all the buzz around
the butterflies ends up as gossip around Dellarobia and is not once about the information that Dr Byron has to share.

“People can only see things they already recognize,” she said. “They’ll see it if they know it.” “And how do they see the end of the world?” Ovid asked. She considered this for a long time. “They know it’s impossible.” (p.391)

“No one was asking why the butterflies were here; the big news was just that they were.” (p.292)

“I think people are scared to face up to a bad outcome. That’s just human. Like not going to the doctor when you’ve found a lump. If flight or flight is the choice, it’s way easier to fly.” (p.318)

“Humans are in love with the idea of our persisting,” he said. “We fetishize it, really. Our retirement funds, our genealogies. Our so-called ideas for the ages... (p.390). Man against Nature. Of all the possible conflicts, that was the one that was hopeless. Even a slim education had taught her this much: Man loses.” (p.339)

What the book does is also bring out another side to the question of disbelief. In a conversation between Dellarobia and Dr Byron, as Dr Byron expresses sadness and helplessness at the inability of humans to realise, accept and engage with their actions and its consequences, Dellarobia struggles to explain how humans are not all equals, how their struggles are different and how the rut and fears of day-to-day existence sometimes wipe out the possibility of acceptance and engagement. Man, caught in his daily struggles (no doubt self-created), is often left with little time to think of anything beyond how to get through the day.

“I don’t know how a person could even get through the day, knowing what you know,” she said. “How does Dellarobia get through hers?” asked Ovid. “Meeting the bus on time,” she answered. “Getting the kids to eat supper, getting teeth brushed. No cavities the next time. Little hopes, you know? There’s just not room at our house for the end of the world. Sorry to be a doubting Thomas.” (p.391)

Lastly, Preston is another interesting and delightful character in the book, the curious little boy in love with animals, nature and its ways, wanting to know what the butterfly ate! His curiosity keeps the story alive and somehow gives the reader the hope that seems to get lost amidst all the believers and disbelievers. Dellarobia is proud of her inquisitive son, but she worries that in the future world there will be no nature for him love. “Dellarobia felt an entirely new form of panic as she watched her son love nature so expectantly,
wondering if he might be racing toward a future like some complicated sand castle that was crumbling under the tide” (p.341).

As for why the book appealed to me personally and how I think this relates to and furthers sustainability, there are five key points. One, the book manages to situate climate change within the day-to-day experiences of the most ordinary of men and women, instead of the usual gulf between it being a subject of discussion at international climate summits and not being a subject of discussion at all. By making climate change the story of ordinary people that readers can visualise and relate to, as opposed to reading about it in academic journals, the book furthers the cause of sustainability.

Second, the book raises a discussion on how people can only see what they know and believe only what they see. This is why Dellarobia says that the end of the world is not in people’s imagination, which is why they do not believe it. Dr Byron knows and hence his state of despair; the rest in the story (and in life in general) do not know and hence their state of disbelief/indifference. The gap then seems to hinge on one’s ability to know. Knowing, in turn, can be made possible through education and here lies the second line of advice the book provides for pursuing sustainability.

Third, one gets a feeling of double powerlessness in Dellarobia’s struggle to defeat the fate of the butterflies. Social powerlessness (lack of access to education or a low social standing) adds to the hurdles of sustainability, since the poor—as seen in Dellarobia’s encounter with a city environmentalist who tells her to reduce her carbon footprint (which she laughingly says she barely has)—may be contributing the least to unsustainability but suffering the most. Hence, social equity is another way to go for sustainability.

Fourth, there is the question of hope. The book shows three kinds of hope: one, Dr Byron’s belief that he will be able to save other creatures based on what he can learn from the monarchs’ extinction, second, Dellarobia’s hope for the butterflies to survive and, third, Preston’s innocent unquestioned hope for being able to be as close to nature as he wishes and know as much about it as he can. Perhaps a mix of all these kinds is what we need today. Finally, what appealed to me by the end of the book was that the name of book could refer to the flight behaviour of butterflies as well as that of humans, the latter referring to our tendency to look at a problem and instead of facing it, more often than not, choosing flight.
Style Sheet
We request authors to follow the guidelines in the style sheet as listed below. This will help reduce processing times of articles that have been accepted for publication.

**House Style**

- For the main text, use Times New Roman, 12 point, 1.5 line spacing.
- For notes, use Times New Roman, 11 point, single line spacing. Set the alignment as “left”.
- Use British and “-ise” spellings (labour, centre, organise).
- Use double quotation marks for quotations, and single marks for quotations within quotations.
- Indent quotations of more than four lines, without quotation marks.
- For quotations from other publications, always provide page number(s) for the quotation.

**Abbreviations**

- Abbreviations including those in common use (BJP, US, BCCI, L&T), are spelled out at first occurrence, as in
  
  **Among recent recommendations of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are**

- Less familiar ones should be used only if they occur more than once within an article, and the terms must be spelled out on their first occurrence, as in

  **The benefits of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) are familiar to many.**

This includes omitting the periods used after initials standing for given names, as in **G K Chesterton, J Krishnamurti.**

- No periods are used with abbreviations that appear in full capitals, whether two letters or more, as in BBC, CITU, and acronyms, as in Nasa, Nato.
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No space is left on either side of an ampersand used within an initialism. Avoid using ampersands in running text unless they are within initialisms such as R&D, Texas A&M.

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Company names are best given in their full forms in running text, though such tags as Ltd and Inc may be omitted unless relevant to the context, as in Brooks Brothers was purchased and later resold by Marks and Spencer.

No periods are used after any of the International System of Units symbols for units, and the same symbols are used for both the singular and the plural, as in kg, cm, m.

Note that a unit of measurement used without a numeral should always be spelled out, even in scientific contexts, as in We took the measurements in kilometers.

Avoid using abbreviations for two-word names as far as possible. Some may be unavoidable such as the US or UP, but where it is part of government bureaucratic or journalistic usage such as PM, CM, DM, SC or HC do avoid abbreviations.

**Numbers**

The numbers from one to nine must be spelled out while every number that is more than nine is written in numerals.

However, very large round numbers, especially sums of money, may be expressed by a mixture of numerals and spelled-out numbers, as in The population of India is now 1.2 billion.

**Crores/Lakhs versus Billion/Million**

If large numbers have to be written out using numerals, when discussion values please follow the Indian numbering system when the discussion is on India:

Rs 11,22,35,567 (ie division in crores, lakhs and thousands), or Rs 11.22 crore.

Where other units are involved, authors could use the billion/metric system, even in discussion of India. However, the preference would be for the Indian system of crore/lakh:
2,34,000 hectares (2.34 lakh hectares)
Or 234,000 hectares

Where the discussion is of a non-Indian issue or the currencies are of non-Indian values, then the preference would be for the standard international system:

$34,234,000 or $34.234 billion
134,567,000 tonnes or 134.57 million tones

*It is most important that authors do not switch from one system to another within the same article.*

Please ensure that either the Indian terms (lakh, crore) or the Western ones (million, billion) are used consistently within an article.

Percentages are always given in numerals. Use the symbol % instead of the words per cent, as in

*Only 45% of the electorate voted.*

Simple fractions are spelled out, as in *She has read three-quarters of the book.*

- Years are always expressed in numerals unless they stand at the beginning of a sentence.
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- Dates should be in the form of *9 March 2007.*

Use an en dash rather than a hyphen between numbers denoting pages and dates.

*Capitalisation*

Be economical in the use of capitals.

- Capitalisation used with headings and titles of articles and books capitalises all words except articles (e.g., a, an, the, etc.), prepositions (e.g., as, in, of, to, etc.), and conjunctions (e.g., and, but, for, or, etc.).
- Although proper names are capitalised, many words derived from or associated with proper names (*brussels sprouts, board of trustees*), as well as the names of significant offices (*presidency, papacy*) are lowercased.
• Civil, military, religious, and professional titles are capitalised when they immediately precede a personal name, as in Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said at the meeting that....

• But titles are normally lowercased when following a name or used in place of a name, as in The prime minister speaking at an informal meeting said...

• Titles are normally lowercased when following a name or used in place of a name, as in In an interview, the prime minister said ...

• Titles denoting civic or academic honours are capitalised when following a personal name, as in Lata Mangeshkar, Bharat Ratna.

• The full names of legislative, deliberative, administrative, and judicial bodies, departments, bureaus, and offices, and often their short forms, are capitalised, as in the United Nations General Assembly, the Parliament of India, the Lok Sabha, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Supreme Court.

• While the names of ethnic and national groups are capitalised (Aborigines, the Jews, the French), designations based loosely on colour (black people) and terms denoting socioeconomic classes or groups (the middle class) are lowercased.

• All caste, tribe and community names to be capitalised.

• The names of political groups or movements other than recognised parties are lowercased, anarchists, independents, communists, but the Communist Party of India.

• The full names of associations, societies, unions, working groups, inquiry commissions, meetings, and conferences are capitalised, as in the International Olympic Committee, the Indian Red Cross Society.

**Tables, Figures**

Headings should be placed above each table/figure and should follow this format:

**Table 1. Asset Ownership by Household Category**

**Figure 5. Communication Flows**

Notes and sources should be placed under each table/figure.

Column headings in tables should clearly define the data presented.
In-text citations

Use the author-date system for citations.

Even if you put information in your own words by summarizing or paraphrasing, you must cite the original author or researcher and the date of publication. You are also encouraged to provide a page or paragraph number; check with your instructor to see if page numbers are required.

• Works cited in the text should read thus: (Brown 1992: 63-64); Lovell (1989, 1993).
• For repeat citations: eg (ibid 75)
• For groups of citations, order alphabetically and not chronologically, using a semi-colon to separate names: (Brown 1992; Gadgil and Guha 1994; Lovell 1989).
• Use “et al” when citing a work by more than two authors, but list all the authors in the References (unless there are six authors or more).
• To distinguish different works by the same author in the same year, use the letters a, b, c, etc., Besson (1993a, 1993b).

References

All works cited in the text (including sources for tables and figures) should be listed alphabetically under References, on a separate sheet of paper.

• For multi-author works, invert the name of the first author only (Gadgil, M and R Guha).
• Use (ed.) for one editor, and multiple editors.
• When listing two or more works by one author, use - - - (19xx), such as after Swann (1967), use - - - (1974), etc, in chronologically ascending order.
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• Use endnotes rather than footnotes.
The location of endnotes within the text should be indicated by superscript numbers.

For sources which have insufficient details to be included in the Reference, use endnotes (such as interviews, some media sources, some Internet sources).

See the following for style and punctuation in References.

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**Online Resources**

Always indicate the date that the source was accessed, as online resources are frequently updated or removed.

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**Article in a web magazine**

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