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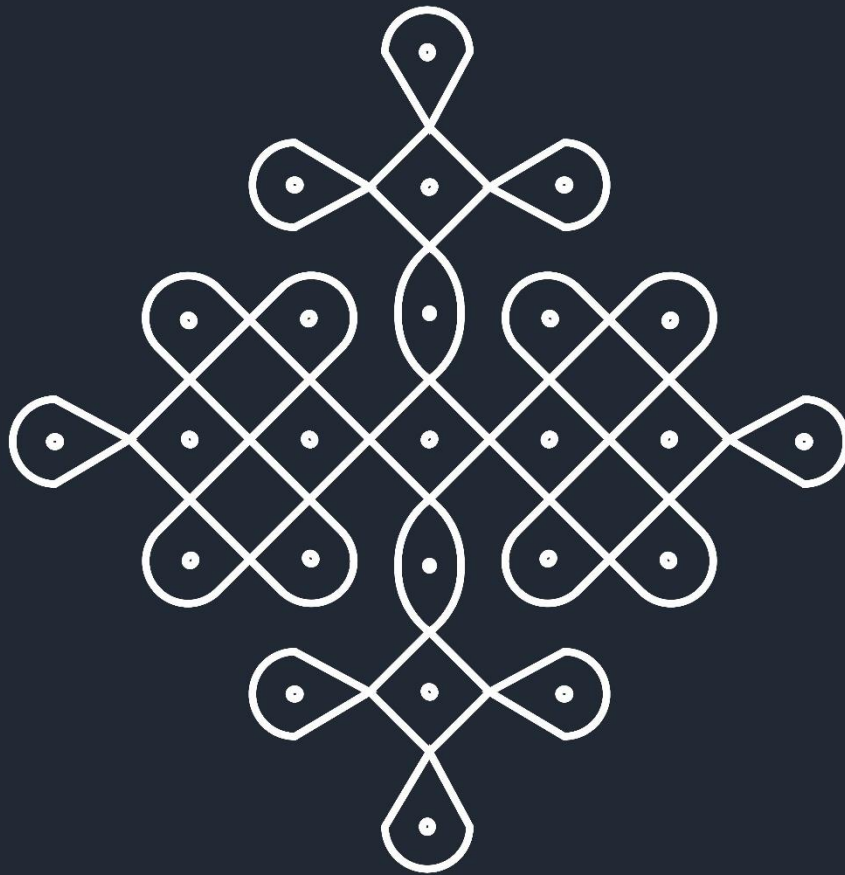
International Journal for Indian Studies

The Social Reproduction of Relational Space in South Asia (Volume 2)

Guest edited by Venugopal Maddipati

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Preface

Our Worth and Value

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It gives me great pleasure to present our readers with the new Nidān December 2023 issue. I thank the guest editor of this special issue, Dr. Venugopal Maddipati, for organizing this second volume and bringing together a fine group of erudite scholars on the history and anthropology of relational space. I thank all our contributors for their high-quality articles that reconceptualise the way space is historically produced and reproduced through political, historical, and literary action. Before leaping into a description of contributions, however, I would also like to thank our peer reviewers for their encouragement, inspiration, advice, and patience, for putting in so many dedicated hours of engagement with our contributions. It is with their support that this second volume has been possible. While all our contributions are brilliant, I would like to particularly mention here, how our editor, contributors, and reviewers from Ambedkar University Delhi faced institutional challenges this year, with the summer months of 2023 marked by faculty strikes. Despite pressures, they sincerely continued to work and cooperate with Nidān and its editorial team. I thank them for this.

Commencing this second volume, Bhawna Parmar provides us an in-depth anthropological perspective, when writing movingly on how Adivasi identity is produced through the space of government school classrooms in Jharkhand. Devanand Kamat, writing on the history of vernacular literature and literary movements, explores how the early- to mid-20th century Maithili language magazine, the *Mithila Mihir*, imagined and produced a separate political identity for *Maithil* upper-castes, the region of Mithila, and the Maithili language, aided especially by the patronage of the Darbhanga Raj. Isha Chouksey presents a historical analysis of Nagpur's urban development in late colonial times. Her paper investigates how colonial politics became subverted by commercial and industrial enterprises that transformed Nagpur by reordering its spaces for neo-industrial elites. One of the most outstanding facets of her contribution is her artwork.

Continuing with the rich tapestry of historical analysis, Pritpal Randhawa and Rachna Mehra provide us with an intellectual analysis of Ghaziabad and its history. A burgeoning satellite town on the eastern boundary of New Delhi, Randhawa and Mehra show how Ghaziabad's urban development is framed by a complex dependent-cum-competitive mode, pressurised by the national capital. Our fifth research article explores disaster ballads from Kerala. Written by exceptionally gifted scholars Ophira Gamliel and Shihab Kalluvalappil, this article, that technically falls outside the purview of the special issue, somehow also miraculously speaks to its theme. While this is a coincidence, it is certainly a serendipitous one, with Gamliel and Kalluvalappil providing readers with the added intellectual dimension of poetry that poignantly reflects and responds to the ecological crisis increasingly experienced by coastal Indian spaces. What a timely piece!

And the research articles are not all; this December 2023 issue has a rich array of book reviews as well, with Epsita Halder writing on Afsar Mohammad's selection of translated Sufi poetry, Tim Allender's review on Felicity Jensz's book on missionary education in 19th and 20th century India, and Sadan Jha's review of Dilip Menon, Nishat Zaidi, Simi Malhotra and Saarah Jappie's book on oceanic travel as historical method. This is followed by my review of Kedar

Kulkarni's book on Marathi literature in the 18th and 19th century, Kaustubh Naik's review of Shailaja Paik's book on Tamasha, and Jackson Stephenson's review of Andrew Ollett's book on the relation between Prakrit and Sanskrit in precolonial India. Westin Harris's review of Vijay Sarde's book on the Natha Sampradaya in Maharashtra is close to my heart, as Sarde's book is of special interest to me. Not only does it discuss my home region like Shailja Paik and Kedar Kulkarni's book—Maharashtra, Sarde's book is also a product of a thesis submitted at my own alma mater: the Deccan College Post-graduate Research Institute in Pune. Harris provides us with a neat encapsulation of the book's argument that is a pleasure to read. Lastly, Torsten Tschacher presents us with a review-cum-analysis of Margherita Trento's brilliant book on Beschi and his Tamil contributions to Catholic devotional literature in South India. Tschacher's review can be read as a sequel to Jason Fernandes's review of Francis Clooney's book on Saint Joseph in South India that was published earlier this year in Nidān's July 2023 issue.[1]

As I come to the end of describing what this volume holds, let me dwell briefly on a subject that has preoccupied me in the last year. To ask the rhetorical question: What is the worth and value of an open-access journal like Nidān in an increasingly corporate-incentivised academic world? Nidān functions according to a traditional publishing model, perhaps an old-fashioned one, hinging on personal cooperation and not anonymous and digitally complex and perhaps-intimidating submission portals. We put our papers through an in-depth peer-review process that sometimes takes a couple of months, without making demands on our scholar peer-reviewers to turn in their digitised verdicts in 2 weeks. We edit our texts manually and free of cost, without using artificial intelligence. I have received overwhelming feedback in the recent months on how Nidān cannot succeed without a SCOPUS rating, and how this rating is imperative. It is not that I am not half-convinced of this argument myself, especially since having such a rating is insisted upon by universities that employ many of my guest editors and contributors. But, universities also accept peer-reviewed journal articles, especially if these journals are of a high academic standard.

The insistence on SCOPUS, I suspect, has become somewhat symbolic over here, even if coming mostly from scholars who otherwise decry the increased corporatisation of the academy, especially in the humanities. To remain on the safer side of their universities, they nevertheless continue to insist on a corporate rating-scale as a benchmark for unblemished excellence. And this is hardly true! For instance, I often read, every other day, of how one or the other SCOPUS rated journal is actually bogus. A SCOPUS rating, though perhaps an important parameter of value for many a humanities journals, is surely not the sole parameter of a journal's worth?

I have observed—and I frankly submit my observations here—the insistence on SCOPUS rating, though perhaps important, is also a vicious cycle. For example, those who insist that Nidān be SCOPUS rated, display little self-reflexivity about the context within which such an insistence on SCOPUS rating operates—the abject resource crunch of the academy—especially in the humanities. This resource limitation centrally includes the inaccessibility of research content, scholarly reading materials—recent books and journals in the region that Nidān focuses on—India, and South Asia in general.

Without adequate research resources, how can journal articles that are up-to-date and good enough to be published in a SCOPUS rated journal, ever be written? The rejection rate and corporate elitism of SCOPUS rated journals is after all, also high. And this is because, despite brilliant and original ideas, there aren't enough affordable resources that can be consumed by readers and students whose first or even second languages are not English, and whose

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[1] See (https://hasp.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/journals/nidan/article/view/22231/21624), 08.01.2024.

resource-poor contexts do not afford them with corporate-rated and marketed research materials that are published and funded in the first world. There is a gap between corporate-rated 'good' resources and the production of new research at the grassroots in South Asia, that can enable the writing and publishing of good quality and methodologically rich monographs and journal articles. As encyclopaedias, companion guides and handbooks grow increasingly unaffordable, they give rise to an alternate economy of grey-market scans, where the ability to scan, to own a scanner, or to have enough electricity costs to run a scanner, itself becomes a symbolic replacement of free and good quality public education—somewhat like SCOPUS rating itself. Scanning does not, in itself, produce or ensure free public education, and neither does SCOPUS rating.

There is significant dearth in the availability of theoretical and methodological resources that can be discursively read and understood—resources that pertain to the self's context, but are produced and funded elsewhere in the first world. The resource inaccessibility that corporate-rating produces only grows more crushing as an increasing number of international libraries and serious journalism remains hidden behind paywalls. An increasing number of tier-one journals charge authors astronomical processing / open-access fees to get published and be read, and the same houses charge readers with equally hefty downloading fees. What is the validity of demanding a SCOPUS rating, when ones research exists within this corporate environment, wherein research inaccessibility is so high that writing good quality journal articles becomes almost impossible? Isn't the ability to learn through the tried-and-tested method of reading and discussion (even at the cost of making the occasional mistake), the whole point of public education—free teaching / research / publishing? Or is making a corporate-rated 'product' the new and only aim of research?

I often receive feedback to the effect of how Nidān may not be respected unless it makes or charges money—due to a tendency among consumers, to not respect what comes easily, or free of cost. While there is some common sense and native wisdom to be had from such observations, it is also important to discern the difference between a business model and a public education model, however old-fashioned the latter sounds. Apart from scans, the corporatisation of the academy has led to a market flooding of alternative narratives: uncomplicated and fictionalised historical narratives that allegedly democratise education because they are easier to read. But this is also, unfortunately untrue. These glossy simplistic books geared sometimes to engender patriotic pride among readers, cost as much as academic books, if not more.

The only way to democratise education, is through public education—something I have personally gained from, both in India and in Germany. Maybe, it is unfashionable to say so, but I see Nidān's goals as fostering this spirit—passing on the gift of public education that I received, to the next generation of readers, editors, reviewers, researchers, and writers, in a bid to jointly create and increase resource accessibility in the humanities. Nidān is not externally funded. Neither I, nor my editors, peer-reviewers, proof-readers, or contributors are paid. We create and strive to produce content that can be easily read and understood without compromising on academic quality, simply because it is important to do so in the spirit of public education itself—the gift our teachers and mentors passed to us. At the expense of being called outdated and old-fashioned, I still experience slight shock when good scholars, beneficiaries of public education themselves, refuse to pass on this gift without remuneration.

Maybe they are right in a way; maybe governments should allocate more funds to public education especially in the humanities—a burden that is often projected on other, equally underfunded research initiatives like Nidān. Maybe governments as well as profit-oriented corporate giants in the publishing world should respect humanities scholars. But that is

perhaps also another debate, concerned with the politics of top-down funding / underfunding in the education sector more generally. The absence of support from above cannot be used as subterfuge to justify our refusal to take personal responsibility for a public education system that not only made us, but also formed our very language of doing meaningful politics and academics. Doing research in the humanities is a conscious political choice (as my mentor at Nidān once said), and the worth and value of how I see my work with Nidān is also to continue in this same spirit.

I have been provided a small humble opportunity to take this personal responsibility, to uphold a public education system that made my own research ideas feasible. It must be up to me (and us)—with the smallest opportunities available to us, as lucky beneficiaries of a public education system, to imbibe its spirit, and support free providers. Without this spirit and responsibility, the compassionate advocacy of Bhawna Parmar's article in this issue that describes the travesty of classroom education for Adivasi students may well be wasted, or relegated to being understood as academic regurgitation. But this is not true! For example, the Adivasi boy she describes in her article, Rueben, is a real person even if anonymised in the article. Unless we resist corporatisation, there will be no way of stopping a potentially destructive trend from unfolding that will continue to devalue research and researchers by 'creating' us as either market successes or market failures.

This hurts poorer students and researchers the most. We can hardly blame them for reading non-complex, simplistic materials that circulate on social media networks free of cost, if we cannot provide them with more-responsible reading materials that they can freely access and understand. Students do not need to respect us personally, though that would indeed be gratifying; they simply need to have enough academic materials to read that is freely available (and understandable) in the public domain—something my generation had access to.

Paradoxically, I still need to convince those who are already convinced of my arguments—scholars of my generation and beneficiaries of the public education system. I still have to battle their fear of making a 'bad career move' in investing their time and effort in a journal that reaches student readers and writers with good ideas, but also those who face a resource crunch. This is marked by the fact that Nidān in its present state is neither SCOPUS rated, nor corporate-incentivised. It is a sincere, university-led journal, that in the spirit of public education, produces good content free of cost through collective effort and motivation.

Nidān has had an intense journey as my predecessor Professor P. Pratap Kumar already outlined in the introduction of the last issue.[2] A product of sincere hard work, and commitment among scholars for over three decades, Nidān was first a department journal, before efforts were made to reach international readership. This year, Nidān has shifted to HASP (Heidelberg Asian Studies Publishing) in Germany, and by making this shift, Nidān has again, luckily, entered a traditional public education model that is still alive, though increasingly underfunded in Germany.

I must assure my readers and Nidān audiences that though I will certainly apply for a SCOPUS rating in the near future, the absence of a corporate rating does not devalue Nidān and the quality of the research it publishes. It cannot devalue the labour and efforts that contributors and editors put into the journal to bring excellent research into the public domain, completely free of cost. Failing to acquire the symbolic badge of a SCOPUS rating, does not mean that we have failed as committed, hardworking, and sincere academics.

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[2] See (https://hasp.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/journals/nidan/article/view/22219/21641), 08.01.2022.

I end my ruminations here, and taking the opportunity to apologise for the slight delay in the publication of this December 2023 volume, since it is already January 2024 as I write this preface. I wish my readers and contributors a wonderful new year 2024, and I hope you will enjoy the Nidān December 2023 issue—there are some wonderful articles and reviews here!

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Introduction

The Social Reproduction of Relational Space in South Asia

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In a relational framework space does not have an objective existence of its own without regard to the people it encompasses.[1] Relational space hinges upon community relations. But what makes communities enter into relation in the first place? Who or what intermediary agencies foment the continuing social reproduction of space relations over extended periods of time? How do these intermediary agencies relate to their own functioning through myth and identitarianism? Moreover, what conception of space emerges when one pays attention to these intermediaries who foster relationships?

The second *Nidan* volume on relational ontologies of space in South Asia throws the spotlight on the social reproduction of relationality, with a particular emphasis on intermediary communities, particularly elite groups of intermediaries, institutions and instruments that galvanize relationality. As some of the essays in this issue indicate, what appears initially as an effort on the part of such intermediaries to bring communities into relation emerges upon deeper scrutiny as their striving to come into presence and identity. The more pressing demand, these essays suggest, is to not only study relationality in its own right but also to comprehend it as a means for elite groups and technocracies to autonomize themselves and to reproduce their own controlling power.

These essays contribute to a longer history of reflections on the part played by elite intermediaries in dominating the social reproduction of relationality in South Asia. C.A. Bayly's *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770–1870* (1998), is instructive. He emphasized for instance, the ability of 18th century commercial groups in North India to imagine the scale of their territorial operations beyond that of the specific regions with which they had financial dealings. By bringing regional markets into relation with a wider trans-regional frame through the means of such complex arrangements of all-India creditworthiness as the *Hundi*, commercial groups could exercise greater command on financial dealings at the local level and therefore manipulate the fortunes of local rulers (Ibid.: 218). The rulers' sense of sovereignty over regional space and their dealings with landholders and cultivators, in essence, became contingent upon the writ of trader and banker intermediaries who drew monetary muscle-power from trans-regional networks and resources.

Bayly also simultaneously drew attention to collectivizing tendencies among these intermediary groups of bankers and traders.[2] Solidarities within these groups could emerge for any number of reasons; they could arise not only on the basis of the shared caste identities, marriage and kinship, but also on account of bonds of trust, credit-worthiness, common religious observances, the ability to reside together in residential areas such as *haveli*s and financial alliances (ibid.: 217-222). In the particular case of Benaras in the 1750s, for instance,

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[1] This theme emerged in conversation with Preeti Sampat whose forthcoming edited volume discusses land as a relational category.

[2] To read more recent writing on collectivizing tendencies among these intermediary groups see Vinay Gidwani (2008), and Ritu Birla (2013).

Bayly wrote about the manner in which the *Naupatti* or the society of nine sharers or burghers coming from different caste backgrounds assumed a powerful collective moral and custumal relationship with the ruler and other land-owning magnates (ibid.: 215-217). The association which emerged initially to provide a loan to the ruler of Awadh during a campaign in Benaras went on eventually to wield considerable authority and autonomy in both political and financial matters in the region (ibid.).

Bayly's attempt at historicizing the rise of a sense of the autonomy of corporate group identity among intermediaries, is a good place to begin building an ontology of relational space in South Asia. In the previous *Nidan* issue on the ontologies of relational space we discussed "socially codified space" as "a social landscape that is at once sustained or reproduced by dominant groups, and resisted or trans-valued by those who are dominated by them" (Maddipati 2023: 11).[3]

This issue continues the conversation on socially codified space, and pays particular attention to the instigators of the mediation between dominant and dominated groups. Some of the articles in this issue specifically scrutinize the exertions of elites and the instrumentality of 'intermediary' institutional frameworks such as planning apparatuses and educational aspirations. Isha Chouksey's cartographic exploration of urbanization in Colonial Nagpur demonstrates the ways in which a sense of spatial boundedness or territoriality can sometimes derive from solidarities and porosities between elite groups. Devanand Kamat's essay shows how the emergence of *Maithil* exceptionalism in colonial and post-colonial India was predicated on the continuing social reproduction of the dominance of elite caste identities in the Mithila region. Pritpal Randhawa and Rachna Mehra's essay on the post-colonial history of Ghaziabad shows how master-planning stratagems rather than being dynamically responsive to the actual needs of the communities they are tasked with serving, only end up reinforcing normative institutional framings of developmentalist aspirations. Similarly, Bhawna Parmar's reflections on aspirations for *Aage Badhna* (moving ahead) through classroom education among Adivasi communities draws attention to how educational apparatuses, not unlike intermediary commercial groups and elites, often end up reproducing existing hierarchies.

Essay Descriptions

Isha Chouksey undertakes a critical cartographic exploration of urbanization in Colonial Nagpur, contesting prevailing notions of segregation and duality between European built environments and the medieval city. Her study calls for a widening of the tapestry of Nagpur's colonial history to incorporate narratives related to the emerging interdependencies between indigenous and western agencies. In particular, Chouksey draws to the fore the transformation of the buffer space in Nagpur that initially emerged as a boundary between the old city and the colonial station on account of a lack of trust between the two settlements in the aftermath of two Anglo-Maratha wars. Chouksey demonstrates the ways in which the emergence of cotton mills in this buffer zone precipitated the in-migration of labourers, leading, eventually, to the emergence of housing provisions in the mill-surrounding areas. The subsequent consolidation of the boundaries of the three microcosms, that is, the colonial station, the mill-area/buffer zone and the medieval city in Nagpur was premised on the rise of groups of elites including former ruling members, traders, immigrant Parsi industrialists, and English-educated individuals. The interdependencies between these elite groups, in turn, contributed to the social reproduction of the urban boundaries of these microcosms.

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[3] See, "Ontologies of Relational Space in South Asia," Nidān: International Journal for Indian Studies (https://hasp.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/journals/nidan/article/view/22220/21643), accessed 09.01.2024.

Elite assertions similarly inform Devanand Kamat's "The Voice of *Mithila Mihir*: The Making of Idea of Mithila." He initially draws attention to the part played by the journal *Mithila Mihir* in the upliftment and promotion of the Maithili language as a separate language in colonial and post-colonial India. Kamat writes about the emergence of Maithili linguistic nationalism in the context of debates preceding the State Reorganisation Commission report that was submitted in September 1955. Drawing on *Mithila Mihir's* article in 1953 on Maheshwar Prasad Singh's speech arguing for a separate Mithila in a Rajya Sabha (the upper house of bicameral parliament of India) session, Kamat foregrounds the manner in which *Maithil* regionalism or conceptions of Mithila as a separate province came to be predicated on an emerging sense of linguistic relationality. However, while Maithili language was promoted as the grounds for the formation of a separate spatial identity among the region's intellectuals in *Mithila Mihir*, the language itself, pace Kamath, received little support publicly. As the mouthpiece of the *Maithil* Mahasabha, *Mithila Mihir* prominently brought to the fore issues that principally related to the concerns of *Maithil* Brahmins and *Maithil Kayastha*s. As a result, *Maithil* identity began to be consolidated as a Brahmin and *Kayastha* identity. It follows therefore, that Mithila as a region was principally the imagined homeland of elite groups such as *Maithil* Brahmins and *Kayastha*s.

Concerns over the social reproduction of normative planning frameworks is at the centre of Pritpal Randhawa and Rachna Mehra's essay on the transformation of the city of Ghaziabad located adjacent to Delhi in Northern India. The city has undergone many changes on account of planned industrialization and residentialisation in the post-Indian-independence period. Randhawa and Mehra chronicle the emergence of a substantial planning apparatus in Ghaziabad, beginning with the Uttar Pradesh Town and Country Planning Office in 1961 and the Ghaziabad Improvement Trust in 1962, through the formation of the Ghaziabad Development authority in 1977. The authors demonstrate how the three Ghaziabad masterplans that were drafted through the auspices of these institutions in the post-independence period in India have not been entirely responsive to the working and living circumstances of the town's burgeoning groups of industrial and migrant workers. Rather, these plans have principally emphasized the establishment of new industrial and urban development areas. Moreover, Ghaziabad's masterplans cannot be studied in isolation; they have to be examined in relation to the history of the planning process in Delhi. Both Delhi and Ghaziabad's masterplans in the post-independence period tilt significantly in the favour of responding to a repeatedly expressed need to systematically apportion Delhi's pressure of urbanization. Ghaziabad's existence as a master-planned city, in that sense, is demonstrably predicated on its contiguity to its most immediate metropolitan neighbour and to its responsiveness to this neighbour's developmental and demographic concerns. In other words, the continuing life of planning processes and planning instrumentality in Ghaziabad hinges on the city's continual social reproduction as an "adjoining urban area" of the city of Delhi.

Bhawna Parmar's essay draws out sharp contrasts between the aspirations and the lived realities of Santhali students in two schools in two villages in the Dumka Sadar subdivision of Dumka district in the Santhal Pargana region of Jharkhand in Eastern India. Parmar builds on the experiences of Rueben and Sunita, both Santhali students, along with others studying in the schools of Dumka, to explore themes related to indigeneity and education. In particular, she critically engages with scholarship centred around a relational comprehension of the formulation of aspirations for *Aage Badhna* (moving ahead) among *Adivasi* communities. While aspirations for *Aage Badhna* may be shaped or proportioned by apprehensions among Adivasi groups over their marginality being reinforced or over their "falling behind," the irony is that the idea of *Aage Badhna* eventually serves to socially reproduce their marginalization. Far from enabling Adivasi students to surge forward, the classroom space delegitimizes *Adivasi* culture,

language, everyday practices, and epistemologies and therefore engineers their eventual withdrawal from education.

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Research Article

Kuchh toh Kar Lenge **'We will Manage Something': Classroom as a Space of Diminishing Aspirations for Adivasi Students**

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This paper is based on the experiences of students of the Santhali community in a classroom in a village in the Dumka district in the Santhal Pargana region of Jharkhand. I draw attention to the aspirations of Santhali students by emphasising their everyday interactions and negotiations with the state and the education system. While juggling between manual labour and the pressures of early marriage, Santhali students strive to acquire educational capital that promises them symbolic distance from manual labour. The spatial practices of schooling emphasise a 'decontextualized modernity', which scholars have noted, deems Adivasis as non-modern and hence in need of reform. The hidden curriculum of the school is Foucauldian, aiming to impose values of mastering self-discipline, and this value becomes central to the relationship Adivasi students have with the education system, embodied by the classroom. This article argues that while the classroom urges Adivasi students to leave their identity outside the school, under the garb of equality, it still others them through pedagogical practices, teacher-student interactions, and a curriculum that defines what is and what is not attainable for them. Employing ethnographic methods, this paper extends Dost and Froerer's (2021) idea of *aage badhna* (progress) that education promises but makes 'almost impossible', by disallowing Adivasi students the promised social mobility that shapes their aspirations. In its exclusion of the Adivasi identity, the state education thus excludes and fails Adivasi students.

Aspirations, Adivasi, Education, Reproduction, Santhali

Introduction

Rueben,[1] a 13-year-old Christian Santhali student studies in a government school in a village in Jharkhand. While sitting in his classroom, he talks about the level of education that he can attain. Rueben wants to go into the army, and imagines himself protecting his country. But sitting in the 8th grade, he finds it difficult to actually learn and attain the skills he would need to reach his goals. Rueben feels he will not be able to stay in school for long, because he eventually has to financially support his family by finding work. He says staying in school till the 8th is still easy but after that he will have to enrol into a secondary school that is 12 kms away from home. He imagines travelling by bicycle which will consume two hours each day, leaving him less time to fulfil responsibilities at home. He thinks the demands of the 9th grade would be much higher and feels that he does not have enough knowledge to understand the topics that are taught in the 9th grade. Even though he has managed to come to school on most days, he says he does not know many topics well because the teachers do not teach properly in school. He does want to move forward in life but the chances of this happening, according to him, are almost next to nil. He explained in an interview:

> Sister, I don't think I will be able to study much. But I will try to at least finish 12th grade. I think I can try studying till the 12th on my own by figuring out my own

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[1] Names of all the students in this article have been anonymised.

finances. But from 9th onwards, one needs to study with a lot of discipline. I will have to enrol myself into tuition classes. I will have to buy books. That school has a different kind of education. I will have to work really hard. My parents will let me study further but for them work is more important. If I get to study after this school, I will.

This vignette shows how the lived realities of Santhali students clash with the aspirations they hold. Rueben, like everyone else, has been promised opportunities by means of education, but the way he experiences education and the factors that shape his aspirations, simultaneously render his possibility of achieving his goals impossible. By studying Rueben's experiences within the classroom, I want to delve deeper into how the aspirations of Adivasi students are formed through classroom interactions, specifically in relation with their Adivasi identity. This article will bring forth the experience of Rueben and Sunita, both Santhali students, along with others studying in the schools of Dumka, to explore their relation with education. For Santhali students, there are four ways of relating to the education system within a classroom: First, the promise of progress or *aage badhna* through education. Second, financial realities that hinder their *aage badhna* that the education system fails to acknowledge. Third, the elimination of Adivasi identity, culture and the customs of students, through the education system; and fourth, the punishment they incur for the very Adivasi identity that imposes 'civility' on them, creating a citizen-subject relationship that the hidden curriculum of the education system forces upon Adivasi students. Highlighting student experiences within classrooms, and their understanding of education and *aage badhna*, this paper foregrounds how the education system offers a tantalizing glimmer of progress but simultaneously actively obstructs the facilitation of this progress for Adivasi students.

The research will extend the idea of *aage badhna* as laid out by Dost and Froerer (2021) to outline the role of education. Building on the idea of *aage badhna*, this article explores and foregrounds the interaction between the Adivasi identity through the case study of Santhali students and the education system within a classroom. Taking into account the fact that education does play a role in enhancing dignity (Jakimow 2016), it equips people with literacy and numeracy skills, and helps to negotiate their agency and autonomy, enhancing confidence and banishing inferiority (Jeffrey et al. 2004). I lay special emphasis on how the Adivasi identity gets understood within a classroom and how this understanding reshapes Adivasi aspirations and ensures the continuity of their current realities. The research for this paper is based on field insights from two schools in two villages in the Dumka Sadar subdivision of Dumka district in the Santhal Pargana region of Jharkhand in Eastern India where Santhals live in the largest numbers (Biswas 1956). There, I conducted a series of workshops to understand Adivasi aspirations and their idea of education. Carried out through an ethnographic lens, the methodology involved a mixed approach, with workshops being carried out in two schools with students from the 7th and 8th grade in upper primary schools. 18 students participated in the workshops from each school, apart from which information was collected through semi-structured interviews and conversations that took place over a period of time (2022). The activities in the workshops included students making a timeline of their own lives, their daily tasks and making images of their future selves. Further, to understand their relationship with each other, and the surroundings, they were asked to map their own villages in terms of access, and map their relationships with others in terms of familiarity and closeness. Other activities included having them chart out pathways for different career options. They were also provided with mobile phones and asked to interview each other. Students, in one school, were provided with mobile devices for 3 days and were asked to click pictures and make videos as per their own choices. This was to enable them to exercise some control over their narrative. These methods, by privileging experiences and feelings, helped students to transcend the boundaries of 'one correct answer'. By allowing them to decide what they wanted to capture

on the devices and enabling them to design questions according to what they wanted to ask each other, students could go deeper into aspects they wanted to explore. Further, by including game-based activities, students could move away from the rigid structure of the classroom, in which the workshops were being facilitated. Both schools, where workshops were held, had a student base that was predominantly the Santhali and Mundari Adivasi population with a small number of students from OBC backgrounds. The research focused only on Santhali students. One of the largest tribal groups of India, the *Santhal*s, reside predominantly in Jharkhand, Bengal, northern Odisha, Bihar and Assam. They speak an Austro-Asiatic group of languages, and their values and way of life are different from Hindus (Carrin 2015). Both the schools were situated in Santhal Pargana, where Santhals have landholding due to the Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act (1949), but the district now has many stone quarries which offer livelihood options to the Santhali (Rao 2005), along with daily wage labour and masonry.

Development discourse is abundant with references to aspiration. There has been a growing corpus of literature, trying to understand the aspirations of Adivasi students. Finnan et al. (2017) focuses on how schools as a social space affect tribal students' aspirations and imagined futures and provides opportunities to hope. Froerer (2011), while comparing the aspirations of Christian and Hindu Adivasis in Chhattisgarh, demonstrates the role of church as a form of acquired social capital for the young, converting their educational qualifications into viable livelihood options. Whereas Ansell et al. (2020) in the Indian context focus on Adivasi students' experience with education in Chhattisgarh, revealing that aspirations that education promises become true only for a few, Dost and Froerer (2021) focus on the relational approach to understand how Adivasi students create viable aspirations for themselves. Morrow (2013), taking case studies of Adivasi and marginalised caste students, explores the gap between international neo-liberal policies for the youth and the complexities of young people's lives in the continuous diminishing of aspirations, especially in regard to the structural constraints of poverty. The present article builds further on this, by emphasising the Adivasi identity and how it informs aspirations. Since research on Adivasi identity and aspiration is inadequate, it is at times clubbed together with other marginal groups and their aspirations, and presented as a monolith. The article moves away from the discourse that suggests that classroom spaces provide possibilities for a better future, regardless of who is entering it, as corroborated by state discourse and existing literature. Instead, this paper emphasises the relational comprehension of classroom spaces vis-a-vis the Adivasi identity.

Before plunging into research findings, it is important to understand the educational background of the field area: Dumka in Jharkhand. Jharkhand was declared a separate state in November 2000. With 26.2% of its population falling under the Scheduled Tribes category, according to the 2011 census, Jharkhand is home to 32 different tribes (Census of India 2011). Carved out of Bihar in 2000, the state houses 8.29% of the total tribal population of the country with 13 districts fully covered within the schedule V areas,[2] and three districts partially covered by the same schedule. The new state, located in an important mining and industrial zone, has not been able to implement radical reforms, but it has tried to extend education among the Adivasis (Carrin 2015). But even though the state boasts of being resource rich, 37% of the population of Jharkhand is below the poverty line (World Bank 2016). 78% of the marginalised tribes in Jharkhand live in rural areas of which 51.6% of STs are again below the poverty line (Ministry of Tribal Affairs 2013). This begs the question why are marginalised tribes systemically excluded from the development discourse, and stuck in the vicious cycles of

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[2] The fifth schedule of the Indian constitution deals with the administration and control of certain areas inhabited by tribal people, in 10 states in India that are called schedule V areas, and subject to special governance mechanisms.

poverty? The education level of tribal students of Jharkhand points towards the same systemic exclusion. The net enrolment ratio for scheduled tribes in Jharkhand at the higher secondary level has dropped from 90.1% to 26.9% at the primary level, suggesting a high dropout rate by the time students reach 11th grade (Government of India 2022). Jharkhand, ranks at the bottom in the large states category, in the School Education Quality Index. It has a literacy rate of 66.41% which is much lower than the national average (Census of India 2011). A glance at the learning outcomes of students in Jharkhand indicate the to the experience of education on the ground. In government schools in Jharkhand, only 11% of students in Grade 3 and only 29% in Grade 5 are able to read Grade 2 level texts (Gurdatta 2022).

Classroom as a Space for Facilitating *aage badhna* through Education

Education has been seen as an equalizing force and as a symbol of national progress since India's independence. Sen, among many other scholars, has spoken ardently about the power of education, that has the power to improve quality of life, and increase a person's capability to earn and be free of income poverty (Sen 1999). In the national development discourse, education is seen as a means for the poor and the marginalized to 'get ahead' and get a chance to live the 'good life', sought to be actuated through state policies, and communicated through normative aspirations (Jakimow 2016). This discourse is reiterated through the calligraphy on one of the walls of a classroom, in one of the schools I visited in Dumka. This inscription eloquently reads: *Siksha hi safalta ki kunji hai* (education is the key to success).

The New Education Policy of 2020 confers on education the power of being a great leveller and defines it as the best tool for achieving economic and social mobility, inclusion, and equality (Government of India 2020). For students like Rueben, government schools are, arguably, the only gateway through which to access education and hence, the only way to get ahead, at least according to dominant discourse. Dominant discourses of education that promise a good life, offer hope to the marginalised but do very little in actually to provide students with realistic opportunities (Jakimow 2016). Jakimow (2016: 26) writes, how this hope instead ends-up coercing the marginalized to invest in the promise of education which comes with a condition that only those who have the will to invest in education can get ahead. In short, investment in education reformulates the aspiration to succeed. I follow Huijsmans et al.'s (2021: 3) definition of aspiration, in my analysis, to mean "an orientation towards a desired future". These futures can be either individual or collective; they can be short-term or long-term, and they can include imagination, affect, and material practices (ibid.: 3). But aspirations are also socially produced, and never completely individual. They are produced through an interaction with the social life, and can be seen as a cultural capacity (Appadurai 2004). "The sociological and anthropological conceptualisation of aspirations situates its production as part of the social" (Hujismans et al. 2021: 5). Aspirations, according to Dost and Froerer (2021), are produced relationally as part of the social, through dialogues with parents, peers, and through the dominant narrative perpetuated by the educational system (Dost and Froerer 2021: 15). Many of these dialogues and hopes are formulated through interactions that take place in the classroom, or through interaction with what the classroom symbolizes. Aspirations can hence be situated within a doxic social logic: ones that fall under the dominant discourse and thus, have a "taken-for-granted status" (Zipin et al. 2015, Hujismans et al. 2021: 5). Or they can be situated within habituated logic—the social structures that decide what is possible (Zipin et al. 2015). This can be seen as Froerer (2012) further questions education as a social good and shows how it plays a role in diminishing the aspirations of Adivasi girls, because of a lack of social and cultural capital. These aspirations take shape within the classroom, even though media, parental outlook, upbringing, and inputs from the larger society. But when students enter a classroom, the classroom becomes a space and foundation that moulds and provides them with viable pathways to their aspirations. The third conceptualisation of

aspirations as per Zipin et al. (2015) explained by Hujismans et al. (2021: 6) is the idea of emergent aspirations, the ones which are not situated in the other two but are "agentic impulses towards alternative futures".
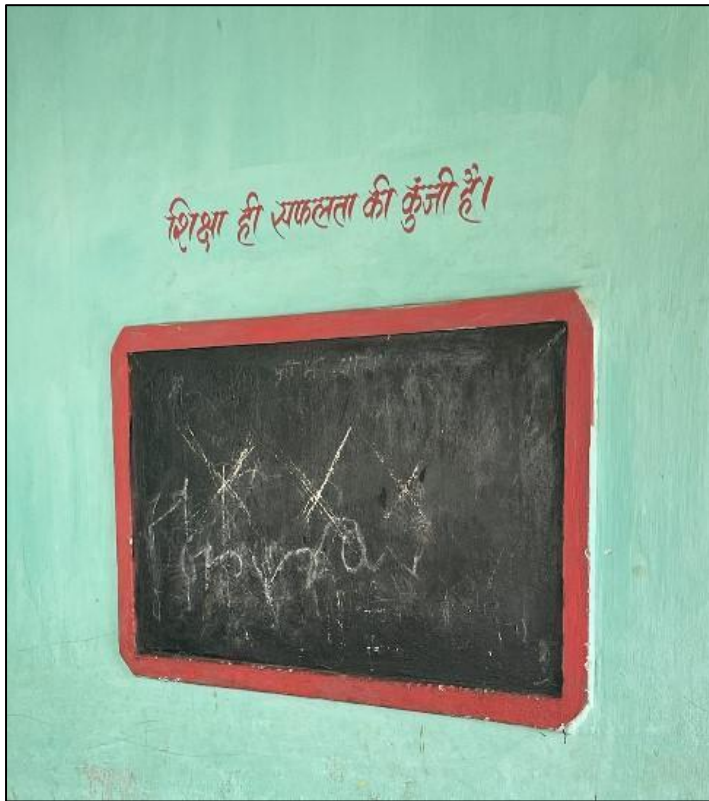
Image 1.1: A Classroom Wall at Rueben's School (source: author).

A vital aspect of *aage badhna*, as Dost and Froerer (2021: 15) expound through their study of Chhattisgarh, is to move away from *peeche rehna* (lagging behind). Not being a part of the education system, hence, means that you will lose out on the opportunities it promises. Dost and Froerer place the aspirations of Adivasi youth in the category of emergent aspirations, where students reimagine their futures by conceptualising more viable pathways in the face of structural constraints (ibid.: 125). Based on their research, they further propose that the school is a space that simultaneously plays a "transformative and limiting role": transformative because education provides students with opportunities that may not present itself otherwise, conveyed by instilling the unidirectional logic between hard work and success (ibid.: 121).

Limiting, on the other hand, because of the narrow range of occupations that are described as available and possible to achieve through the school curriculum, accompanied by a lack of discussion about this by the teachers (bid.: 121). Research shows that even if students finish schooling, their chances of securing employment remain low as there are not enough jobs for the educated young, resulting in an increase in the number of the educated unemployed (Jeffrey 2010: 467). But because of the prospect of gaining educational capital through education, this has not stopped the marginalized from subscribing to education. The lack of education is seen as a reason for poor livelihood outcomes, and education is seen as a pathway to a better life for the next generation (Jakimow 2016: 15). Jakimow (ibid.: 20) elaborates on how education fails to live up to its promise for students from Scheduled Caste communities in rural Telangana, and also comments on how hope for a better life is upheld, notwithstanding the failure of education. Further, Jakimow is of the opinion (ibid.: 21) that education provokes the building of aspirations that are "not objectively realizable". Even if hope is deemed lost for the present generation, it gets transferred to future generations as a possibility. Jakimow concludes (ibid.: 27) that holding on to hope is almost an obligation, because the thought of a future where the next generation remains equally entrenched in manual labour, is also unbearable. Hence,it is the "almost impossibility" of reaching aspirations that students set out with, which is the reason why most people hold on to education (ibid.: 12).

While holding on to hope might be true for all students, the hope held by the students from different communities interacts in a special way within the same classroom. While certain students come closer to realizing their hopes, others do not. Even though Adivasi students do

not survive the promises of education, they nonetheless gain educational capital, accruing confidence, language, and the etiquette to make important social connections with outsiders—something that contributes to the rise of meaningful alternatives, and often, even more viable future trajectories (Dost and Froerer 2021: 125). Dost and Froerer thus take on a more constructive approach to understanding how young people reframe their aspirations. Reframing aspirations from a relational lens, they posit that the marginalized youth distinguishes itself in the face of depravity. Through acts of agency, they reconstitute their aspirations even when the futures promised through education prove unsustainable. Dost and Froerer (2021: 111) view their "orientation" towards the future as "assertions of identity" that transcend the current present. While Dost and Froerer (2021) ascertain that hope forecloses achievements for Adivasi students, they do not speak of the influence of interactions within the classroom that informs the formation of aspiration. Even though the forming of aspiration is theorised through a relational approach, the influence of the Adivasi identity and its role in the (re)framing aspirations remain unsubstantiated. What is lacking is: how does the Adivasi identity and its historicity interact with the design of the education system to inform aspirations? I argue that the Adivasi identity has been overlooked in prior conceptualisations of aspiration and its formation. This research delves deeper into this question of identity, describing how this identity is constructed and reinforced as inferior, which again, informs Adivasi aspirations.

The Adivasi Experience of a Classroom

The construction of a separate 'tribal' identity was undertaken as a colonial project (Kuper 1988) which attempted to define and classify the demography of India, where Adivasis were seen as the "living remnants of Europe's evolutionary past" (Desai 2013). Adivasis are often referred to as *jangli* (wild), with wildness being defined in opposition to civilisation, or something that precedes, or is outside civilisation (Skaria 1988). Santhals in many colonial accounts have been called 'savages' and 'primitive' but good workers, with Canney (1928) calling for a careful study of whether Santhals are not a 'degenerate' but rather just 'a backward race'. This discourse has facilitated a stereotype about 'tribals' as backward, and in need of upliftment and evolution. This continuing stereotype endures as a value in the upliftment projects conducted by the Indian government. Almost all developmental projects on Adivasis seek to propel them towards civilisation, which includes education. As part of the same argument, it is rebelling against the colonial state and the national elite, as response to subordination, that also gives rise to a distinctive Adivasi identity (Desai 2015). Adivasis have thus had a troubled relationship with the state-led education system. Having the lowest literacy rate in the country, the census of 2011 reveals that the literacy rate among Scheduled Tribes stood at 59% against an overall literacy rate of 73% in the country (Census of India 2011). Veerbhandranaika et al. (2012) illuminates the two interrelated reasons for this: one, the state fails to ensure that schooling reaches the Adivasi child, and two, Adivasis have perceived schooling as a tool of colonial and nationalist oppression, and have hence demonstrated limited engagement with it. The state education system and the classroom aims to treat each pupil as equal, and hence propagates a universal curriculum, a uniform way of teaching, pedagogy, and design. Balagopalan (2003) outlines the experiences of the first generation Adivasi learners and their parents within the system, of their negotiation of existing in a space of formal schooling that privileges particular ways of being, and generating specific forms of knowledge. The spatial and temporal practices of school conveys a 'decontextualized modernity' (Maithreyi et al. 2022), that does not representatively include Adivasi ways of living. Defined through a fixed pedagogy, it is designed at creating 'separations: separation between home and school, between manual, household labour and economy, and intellectual labour' (Maithreyi et al. 2022, Balagopalan 2003). An Adivasi child finds herself in a space that rejects her way of life, and moulds her instead, into becoming a subordinate citizen. The aim of

modern schooling and its hegemonic practices in creating a 'rational, homogenous citizen-subjects' out of diverse populations thus tries to reform Adivasi populations, and this marks the experience of Adivasi students with discrimination (Balagopalan 2003).

There have been several calls to revise school curricula from an Adivasi perspective, to reassess its relevance for them, but this has been to no avail (Kumar 1983). Velaskar (2010: 67) points to how, apart from rhetorical advocacy and theoretical emphasis on the education of marginalized groups in the 1968 educational policy,

> …the education of Dalits, tribals and girls was almost a non-issue in the policy which made no special financial, curricular or pedagogic commitment to their education….Dalit and Adivasi dominated areas suffered sustained exclusion or piecemeal inclusion.

Many research endeavours have highlighted the need for schools that are more open to tribal culture, taught by Adivasi teachers, and an indigenized curriculum as expressed by *Santhal*s themselves (Carrin 2015). But the tribal lifestyle is rejected by the mainstream and the non-tribal elite, including the ones who design the education system, making Adivasis feel excluded and punished for their cultural difference. State education, as it appears to them, is a means to destroy their social fabric and cultural heritage (Kumar 1983). Even though Adivasis perceive education as not the only priority and an unwelcome imposition in the present condition (Desai 2013), they acknowledge the cultural changes that are introduced by modern education in their community life. The inescapability of their existential situation renders them choiceless, as the option to depend on earlier forest-based livelihoods are also now, increasingly precarious (Maithreyi et al. 2022). The importance of education is understood as enabling a move away from manual labour to jobs that are inside rooms and are not as arduous (Jakimow 2016, Froerer 2021). However, the Adivasi acceptance of schooling as a means to get ahead in life does not mean that the education system itself creates any space for them to access the benefits it promises.

The Value of *Mehnat* (Hard work)
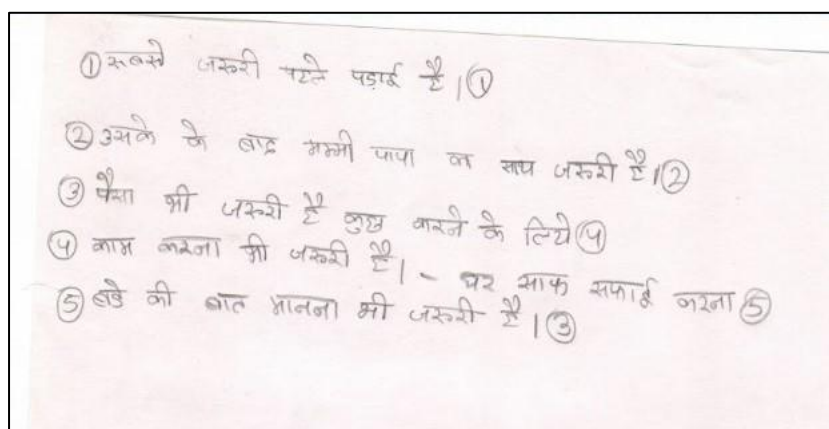
Image 1.2: A Santhali Student marking what is Important for them. The numbers on the Right indicate that Education comes First (source: author).

The education system opens up the possibility of nurturing different aspirations among students, and aspirations situated in the doxic logic of 'you can achieve anything if you work hard enough' is a powerful message for students within workshops. Almost everyone says: *padhai karna bohot zaroori hai* (it is very important to study).

Rueben wishes to be an army officer, whereas Sunita aspires to be a teacher. When asked what steps Rueben would take to enlist in the army, he says he would first have to finish school. He has little idea about life after school, and says that he will figure it out once he has finished his 12th grade. For him, the important thing currently is to focus on his studies, and finish schooling without further

hurdles. In one workshop activity, Rueben drew himself as he wanted to see himself in the future, as an army officer with the flag of India in one hand and a flower in the other. He says he wants to be of service to his country, and the flower represents the love he feels for it. In his quest to realize his dream, he says he will have to do *mehnat* (hard work) in the classroom. Many children in both schools in Dumka where workshops were held, repeated that education was very important to them, and if they wanted to realize their dreams, they would have to do *mehnat*. But the question of what *mehnat* entails, confuses them; they look down and repeatedly mutter under their breaths: *ache se padhai karni padegi* (we must study hard). This statement, which is not their own, seems to echo what the teachers constantly tell students. The statement emphasizes the onus of succeeding in the education system to lie on Adivasi students themselves.
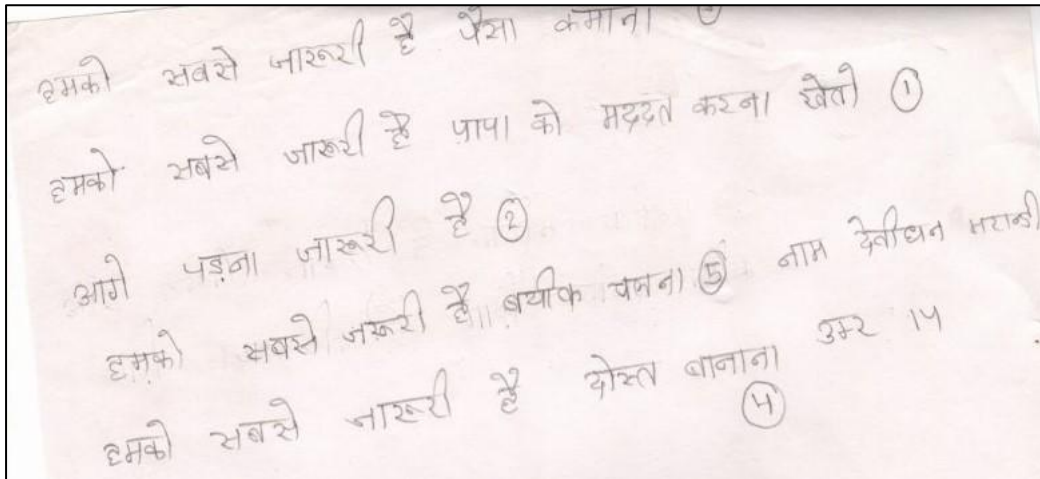
Image 1.3: Another Santhali Student marking Priorities. The Numbers on the Right indicate that Education comes Second (source: author).

The math teacher in one of the schools said: "these kids (pointing to Adivasi students) need to work hard and open their minds; only then will they be able to reap the benefits of education." While Santhali students harbour aspirations to become army officers, nurses, doctors, teachers, these aspirations do not find their way back to their parents. Sunita says: "I have not told my parents that I want to become a teacher, otherwise they will feel burdened." The same opinion is repeated by Jonathan who wants to go into the army: "I have not told my father yet; I have to earn money for them; they will feel pressured if I tell them I want to go in the army." But students unanimously declared that *aage badhna* was very important. Rueben wants to buy a bike in future, a drawing of which he has stuck on the classroom notice board. *Aage badhna* for students is expressed in the same way, as was defined by Dost and Froerer (2021), linking the concept to a gain in social status, spatial mobility, the acquisition of material things, and the enjoyment of freedoms. These aspirations are formed through symbols and through information that the students are exposed to in the classroom.

In one workshop activity, students were asked to chart-out two career paths for a fictitious *Santhali* student who was their own age. The first was to chart out a pathway towards becoming a teacher or a doctor, and the other was a pathway towards becoming a mine worker, or a daily wage labourer. These career options were picked through discussions with the students. The options of a teacher and doctor were listed by students, according to what they see in their books or aspire towards, whereas mine working or the work of a daily wage labourer were careers they saw in their everyday surroundings. There are many stone quarries in Dumka (Rao 2005), and it is not uncommon for students or their family members to work in one. Their lived realities influenced their career choices in the activity that was carried out in groups of three. I elaborate here on the outcomes of 2 groups. The first group had Rueben along with Pooja and Duryodhan; and the second group had Sunita along with Preeti and

Neetu. The students were also asked to describe the roles played by their parents, the school, the community, and the self, in decisions leading to deciding on a particular career option. The groups were first asked to draw a character and give them a name. This character was supposed to be a bearer of backgrounds similar to theirs, and hence s/he was a Santhali student of the 8th grade. The students were then asked to chart-out aspirational career paths for their character, like teacher and doctor. They were disconcerted while doing so, because apart from saying *mehnat karni padegi* (we must work hard), they did not have any clear idea about how the path ahead would materialize. They charted-out the path in a disjointed way that argued that their character would first have to gain financial assistance, and then gain good education: schooling, enrolment in tuition classes, and prepare and appear for exams. The same was the case with group 2, where the girls could not imagine how their character would become a doctor. Even as they tried to chart-out different paths, the realities of their lives made them stop and think. For example, questions like how the character would secure adequate financial support to carry out their chosen career, or whether school education would be adequate to become a doctor later, confused them.

Leaving this exercise where it stood, they next moved on to imagining how their character would start working in a mine. They had elaborate explanations on what role the school, the teachers, the community, and their parents had to play in pushing their character into mine work. The reasons to go into mine work included medical emergency in the family, the family's need for money that would push their character into working part-time along with school, and / or the accidental death of the character's parents. On the school front, their character was imagined to have left education and gone into mining work because of the very demanding nature of schoolwork. Their character was unable to keep up with the curriculum and her studies. She was perhaps heavily beaten and punished in the classroom by teachers, and she had perhaps also failed the exams. Their character may not have been able to attend regular classes, and unable to understand the textbooks. Not being able to do homework, would only have compelled teachers to increase their punishment of the character, resulting in the latter first falling behind in her studies, and eventually dropping out of school. The community's role was seen in terms of parents pushing the character to earn money instead of wasting time in school. All these reasons, Rueben said, lay just one misfortune away for him and for his peers; it was something he witnessed many people in the village go through. Returning to the prompt of the character becoming a teacher or doctor, Rueben, after deliberation declared that the character would have to work on a farm to earn money first, to financially support the family,[3] in order to fund her higher education plans of becoming a teacher. For Rueben, higher education in this case meant that the character would have to continue with school beyond the 10th grade. Rueben drew up an elaborate plan for himself, if he were to pursue a career in teaching. After pondering on the financial requirements that becoming a teacher would entail, he declared that he would have to work every morning from 4am to 12noon to earn money, after which he could go to school to study, and then return home to help his parents with farming. Notwithstanding the unsustainability of this routine, Rueben said that undertaking higher education would at least require this amount of hard work from him, so that he would have enough capital to fund himself. This capital would aid him to buy better books for studies after the 8th grade, that in turn would help him to get into tuition classes and thereafter get admitted to college. He would have to attend school regularly, and pay attention in the classroom. He tried to plan about how he would build a better relationship with his teachers,

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[3] Rueben is aware of the Pre-matric government scholarship that Scheduled Tribe students receive. He receives 1500 rupees every year, which his parents save, to be used in an event of an emergency. Along with this, Rueben received 600 rupees for his uniform and 4500 rupees for a cycle. Rueben believes the scholarship amount is not enough to make a tangible difference to his education.

and the solution, he thought, lay in him finishing all his homework on time, and pushing his teachers to teach more.

Pursuing a career would, however, also be very isolating for him. Rueben imagined, he would not get much support from his parents or teachers, and would have to embark on his journey alone. The thought scared him, but he felt content thinking that if he actually managed to become a teacher, everyone, including his parents, teachers and the community would finally respect him and acknowledge his capabilities and not brand him 'unable'. Rueben, without knowing how the education system was ideally supposed to be providing for him, found himself grasping at straws, without many options in the face of harsh reality. The onus of moving forward in his life, to climb the ladder of social mobility, lay squarely on his shoulders. In case he was unable to achieve the mobility promised to him by the education system, he would accept defeat and acknowledge that the fault lay with him. As Kumar (1983: 1568) writes "the failure to remain in advanced institutions is attributed to the marginalized students' own inadequacies, and not to the inadequacies of the school curriculum and the school system to which they were exposed throughout childhood and adolescence." Similarly, Sunita in her group declared that their character would first have to ply a rickshaw to sustain her education that was necessary to become a doctor. She would have to get better books, enrol herself in tuition classes and attend school daily. Even thereafter, the possibility of becoming a doctor seemed slim: *patanahi, kaise hoga. lagta nahi hai ho paega, doctor banna toh bohot mushkil hai, hum jaise log kaha bante hain* (I do not how it will happen; it will be too difficult to become a doctor; how can people like us become doctors), she rhetorically says. In either scenario, the student characters seemed to be fighting an already lost battle, in the face of their current realities. These obstacles did not enable them to make meaningful career choices. As another student Duryodhan said:

> I don't know if I will be able to write the exam for the post of police, for that I will have to at least finish 10th. I am not sure if that would be possible. I have to work at the farm, and might have to go out to earn money after 10th. Will have to carry rocks (*pathar wagera uthana padega*). I have not worked in a mine yet; but maybe when I am a little older I would have to go there. If I do not find any work here, then I will have to go to work in the mine.

Duryodhan's feelings are reflected in Jakimow's (2016: 26) analysis of why students stick to education even when it seems to be failing in its promises. The reason is the absence of alternative routes to create a good life. This attachment with an "almost impossible" hope of ever reaching their aspirations, lowers their expectations from life, and gives rise to negative consequences that reinforce their structural position of marginality. While education opens the doors for Adivasi students to dream of careers like that of an army officer, teacher, police, and the likes; the reality is still overwhelming. To achieve these goals in the future, they would have to inevitably engage in manual labour. The best they hoped, was to perhaps start a small business, like a shop in the village. Jonathan, from the 7th grade expressed it in this way: "At least I will be able to study till 8th, so I will try to open a shop. I will do something or the other (*kuchh toh kar lenge*)." Dost and Froerer (2021: 125) show how schooling leads to the narrowing of young people's aspirations by progressively channelling the "forward movement" towards a limited set of possibilities that are unattainable. Even after they realize that their aspirations are unattainable, young people reframe their aspirations into locally viable outcomes. In the lives of Adivasi students from Dumka, it is clear that locally viable outcomes remain the ones that they see their parents, or their elder siblings and relatives take recourse to. For them, even though they are more educated than their parents, and have reached a higher grade, their career and work options remain the same. Rueben, for instance, talks of a brother-in-law, who after finishing 10th grade, still remains a *chaddmistri* (stone mason). By

citing such examples, he tries to convey what the future realistically holds for him, and many other students like him, who are currently enrolled in government schools.

The Othering of Adivasis

Rueben and Sunita's school, a primary and upper primary government school in a village in Dumka has 6 teachers per 210 students, sporadic electricity, and no playground or boundary wall. 3 of the teachers look after standards 1st to 5th, and the other 3 are entrusted with standards 6th to 8th. Even though teachers are allotted classrooms, they teach subjects interchangeably depending on where the need arises. The classrooms of the 6th, 7th, and 8th standards are situated on the first floor, whereas the rest are on the ground floor. With one teacher perpetually absent, the other two teachers of the middle school seldom climb to the first floor to address or teach students. "The teachers do not climb up for days; each teacher comes only once in a week" Sunita says, when asked about the teachers' classroom interactions. With a skewed teacher-student ratio, teachers have to extend themselves to be present in all classes at the same time. They enter a classroom for a few minutes where they assign classwork and move to the next class. This translates into students jotting down the contents of their books into their notebooks or mugging up the answers written on the board. "Sir comes once a week and gives us maths classwork but does not explain how to do the problems. He just comes and gives classwork and then leaves; if we are unable to write the correct answer then he just asks us to repeat it next week," Rueben disappointedly explains as he elaborates on the gap between his curiosity to learn more and the way teachers teach in school. Teachers tend to take help from older students or monitors, who make sure that the students are finishing their classwork in the absence of teachers. A blueprint of rote learning, this process affects student learning. As many students recount, they just practise writing, try to read stories, or mug up questions and answers, as directed by teachers. Hence, students often find themselves without a teaching presence or reliable guidance about the subjects they are prescribed in classrooms.

The teachers' explanation of poor learning is the behemoth of the various administrative tasks assigned to them, which gives them lesser time to spend in the classroom. Administrative duties and a skewed student-teacher ratio is however, peeling away just one layer of the problem. The many layers underneath need to be understood in further depth. Even when teachers are present in the classroom, they do not strive for excellence. They expect only a 'minimum level' of performance from students from marginalised backgrounds (Velaskar 1990). Teachers are satisfied with imparting bare minimum knowledge, which they justify by pinning it on to the alleged incapabilities of 'these Adivasi students'. Teachers claim that Adivasi students are cognitively less capable of grasping concepts that are designated for the learning level of their standard. As one science teacher put it: "They don't have enough brains to work hard and reach beyond labouring (careers). All the smart kids are in private schools; we get students who are less capable; so, it is unfair to expect them to reach the same height as students from private schools." This suggests that the inability faced by students to encash the social mobility offered by schools is seen as being a natural product of their talents or lack thereof. The label 'ineducable', detailed by Balagopalan (2003) fits here, as teachers deem Adivasi students as not smart enough to assimilate whatever is taught in the classrooms, a notion that reinforces the idea of community 'backwardness'. Their sense of responsibility and duty towards students becomes skewed, when teachers feel students lack the capacity to compete with their privileged private-school-going counterparts. This is also confirmed by the practices employed by teachers in Sunita's school. Coming once a week to allot classwork, not entering classrooms for days, and spending time on the phone in the hallway, are some ways in which teachers fail students. During examinations, teachers help the students in writing answers, so that they achieve passing grades, and are not held back at the previous level in

school. Rueben recounts various ways in which teachers in his school helped him with writing answers during exams. Teachers are known to write answers on the boards, google the questions, and individually convey answers to students, or help them arrive at the answer by engaging them in conversation. Rueben says, even though he does not understand math properly, he continues to get good grades. Carried out as a systemic strategy to increase enrolment, retain students, and bolster promotion rates, these strategies show an increase in the education level of the state and the country, while learning outcomes remain abysmal. Actual knowledge, growth, and cognitive development does not seem to be the real goal of the education system, especially when it comes to catering to marginalized students. Velaskar (2010) confirms this by saying that while the state's educational innovations enable the economically and socially subordinate to get a foothold inside the system, it continues to exclude them from attaining the educational level that really counts.

As knowledge transmission and growth takes a backseat, discipline in the form of corporal punishment comes to the forefront. In this apparatus, as defined by Balagopalan (2003) when describing formal schooling in the modern state, teachers are predisposed to carrying out the functions of the state. The schools have non-Adivasi teachers for the upper and primary levels. Even though the principal of Rueben and Sunita's school is from the *Santhal* community, non-Adivasi, upper caste teachers seemed to be in a decision making role. The principal agrees to everything the teachers say about Adivasi students. Deeming Adivasi students ineducable, allows for limited education, with the primary aim becoming discipline imparting, which is the prime objective of creating 'citizen-subjects' out of Adivasi students. Classrooms act as a space for instilling discipline in the minds of the young, and Adivasi students become its primary-most recipients. Teachers take immense pride in their Adivasi students reciting the national anthem standing in the correct posture, or taking the pledge for India. If students falter, joining the assembly late, or not wearing correct uniforms, they are corporally punished or verbally abused for not following orders. "Corona really affected the discipline we had taught these students. The school was shut for 2 years and whatever discipline we had maintained in the school premises; the students forgot everything. This has been the biggest drawback. They do not even remember that they have to stand for the national anthem," one teacher said, when expressing exasperation with the 'undisciplined' nature of Adivasi students.

Discipline, for teachers, takes precedence over didactic education because it is more important for teachers that Adivasi students follow instructions and remain amenable. "They beat us more than they teach us," mumbled Rueben hesitantly, fearful of this information reaching his teacher. Jonathan said, "they just try to find an excuse to hit us." Adivasi students are aware that the corporal punishment they receive is not commensurate with the mistakes or disrespect that they may have caused teachers. A girl from the OBC caste who studies in the same class as Adivasi students happily tells me that she does not get beaten by the teacher, as she is a good girl. But she is still scared because she has seen how teachers beat Adivasi students. Students are known to stop coming to school if they cannot bear the punishment. To be physically violent is the only way by which teachers try to discipline and mould students into good citizens. Morrow et al. (2015) demonstrates that students from marginalized backgrounds are more likely to be punished in school, and this punishment has adverse and negative impacts on their cognitive skills. The Othering that students confront, as Ramachandaran (2023) shows, is perhaps most pronounced in the Schedule V Areas of the country (see fn. 1), which schools like the ones in Dumka fall under. Corporal punishment is just one of the ways of 'civilizing' Adivasi students, and assimilating them into the mainstream. Teachers are quick to point out that Adivasi students are not interested in studying. Many researchers have pointed to how teachers place blame about Adivasi student disinterest in education on their parents' illiteracy, as factors that contribute to the falling back of Adivasi students—that is, apart from their allegedly innate ineducability (Desai 2015). A teacher said

along similar lines: "Their parents do daily wage labour; they don't understand the importance of education; nor do they want their kids to be educated. They just want them to earn money as it will bring more money into the house." This is why teachers think Adivasi students are disinterested in education, believing that they just come to the classroom to idle away time. This is far from the truth, as many Adivasi children categorically said that they wanted to learn more. They specially wanted to learn languages, because they knew it would help them to communicate better. They expressed the need to learn English, as it might help them to progress. Rueben mentioned that he found a YouTube channel that teaches maths, and he tries to follow it because he really wants to learn maths. Teachers' perceptions about Adivasi student disinterest and ineducability informs their teaching and their disinterest in teaching Adivasi students. While many scholars have said that the solution to this is to have more Adivasi teachers, Desai (2015: 154) notes that, while schools may have an increased number of Adivasi teachers, at times, the internalized biases of society and its oppression, results in duplicating an older dynamic between teachers and students.

Ramachandaran et al. (2013) illuminates the disjuncture between teacher perceptions and reality, when describing how students from marginalized backgrounds perform in school. Santhali students said, they loved studying Hindi or English, but laughed when asked if they were ever taught in their own language. "They would never teach in our language; that is not official; we learn in Hindi here," Preeti said. According to Carrin (2015) Santhali students feel stigmatized for their mother tongue and develop inferiority, when failing to get good marks, due to the problems of learning in a second or third language. Santhali students feel Othered and excluded by all their experiences in the classroom, where their language, culture, and their families are looked down on. In 2008, textbooks in the Santhali language were distributed in schools in Jharkhand, but the state had not appointed Santhali teachers, and the project has since been halted (Shekhar 2008). The classroom, hence, becomes a space where Adivasi-ness is disrespected, ignored, rejected, and punished, within interactions with teachers, the curriculum, and the overall education system. Desai (2013) corroborates this: although the last two decades have witnessed an increase in elementary school provision for Adivasis, student experiences are jeopardized by discrimination, prejudice, and low expectation, that occurs in the micro-practices of teaching and learning. Hierarchies of caste and tribe and resulting discrimination, is expressed and becomes fixed in social interactions between the teacher and student, and among students (Desai 2013). Adivasi students realize quite early in their schooling that there is a separation in the knowledge being imparted in schools, and the knowledge being imparted by their ancestors in the community (Carrin 2015: 348).

The Realities that Students Bring into the Classroom

Santhali children do not leave their identity outside the classroom. They bring their knowledge, realities, perceptions and context to the classrooms where they study. Rueben, when asked to define himself by naming the qualities he possesses, writes matter-of-factly: *hum gareeb hain* (we are poor) and *hum santhali hain* (we are Santhali). These phrases define the character of Rueben's family life and are the most important aspects that dictate every decision made by him and his family. One day's work ensures enough money for the sustenance of a family for that day, with families always at a risk of being unable to subsist on meagre wages. Rueben's father has studied till the 5th grade and now works as a *mistri* (mason), while his brother-in-law who has completed 10th grade now working as a *chaddmistri* (also mason). It was inevitable that Rueben would become the third earning member of his family, responsible for putting food on the table. As the economic policies of the neoliberal state have contributed to the increasing poverty of Adivasi communities, this continues to produce manual labour as integral to the subsistence of these children and their families (Balagopalan 2003: 60). The parents, apart from daily wage labour, also work on their own lands of 2 acres, to grow their

food. Work responsibilities are divided among family members, and the women of the family share in this. Rueben's sisters and grandmother are responsible for goat herding and fetching water from the handpump. Men are responsible for earning wages. The women of the family are also in charge of household chores: cooking, washing, and cleaning. At their farm, responsibilities are again divided based on gender. Boys are entrusted with ploughing and weeding, while girls do paddy transplantation, cutting and collecting. Rueben wakes up every day at 4am to work on the farm. After farm work for the day is over, Rueben gets ready for school. Farm labour is an important aspect of family life, a task that the family undertakes together without exception. Among Santhals, reciprocity among kin and children are incorporated into a system of production (Carrin 2015: 352) subject to gender-defined roles. Even though Rueben does not like working on the farm, and complains of the strenuous work and insect bites, he feels he has no say in the matter. His father dictates Rueben's responsibility to the family, and if he rebels against farm work, his father threatens him by denying him food if the work does not get completed. The tension Rueben feels is corroborated by Morrow (2013) when describing individualistic values that are mirrored in the acquiring of formal education in contrast to the values embedded in collective cultures, where children are supposed to contribute their labour to a shared enterprise. Rueben's father pushes him to undertake more work, leaving him no time for studies, and sometimes the work ends up eating up into his school time. "My father asks me to work even when he sees that I am studying. He says if I am not able to earn through any other means, at least I will have the farm to fall back on," Rueben says, almost believing what his father instils in him. Implicit in this statement are his parents' reservations about the actual utility of education. Ruben tells me.

> I do not think I will be able to study much. My father would not let me go to school, if I do not finish my work on the farm in the morning. He says education has its own place in life, but why put in so much effort if I have to farm and do manual labour for the rest of my life? He lets me go to school but asks why I need to go everyday?

In Rueben's village, people who have finished school have not been able to secure permanent jobs and are seen as doing either manual labour or odd jobs, with some out-migrating for the short-term. This holds the parents back from letting their children give up on household realities. Parents weigh their options and sometimes decide to avoid the direct cost entailed in availing opportunities, like getting secondary school certificates that will ultimately be useless (Froerer 2011). This phenomenon is explained by Balagopalan (2003: 60) as: oftentimes parents feel that even if they spend money on their children's education, they do not get jobs and do not want to work in the fields either. Hence, it becomes important for parents to instil the abilities of doing manual labour in their children from an early age, even if they keep attending school. Bourdieu (2002) explains that parental behaviour towards children's education is based on an empirical evaluation of their real hopes, common to other individuals in their social group; children are constantly reminded of their impending fate through the experience of failure or the partial success of children from the same background. This is why Rueben's father insists on Rueben prioritizing farm work. Even with parental support, the material realities of the family propel parents to impede their children's education. Shyam, an 8th grade Santhali student, passionately works on technical projects at home and wants to pursue a career in engineering. Since his father's accident, which has resulted in no income for the family, it has pushed the family into taking a loan, in order to provide for themselves. Even though Shyam's parents are supportive of his dreams and would not want him to drop out, he feels that it is almost inevitable that he finds an odd job somewhere to support his family. Sunita, describing herself, writes: *hum bohot mehnat karte hain* (we work very hard) and declares that she loves doing farm work. If given a choice between school and farm, she would gladly give up school and work full time on the farm, because that is what her parents prefer. Moreover, she feels that she truly belongs there, because of the feeling of togetherness

while working with her kin and friends on the farm. In addition to farm work, domestic duties for girls begins by the time they are 7. Teaching girls domestic work and farm labour is non-negotiable, because of the community's belief that the foremost responsibility of girls is to take care of their households, especially after they are married. Many parents, because of this, urge their daughters to discontinue school as they do not see the merit in education: "My parents urge me to learn house work and farm work properly as they say I have to do only this, later in life. After I get married, I will be doing domestic chores and working on the farm," Sunita says. Many girls in remote government schools of Dumka get married well before the age of 18.

During the harvest season, everyone has to work together on the fields and children are no exception. The classroom sees very low attendance during that time because all the students work in the fields at the time. But the school calendar is not designed to take this into account. Nor do teachers design their classes around it. Students, when they return to classroom after the harvest, have to catch up with their lessons on their own without help from teachers. Instead of extending a helping hand or an understanding nod, teachers are known to dangle the fear of issuing 'Transfer Certificates' for students with absenteeism.[4] Jonathan tells me: "sir just gets angry and says he will issue a TC if I am absent for a month; when we say the harvest time is an important time to us, he gets angrier and blames our parents." The dichotomy between manual and intellectual labour that the education system propagates is not lost on students. There is a discursive shame attached to manual labour when looked at from the schooling lens. This discursive production of manual labour as inferior, which fits well with existing caste hierarchies in Indian society is only accentuated by the schooling system (Balagopalan 2003).

Students who see other Adivasis like themselves doing only manual labour, this dichotomy between manual and intellectual that is furthered by teachers only separates students further from school, as corroborated by Morrow (2013), when describing the tension students feel. The parents on the other hand try to bridge this gap by making sure that their children do not separate themselves from manual labour entirely. To take an example of this, making rice beer is considered integral to Santhali culture, something that many parents take part in, for their subsistence as well. Making rice beer has in fact been seen as a marker of Santhali identity (Carrin 2015: 352). Canney (1928), documents that the principal cultivation crop of Santhals is rice and the beer made from it is a prominent feature of their celebrations and festivals. In the Santhal creation story, The Great Spirit after creating the first human pair, gave them yeast to make rice beer (Canney 1928: 331). But this is not understood by the teachers, and students are shamed for their culture of beer consumption. Teachers, instead of acknowledging and understanding the realities that define student lives, often label their parents *unpadh* (unlettered), as those who do not understand or appreciate the value of education. Adivasi parents are thus visualised only as 'drunk' and 'disinterested' in the education of their children (Balagopalan 2003). When an Adivasi student enters the classroom, the education system actively propels him to leave their realities outside school.

The Unmaking of Indigeneity and the Diminishing of Aspirations

The classroom urges Adivasi students to keep their Adivasi-ness outside when they enter the room but simultaneously punishes them inside the classroom for this very identity. Adopting the framework extended by Balagopalan (2005) to understand the experiences of Adivasi students, it becomes clear that the postcolonial education system functions to "integrate Adivasis into the nation-state through forms of submissive assimilation, which retains them in subordinate positions" (Desai 2015: 154). Adivasi students feel inherently Othered by the

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[4] Transfer Certificate is an official document that students receive when they leave school.

education system; they are discriminated against by their teachers, their peers, the curriculum, and the pedagogy. This demeaning educational experience pushes them, in turn, to internalize the symbols of 'backward' behaviour (Kumar 1983). The ethnographic accounts above that outline the interaction of Adivasi students with the education system in classrooms make clear that Adivasi culture, language, everyday practices, and epistemologies are delegitimized by the education system. Carrin (2015) further confirms this experiences of Othering for Santhali students, when saying that because they do not find their language, their people, or their knowledge represented in the classroom, all of which is moreover, effectively devalued, the knowledge that is imparted through the curriculum of government schools is only socially valuable to dominant groups. This makes the differential values education holds for different groups invisible (Kumar 1983: 1569). Without context-based curriculum, schools in Adivasi areas offer the kind of knowledge that is designed only for the middle classes living in metropolitan areas. As Carrin (2015: 354) puts it, for Santhali students,

> The textbooks overwhelmingly represent the values and perspectives of middle-class families who live in villas in residential areas where children play in a protected environment and visit relatives by car. Parents in these textbooks have stable and interesting jobs, while issues of unemployment and poverty are absent from the textbooks' landscape. Santal children cannot recognize themselves in these books.

The importance of teachers and the relationships they build with students in a classroom affects a child's learning (Hamre and Pianta 2001), along with affecting their engagement with school and successful education (Roorda et al. 2011). The teacher as a figure of authority facilitates the construction and regulation of knowledge in a classroom (Carrin 2015). Kumar (1989: 21) elucidates the importance of teacher-pupil interaction through a case study where a teacher asserts her knowledge and authority to prove to an Adivasi boy and to the rest of the class, that he is ignorant. The relationship teachers have with Adivasi students is laden with biases and an increased control, seen also in Rueben's and Sunita's experiences. Adivasi students are forced to identify with the symbols of dominant groups through curriculum, and they internalize the biases that teachers hold against them, thereby believing in their own 'backwardness' (Balagopalan 2003: 56). This feeling of lack is also echoed by the stakeholders of the education system. The feeling of Othering experienced by Adivasi students is described by Bourdieu (2002: 23) as neglect:

> To penalise the underprivileged and favour the most privileged, the school only has to neglect, in its teaching methods and techniques and its criteria when making academic judgements, to take into account the cultural inequalities, between children of different classes. In other words by treating its pupils, how unequal they may be in reality, as equal in rights and duties, the education system is led to give its de facto sanction to initial cultural inequalities. The formal equality which governs pedagogical practices is in fact a cloak for and a justification of indifference to the real inequalities with regard to the body of knowledge taught or rather demanded.

State education system neglects Adivasi students and Others them by refusing to take their differences, realities, and forms of indigenous knowledge into account. In the above accounts it becomes clear that this neglect is geared to communicate their inferior place, and reduced their opportunities in the state education system. This acute awareness shapes and reshapes Adivasi student aspirations, continually narrowing the idea of *aage badhna* that keeps getting diminished. Carrin (2015), illuminates the pressures of dominant culture that Adivasi students face in a classroom, and in extension in the education system, which makes the school a space

where indigeneity is unmade. The pressures from the dominant culture, to assimilate Adivasis into the mainstream simultaneously excludes Adivasi identity and culture in the classroom by punishing Adivasis, and contributing to producing the classroom as a space where indigeneity is unmade. The idea of *aage badhna* that is entwined within the education system is not the same for Adivasi students as it is for other students. For Adivasi students, the education system does not work to provide them any social mobility, but reforms them to create subordinate and rational, citizen-subjects—a project in civility. Balagopalan (2003) uses a Foucauldian framework to explain classroom culture. The dominant culture of modern schooling is interested in students incrementally acquiring civil-social skills, discipline, self-regulation, and rationality, and most importantly, work ethic that prepares them for a future career. This is privileged as the modern natural order, in which teachers are ultimate authority figures. It is they who decide who can and who cannot be placed in this natural order, in the classroom. Adivasi students in terms of this natural order, are viewed as non-modern subjects and hence in need of reform, but not as people who can be prepared for a future career till such reform takes place. Schools have historically functioned to create citizens out of their populations. Foucault gives us an insight into the role of the hidden school curriculum (Skelton 1997) in how it promotes education as social control that creates the marginalized as docile. The marginalization students face in the classroom when they interact with the curriculum, with teachers, peers, pedagogy, and the school calendar, works to reinforce their 'non-modern', 'inferior' status.

The conceptualisation of aspirations for Santhli students falls under the habituated logic and even when they create emergent aspirations for themselves, the relationality with the classroom pushes them towards the habituated logic. Students are aware of their positionality in the classroom and in the education system; they know that *aage badhna* is not for them. This is why Rueben says *lagta nahi hai zada padh paenge* (I do not think I will be able to study much), as he fights the system to keep himself in the classroom. This is why Sunita wants to choose farm work over schooling, if the choice ever presents itself, since the classroom does not provide her either the inclusion or the social mobility that education promises. The forward movement that education promises is in fact unattainable from the moment they enter the classroom, where they internalize the notion of their own alleged lack and 'inferiority'. They repeat the anthem, *nahi sakenge* (will not be able to do). *Hume pata hai zada nahi padh paenge, karni toh majdoori hi hai* (we know we will not be able to study much; we have to work as daily wage labourers), as a way of describing their realities, despite the promises offered by education. Without acknowledging their lived realities, the education system only pushes Adivasi students out of the classroom. Adivasi students treat education and classroom access as a privilege, and not as something they deserve. For the Adivasi young people in the villages of Dumka Jharkhand, education does not seem to open new alternatives, or locally viable options, other than working on the fields, in mines, or migrating as manual labour to other states. The internalized inferior status that the classroom instils, places the blame for not being able to get ahead in life through education, squarely on them. Thus, aspirations are relationally produced, but for Adivasi students the most important aspect informing their aspirations, is their Adivasi identity.

Conclusion

Santhali students experience great tension between their aspirations and their identity, something that gets reinforced in their relationality to the classroom. The paper shows four ways in which students relate to the classroom: one, where their aspirations are formed; second, where *aage badhna* is hindered; third, where Adivasi identity is denied; and fourth, where Adivasi identity is simultaneously punished in the education system's agenda to 'civilize' Adivasis and create rational citizen-subjects out of them. The idea of *aage badhna* is intricately

linked with Adivasi identity, and it is this identity that shapes and reshapes their aspirations in the classroom. It ultimately also reshapes their aspirations about current realities, even though their education levels might be higher than their previous generation. The classroom becomes inherently important as a space where these aspirations get conceptualized, and where their current realities also get reinforced. This serves to push Adivasi students out of the classroom and out of the education system. The idea put forward by Dost and Froerer (2021) about the reconceptualization of aspirations as an act of agency discounts the way in which the education system in its interaction with students' Adivasi identity actively plays a role in diminishing these reconceptualized aspirations. The paper shows that the Othering of Adivasi students inside a classroom plays a crucial role in reshaping their aspirations as inferior. Appadurai (2013, 2004) speaks of the capacity to aspire which needs to be developed, and Finnan et al. (2017) speak of the school, and in extension the classroom's role, in developing aspirations. This research has attempted to uncover how the classroom as a relational space, instead ends up doing exactly the opposite for Adivasi students.

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Research Article

The Voice of *Mithila Mihir*: The Making of the Idea of Mithila

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The demand for a separate Mithila has recently resurfaced. This is however also an older demand that first emerged in the 1940s. *Maithil* linguistic nationalism in the early decades of the 20th century played an essential role in contributing to the generation of a movement led by *Maithil* intellectuals, for whom the prestige and heritage of the Maithili language took precedence over all other concerns. To understand this process better, this paper peruses the literature on Mithila, *Maithil*, and Maithili that underlies the emergence of Maithili nationalism and the demand for a separate state. Many of these books were initially published through Maithili language and literary magazines. For instance, the *Mithila Tattva Vimarsha* published in 1949 was first released as a series of articles in the *Mithila Mihir* Magazine between 1912 to 1914. In this paper, I discuss questions of Maithili, *Maithil*, and Mithila in the way it emerged in the *Mithila Mihir*. This study, which draws on hitherto unavailable information from official and archival sources, fills a substantial gap in the literature on Mithila, historicizing the movement for the Mithila State in the context of the State Reorganisation Commission (henceforth SRC). This article also seeks to delve into why the demand for a separate Mithila failed. Though it is common to recount success stories of state-formation in the context of post-independence India, explaining why such demands failed, is also equally important.

Mithila, Maithili, Bihar, Panji, Darbhanga

Introduction

Maithili is the language spoken in Mithila, a geographical region of Bihar, and the word Maithil here refers to a particular community from Mithila that speaks the Maithili language and adheres to Maithili culture. However, there are debates regarding these terms, with there being divergences in the way different groups define them. Mithila is sometimes identified as north Bihar, based on ancient texts like the *Brihat Vishnu Purana, Yajnavalkya Smriti* (compiled between the 3rd and 9th centuries) and other literature like the *Ramayana* (Jha 2012: 2-4). George Abraham Grierson was the first in modern time, to delineate the extent of the Maithili-speaking region in his *Linguistic Survey of India* (Grierson 1903: 13-14). From the early medieval period, Mithila was identified as a region with its own separate language: Maithili. Maithili has also enjoyed an independent literary tradition and recognized script called the *Mithilakshar* or *Tirhuta*. Mithila also has another script called the *Kaithi* that is primarily used for judicial records. The earliest references to Mithila can be found in later Vedic texts, with four out of six strands of Indian philosophy having flourished in Mithila: namely, the *Mimansa, Nyaya, Sankhya,* and the *Vaishishik*. The region was eventually incorporated into the territories of the Mauryas and the Guptas.

A local Karnata dynasty arose in the region in the 11th century and Hari Singh Deva (1296-1324), the last ruler of this dynasty inaugurated the *Panji-prabandha* system of genealogical record keeping that is well-known for the Brahmins and Kayasthas of the region (information about a native's ancestors and village are used as a resource to fix appropriate marital relations from the same caste). The Karnata dynasty was followed by the Oinwar dynasty that more

prominently promoted the formation of Maithili literary legacy. Vidyapati (1360-1448), whose writings helped to shape the distinct cultural identities of Mithila, Bihar, Bengal, Assam, and Odisha, was supported by Shiva Simah, an Oiniwar dynasty ruler. Vidyapati, born in Mithila, is praised in high terms and is metaphorically called the *Maithil kokil* (cuckoo) to indicate the melodious nature of his poetry. His writings had a significant impact on the evolution of medieval Indian poetry, and he left a vast literary legacy that included compositions in both Sanskrit and Maithili. Though the bulk of his literary works are in Sanskrit, *Padavali*, his solo Maithili work, is a collection of approximately 945 songs that are a unique blend of sweetness, melodious rhythm, and vivid imagery. Vidyapati's songs predominantly concern human emotions, and the *Padavali* had a profound impact on both Bengali and Hindi poetry (Bandopadhyay 1977: 37-42). Moreover, Vidyapati's writings highlight the importance of moral conduct especially in legal matters, to be upheld by leaders and administrators. Therefore, Vidyapati was not just a poet; he was also a key figure in terms of political thought. His two works *Purushapariksha* and *Bibhagasara* are both treatises about political ideals, and in these works he suggests that the king was the final source of all law (Gupta 2020: 53). The end of the Oinwars and the advent of the Khandwala dynasty marked a significant transition in the history of Mithila. In 1557, Akbar provided a land grant to Mahesh Thakur, the first *zamindar* of the Khandwala dynasty in Mithila that led to the formation of an administrative body that came to be known as the Darbhanga Raj (Rorabacher 2016: 260). Subsequently, a letter from Aurangzeb to the Bengal *Subedar* Shaesta Khan in 1684 contained a *farman* (royal decree) that established Mahinath Thakur to be the landowner of the region. This *farman* conferred permanent land-ownership rights in the region to the Darbhanga Raj (ibid.: 269). It is not entirely clear when the term 'Darbhanga Raj' first came into use, especially since the term is not used either in Akbar's *farman* issued to Mahesh Thakur nor in Aurangzeb's *farman* to Mahinath Thakur. In the initial period, in Akbar's and Mahesh Thakur's time, the Darbhanga Raj fell under Mughal administration as Mahesh Thakur was an officer in the Mughal administration (c.f. Ansari 2008), working as Chaudhari (land-owner) and Qanungo (local dispenser of law).

After the conquest of Bengal and Bihar under British administration, the Darbhanga Raj was given the status of *zamindari* (fiefdom) under the permanent settlement. It was, moreover, a very large *zamindari* comprising substantial area: Mithila. Although Darbhanga Raj was never officially a Princely State, many of the characteristics of other Princely States were inherent within its practices. From time to time, the administrators of Darbhanga Raj assumed titles such as *Raja*, *Maharaja*, *Maharajadhiraja* (Brass 1975: 59), and Pankaj Kumar Jha (2006) describes how the Darbhanga Raj struggled with an identity crisis throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. During the colonial period, at the time of Raja Madhav Singh (1775-1807) and his successors, the administrators of the Darbhanga Raj were reduced to renters and this naturally led to the diminishing of their influence. To maintain their supremacy, the administrators of the Darbhanga Raj began to give away a significant amount of land-grants to Brahmins—a tradition that continued well into the 20th century. Shrotriya Brahmins were specially preferred, as it was a sub-group of Brahmins that the Darbhanga *Maharaja* himself belonged to, considered superior to the other sub-groups like Yogya, Panjibadha, and Jaibar Brahmins. The Darbhanga *Maharaja* could not afford to disregard Shrotriya Brahmins either even if wanted to, as they provided him important political backing in the region. From the 1940s onwards, the Darbhanga Raj maintained and upheld a unique Mithila-based identity that privileged its own intellectual history. Its sovereign concerns, as Hetukar Jha outlines (2007: 141-142), were reflected in the speech made by *Maharaja* Kameshwar Singh at the Constituent Assembly in 1947 in which he supported the cause of a separate Mithila sub-province. *Maithil* scholars and intellectual elites traditionally drew on the rich cultural and linguistic heritage of the *Maithil* identity, creating a powerful and self-legitimizing discourse—a dominant interpretation of how their heritage was directly drawn from ancient Mithila. This discursive

reconstruction in the early 20th century was defined by an imagination of Mithila, linked to the intellectual heritage of the Maithili language, Vidyapati's literary contributions, and to other scholars from ancient and medieval Mithila. As Jata Shanker Jha observes (1972: 133): "Since it occupied a glorious position in the realm of education and culture, it (Mithila) maintained an indifferent and somewhat disdainful attitude towards foreign languages." It is therefore not entirely surprising to see how late English education arrived in Mithila.

The popularity of the printing press and the inauguration of publications (mostly magazines) such as the *Maithil Hit Sadhan* (1905), the *Mithila Moda* (1906), and the *Mithila Mihir* (1909) in accompaniment with the formation of the *Maithil Mahasabha* in 1910 significantly propelled this conversation about heritage much ahead, towards celebrating a regional and intellectual tradition. Many books were published out of the Darbhanga Raj Press in the 19th and 20th centuries, which laid greater emphasis on the literary tradition of Mithila and the *Maithil* identity. The Darbhanga *Maharaja*, Rameshwar Singh founded the *Maithil Mahasabha* in 1910 in the wake of the identity crisis surrounding the status of the Darbhanga Raj, to promote Mithila, Maithili, and *Maithil* culture. The *Maithil Mahasabha* was to become the most powerful organisation of the Mithila region in the first half of the 20th century, its membership confined to *Maithil* Brahmins and Kayasthas. The vernacular magazine *Mithila Mihir* (published between 1909 and 1954) provides important and in-depth descriptions of the proceedings of the *Maithil Mahasabha*.

Language Dynamics, State Demand and Politics

The roots of language-oriented state formation in India can be historically traced to the nationalist movement from the interwar years—roughly, the 1920s. This time period was characterized by many lively public-sphere debates on language, state-formation, culture, caste, and class. It was a period when Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar were hotly debating provincial reorganisation. The Nagpur session of the Congress in 1920 formed an important milestone in this history, passing a resolution to establish 20 Congress committees based on language and culture. Since the committees recognized linguistic units like Madras, Karnataka, Andhra, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bihar, Kerala, Utkal, and some other linguistic regions (Sarangi and Pai 2011: 6), language became considered the basis of state reorganisation in the imagined future republic. But this was in contrast to British administration. Having previously divided the country to create provinces that met their political and economic, administrative purposes, the creation of Orissa in 1936 was the only instance in which the British government considered language as the basis of state formation. Nivedita Mohanty (1982), writing on the Orissa state movement in the 19th and 20th centuries, explains how the Chota Nagpur division, Bengal and Madras Presidencies, and Central Provinces were fused into various parts of Orissa. The *Utkal Sammelan* played a leading role in the Orissa movement that finally led to the creation of the Orissa state (Sarangi and Pai 2011: 22). Based on the Orissa experience, the Congress adopted the linguistic principle as a basis for state-formation in its election manifesto of 1945-1946. After independence, the political movements for various separate linguistic states re-emerged and the Constituent Assembly made space for a separate Linguistic Provincial Commission in 1948 that was known as the Dhar Commission. The Dhar Commission was especially given the task of examining the feasibility of creating states like Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra. Here, the Commission departed from older ideas of creating states based purely on linguistic distinction and took other aspects into consideration instead, like geographical cohesion, capacity for financial independence, future development prospects, and administrative convenience (Fazal Ali 1955: 15).

The SRC was established by the Government of India in December 1953 to look into the complexities of state rearrangement, following an intensified movement in Andhra in October 1953. The commission submitted its report in September 1955, primarily expressing concern about the security and unity of the nation. It gave equal importance to financial, economic, and administrative matters alongside questions of language and culture (ibid.: 264, also cf. Sajal Nag [2023] for how the SRC prioritised other principles apart from the linguistic). Instead of the creation of rigid linguistic provinces, the commission advocated multilingual provinces, with Sajal Nag further adding that the SRC did not support the demand for separate hill states in the Northeast. However, when the Northeastern states were formed in 1971, the ideology of making an ethnic homeland predominated, reflecting different principles than those recommended by the Commission (Sarangi and Pai 2011: 22-23). Though the demand for state reorganization based on separate linguistic units was already undergoing scholarly research in the colonial period, a fresh perspective that would examine this evolution within the larger Indian context was largely lacking. With this missing perspective in mind, scholars like Paul Brass, Marcus Franda, Hugh Gray, Ram Joshi, Baldev Raj Nayar, Balraj Puri, Lawrence Shrader, and Wayne Wilcox wrote *State Politics in India* in 1968 (edited by Myron Wiener) after a seminar on the subject held in 1961. This seminar was important because it initiated a detailed study of political processes of state-formation (Wiener 1968: 7). Wiener cited Joshi on the social, economic, and cultural aspects underlying the unification of Maharashtra: the coming together of Marathwada and Vidarbha with western Maharashtra, in which socio-economic reforms, lower-caste emancipation, equitable resource distribution, and cultural commonality, all played a crucial role (ibid.: 13-15).

If one were to step away from Maharashtra, one would see that the case of Bihar provides an entirely different picture. Unlike Maharashtra, there was an absence of uniting elements in Bihar. However, despite this absence of unifying elements, the state of Bihar remained integrated. And this was despite the fact that the Maithil intelligentsia had already identified sufficient grounds for the division of Bihar and Mithila: grounds that not only included linguistic disparity, but also the underfunding of Mithila in the Bihar government as found documented in the *Mithila Mihir*. Paul Brass discussed many objective bases for the demand for a separate Mithila state, taking into account its geographical extent, its linguistic uniqueness, its historical tradition, and its culture. He also highlighted various political factors that had played a role in the failure of a strongly developed *Maithil* identity that disallowed it from breaking away from Bihar (Brass 1975: 54-58). Why was Mithila unable to break away from Bihar? To answer this question, it is critical to first recognize the nature of political leadership and the involvement of the general public in the process of dividing and uniting any state. Mithilesh Kumar Jha (2018: 252), writing on the Maithili movement, analyses the important role of language based on 3 registers: communication, forming a group identity, and the formation of conceptual categories. Jha focuses on the politics of language in the Hindi heartland from the 19th century onwards, and on the various ways, language was used for social and political mobilisation by the regional elites of Mithila. He shows how Maithili speakers, even as they accepted Hindi as a national language, opposed efforts that would recognize Maithili as a dialect of Hindi.

The political movement to uphold the distinct identity of the Maithili language is witnessing a renaissance in recent times, with non-Brahmin and non-Kayastha castes challenging the Brahminical dominance of Mithila's language and culture (ibid.: 235). It is important to pay attention to this phenomenon of Brahminical dominance that can be dated to the early part of the 20th century, and in the following discussion, I will show how this Brahminical domination especially in the field of literature and regional thinking, influenced the politics of the demand for a separate Mithila state. I will finally examine how the *Mithila Mihir* played a role in the forming of *Maithil* society.

Mithila Mihir as a Source of Mithila and Maithili Movement

The Maithili movement that revolved around Maithili, and the distinct identity of Mithila and the *Maithil* community began in the early decades of the 20th century. To understand this history is greater detail, it is important to explore the various developments of Maithili literary culture during this period. Aadyacharan Jha stated in 1984 that the definition of the Maithili movement was not just about the planning of peaceful, non-violent, and fearless action towards the expansion of language and literature, but the active promotion of this literature through financial backing. Drawing from Jha, it can be argued that issues surrounding the writing of history or about historical figures or about language development were brought to the forefront by the Maithili intelligentsia through literature. The most significant contribution to this was made by the literary activities of *Mithila Mihir* that did not however explicitly declare its support to the Maithili movement till 1936. This changed significantly with the publication of a special issue of the magazine called the *Mithilank* that heralded a process in what Eric Hobsbawm calls the invention of tradition (see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983 [2012]). Invention of tradition refers to rituals and norms that demonstrate a continuity from the past, even though traditions referred to, are not always as old as they are made out to be. These traditions are established both formally and informally, mainly adopted as a response to an emergent identity crisis. References to tradition are then either taken from history; or then, a sense of historicity is itself invented and created through repetitive performances of tradition. As outlined above, vernacular magazines like the *Mithilank* issue of the *Mithila Mihir* in 1936 became an important vehicle for reinventing *Maithil* tradition, and there were, after all, many other Maithili magazines in that early period that were busy with similar endeavours: the *Maithil Hit Sadhan* (1905-1909), the *Mithila Moda* (1905-1921), the *Maithili Sahitya Patra* (1936-39)*,* and the *Mithila* (1929). What is notable is that all these Maithili language magazines together published a sum total of 750 stories till 1954, and out of these 750 stories, over half were published exclusively in the *Mithila Mihir*. This demonstrated the publication's overarching and discursive significance (Laldas 2007: 109-110)*.* Parmeshwar Jha's history of Mithila in 1949 (published posthumously), *Mithila Tattva Vimarsha*, the first book on the history of Mithila written in the vernacular, in Maithili, was first published as a series of essays from 1912 to 1914 in the *Mithila Mihir*. Vernacular magazines like the *Mithila Mihir* made significant contributions to the growth of Maithili language and literature, and to the tradition of writing Mithila's history, contributing significantly to the Maithili heritage movement, and simultaneously, to the movement for a separate Mithila state.

The policies and ideologies that drive any magazine can be understood through the ideologies and policies of institution(s) that promote it. As already mentioned, the *Maithili Mahasabha* was formed in 1910 by the Darbhanga *Maharaja* Rameshwar Singh, and it was Darbhanga Raj that also patronized the *Mithila Mihir* founded in 1909. The *Maithil Mahasabha* was, moreover, a caste-based organization with the explicit goal of promoting Mithila, Maithili, and *Maithil* culture. These objectives were strongly interlinked with Shrotriya Brahminism in the region, with the Darbhanga *Maharaja* himself a Shrotriya Brahmin, pressured to protect community values, leadership, and identity. Chandra Nath Mishra Amar (1999: 5) quotes a letter written by the Darbhanga *Maharaja* Rameshwar Singh to the next Darbhanga *Maharaja* Kameshwar Singh (translation mine): "You are a prince, of course, but you must always remember that you are first the son of a Shrotriya Brahmin and only thereafter a prince." It can be surmised that the Darbhanga *Maharaja* was deeply imbricated with Shrotriya culture and saw himself as the protector of Shrotriya values, just as the *Mithila Mihir* and the *Maithil Mahasabha* were considered protectors of Brahmin and Kayastha culture. These two entities, the *Mahasabha* and its mouthpiece, the *Mihir*, rose to pre-eminence in tandem, on account of their patronage by the Darbhanga Raj. While the *Mahasabha* focused mainly on the development of *Maithil* Brahmins and the *Maithil* Karn-Kayastha identity, the *Mihir* raised issues about culture,

education, and the importance of identitarian politics, as presented in the proceedings and documents of the *Mahasabha*, dominated by Brahmins and Kayasthas. Therefore, the *Mihir* remained primarily embroiled in the interests of *Maithil* Brahmins and *Maithil* Kayasthas, as it expounded on the expansion of Maithili language and literature.

From a methodological perspective, it is important to note that not all issues of the *Mithila Mihir* from 1909 to 1954 are stored in one place. Only small portions are available, and these too are only partially accessible. The magazine is nevertheless quite important as historical source material on early writings on Mithila. According to Chandranath Mishra (1981: 288), the story behind the publication of the *Mihir* can be divided into 4 temporal phases: from 1909-1911, from 1911-1935, from 1936-1954, and from 1960-1981. He does not, however, provided a consistent set of arguments for why he divides the magazine in these 4 temporal phases. While the first phase marks a period when the *Mihir* was published monthly, the second phase marks a period when the *Mihir* was published weekly. The third phase is demarcated by its editorship under Surendra Jha Suman, and the fourth phase starts with the re-publication of the *Mihir* from 1960 onwards from Patna, instead of Darbhanga. It is important to note that there were many other kinds of changes that also took place in the *Mihir* in between these phases. The magazine gradually shifted beyond its primary focus on Maithili and Mithila, and began incorporating national issues within discussion topics: updates and demands for separate vernacular states across the country.

Mithila Mihir, *Maithil Mahasabha*, and *Maithil* identity

As outlined above, the *Maithil Mahasabha* was formed in 1910 by the Darbhanga Raj to develop Maithili, Mithila, and the *Maithil* identity. In the first phase of the *Maithil* movement, the *Mihir* worked as the mouth organ of the *Mahasabha*, and its archives can be described as an essential primary source for charting the history of the *Mahasabha*. The *Mihir* documents all seminar and conference proceedings and activities of the *Mahasabha*, and the chair of the *Mahasabha* in the beginning period was none other than the Darbhanga *Maharaja* himself. In the decades of the 1940s, the Darbhanga *Maharaja* even appeared at several of the conferences and his speeches were reported in the magazine. These conferences had different events and activities organized by sub-committees: i.e., the *Vishaynirdharni Samiti* (theme selection committee), *Kavi Sammelan* (poetic gatherings), *Vidtatv Parishad* (intellectual gatherings), *Gayak Sammelan* (singers gathering), etc. All these were reported in the *Mihir*, and the magazine also published declarations and proposals for future conferences. Except for the proceedings of the *Mahasabha*, the *Mihir* did not provide any detailed information on any other caste *sabha* activities of the time, and this suggests that the *Mahasabha* constituted the *Mihir*'s primary focus.

In the essay, *Mithila ki Kuchh Sansthayen* (a few institutions of Mithila) in the *Mithilank* issue of the *Mihir*, Devnarayan Chaudhary provides information on the caste-based nature of the *Mahasabha*. For instance, he states that the *Mahasabha* was a caste *sabha* whose membership was dominated by Brahmins and Karna-Kayasthas. Chaudhary notes that the objective of the *Mahasabha* was to expand education, develop Mithila and the Maithili identity, and alongside eradicate some social evils. While Chaudhary acknowledges the existence of other caste institutions like the *Rajput Sabha*, the *Bhumihar Brahman Sabha*, the *Vaishya Sabha*, the *Karna-Kayastha Sabha*, the *Yadav Banshiya Sabha*, the *Gop Sabha* etc., he does not provide any detail about these other organisations. Despite this imbalance created due to an absence of detail, he praises the *Mahasabha* for its donation to poor *Maithil* students.[1] Unlike Chaudhury, other writers in *Mihir* wrote more critically about the *Mahasabha*. In an essay

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[1] Devnarayan Chaudhary (1936). "Mithila ki Kuchh Sansthayen." Mithilank, *Mithila Mihir*, p. 175.

published in *Mihir* dated 06.11.1948 for instance, Pandit Shreekalikant Jha raised concerns about the *Mahasabha*'s narrow influence over local and migrant *Maithil* groups. He added that the *Mahasabha* had very little circulation, and the strongest part of its outreach was only confined to Darbhanga, Madhubani and its nearby areas. In everyday practice, very few people had any awareness of the *Mahasabha*'s activities and resolutions. Shreekalikant Jha urged the *Mahasabha* to unite and gather newly migrant *Maithil*s to raise funds in order to improve the living standards of the *Panjikar*s (professional genealogists who maintained the *Panji*).[2] *Panjikars* travelled from place to place, gathering family histories of clients and entering them into a document called the *Panji*, and the *Mihir* encouraged the system of *Panji-prabandha* because it preserved *Maithil* Brahmin and Karna-Kayastha genealogical records. Since the *Panji-prabandha* was considered foundational to the *Maithil* identity, the system also generated the idea that only Brahmins and Karna-Kayastha were properly *Maithil*. This meant that the *Mihir* to some extent reproduced and universalised this restrictive and exclusive *Maithil* identity.[3] The confined membership policy of the *Mahasabha* and its endorsement of the *Panji-prabandha* strengthened its Brahminical identity, especially as the *Mahasabha* used the term *Bandhugan* (brothers) to refer to *Maithil* Brahmins and Kayasthas. Jagdeeshanandan Singh, a speaker at the 37th session of the All India *Maithil Mahasabha* held in Darbhanga, addressed his *Maithil Bandhugan* through the instrument of the *Mithila Mihir*, and here, my focus lies on the use of *Bandhugan* that shows how the *Mahasabha*, and its mouth organ the *Mihir* encapsulated and endorsed the *Maithil* identity as a Brahmin and a Karna-Kayastha identity. Pankaj Kumar Jha (2003: 1198) similarly argues, "the functioning of the *Panji-prabandha* proved harmful as its impact gave way to orthodoxy and caste-purity based conservatism."

During the early decades of the 20th century, language became central to the assertion of *Maithil* identity in the *Mihir*. In an essay in *Mithilank* titled *Mithila-Maithil-Maithili*,[4] Umesh Mishra described ancient Mithila as a spiritual centre that was known for imparting Sanskrit education. According to Mishra, Maithili existed simultaneously with Sanskrit, with *Maithil* Pandits composing texts in Sanskrit and replacing difficult to understand Sanskrit words with Maithili words. To illustrate his point, Mishra pointed to the writings of Chandeshwar Thakur and Vachaspati, adding that the influence of Maithili was once prevalent over most parts of North India. But even before Umesh Mishra's exposition on the matter, there was a larger tendency (since the 1880s), of seeing present-day Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh as Hindi-speaking regions, studied from the perspective of the Hindi-Urdu debate. In this process, the debate between Hindi and other regional languages like Maithili became marginalized. Mithilesh Kumar Jha (2018: 29) throws much-needed light on the matter, discussing the many complexities of linguistic politics, community identity, and the struggle for recognition in a tussle between Hindi and Maithili, analysed from a historical perspective. Vidyapathi's name surfaces repeatedly in the context of Maithili identity-formation at the end of the 1880s, when Bengal and Bihar were in a state of transition. Vidyapati's legacy became a much-discussed topic, as there was a misconception among scholars that Vidyapati was a Bengali poet. Pankaj Kumar Jha (2004: 853) cites the controversy on Vidyapati's linguistic belonging between R.L Mitra, N.G. Nyaya Ratna, John Beams, and R.K Mukhopadhyay. While R.L. Mitra and N.G. Nyaya Ratna believing that Vidyapati's poems were Bengali, R.K. Mukhopadhyay concluded that Vidyapati wrote in Maithili and not Bengali. This debate became further activated with the *Mihir* commencing anew under the editorship of Kusheshwar Kumar in 1929, published from Darbhanga. One of the main goals of the *Mihir* in its new avatar was to develop and exalt Maithili, and place it in a superior position to Bengali. The *Mihir* published a series of discussions at the time on Vidyapati and the medieval Bengali poet Chandi Das, presenting

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[2] See (06.11.1948). "Maithili-Mahasabha O Prachar Karya." *Mithila Mihir*, p.5.
[3] See (26.06.1948). "Akhil Bhartiya Maithil-Mahasabhak 37 Adhiveshan, Darbhanga." *Mithila Mihir*, p.4.
[4] Umesh Mishra (1936). "Mithila-Maithil-Maithili." Mithilank, *Mithila Mihir*, pp. 9-15.

arguments in favour of Vidyapati's superior influence over Chandi Das's poems—the first time such a long discussion on literary figures in Bengal and Mithila was taking place in the public sphere.[5] Apart from this, there were other discursive developments on Vidyapati's contributions that found mention in the *Mihir*. In 1937, a Bangla film was made on Vidyapati, in which the latter was portrayed as a migrant from Bengal to Mithila. The *Mihir* immediately published an article criticising the film, and asserting that the entire literary world already acknowledged Vidyapati's *Maithil* identity.[6]

Existing debates on Maithili with other vernacular regions had hitherto focused mainly on Bengal. But the *Mihir* discussed other languages and literatures of North India as well, like Bundelkhandi. In an essay titled *Maithili Sahitya* (Maithili Literature), Aadyacharan Jha, while discussing Bundelkhandi and its literature, wondered whether Maithili and Mithila's development could compete with the linguistic and literary development of Bundelkhandi. He was impressed with the Bundelkhandi magazine *Madhukar*, and speculated whether *Maithil* intellectuals could compete with it. He also stated that the *Madhukar* published a special issue, specifically examining the demand for a separate Bundelkhand province.[7] Notwithstanding the promotion of Maithili as grounds for a separate political identity led by the region's intellectuals, the language received little support within the region. While the principle reason for the creation of states based on language was accepted in the election manifesto of the Congress in 1945-1946; following independence in 1947, Maithili was still far from being accepted as a universal distinct language of the region. Non-Brahmins in the region did not fully associate with the language.

The Change in Articulation in the Demand for a Separate State (1947-1954)

With independence, there was an increase in demand for separate states, and these demands at the national level greatly influenced the *Mihir*. The *Maithil* intelligentsia of the time wrote variously, on the Partition of the Punjab in 1947 published in a column titled *Samyik Prashan* (contemporary questions), with the *Mihir* including discussions on the demands placed by Sikh leaders—of forming a new province by merging the 16 districts east of the Ravi river. In the same column (*Samyik Prashan*) writers noted that if public attitude did not change, and if circumstances in the Punjab remained tense; West Bengal would also be affected.[8] The *Mihir* thus became a medium and instrument of *Maithil* intellectuals to express their public sentiments and political opinions. After independence, the debates in the magazine also changed. Now, the demand for a separate Mithila appeared more frequently, along with other national-level debates. These national-level debates also revolved around the demands of separate state formation, for Gujarat, Hyderabad, Madras, and other parts. Most writers and scholars located their demand for a separate Mithila in a partial manner, linking it to ongoing disputes with Bihar. But the *Mihir* provides us with information that goes beyond this. Even though there was no mention of Mithila in the SRC Report, the *Mihir* fills a critical information gap about the politics surrounding the demand for a separate Mithila. For instance, a telegram was sent to the secretary of the Constituent Assembly on 12.07.1947 by Ganganand Sinha, the president of the Mithila Mandal Central Committee. In this telegram, Sinha identified the districts of Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Bhagalpur, Munger, Purnia, Santhal Parganas, and Champaran as Maithili areas. Further, he wrote (Jha 2007: 136):

> The Indian Nation has gained political power and in accordance with its repeated resolutions is going to constitute provinces on linguistic basis we place our claim

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[5] Shree Narendra Nath Das (1336 [1929] Vaishakha 20-25[May]). "Vidayapati O Chandidas." *Mithila*.

[6] Editorial (29.10.1937). "Vidyapatik Film Mein Bhayankar Bhram." *Mithila Mihir*, p.1

[7] Aadyacharan Jha (19.02.1944). "Maithili Sahitya." *Mithila Mihir*, p.11.

[8] Editorial (11.01.1947). "Samyik Prashan." *Mithila Mihir*, p.1.

for a separate province on those accepted principles and earnestly request the number of the sub-Committee and the Constituent Assembly to examine our claim along with those of other parts of India similarly situated.

A similar argument was extended by the Darbhanga *Maharaja* Kameshwar Singh in the Constituent Assembly on 25.08.1947: "like several other provinces the present province of Bihar also is not homogeneous either linguistically or culturally" (ibid.: 141). His demand for Mithila was mainly based on language, and although the *Maharaja* touched upon other aspects like history and culture, these were not his primary focus. He also demarcated the same districts that Ganganand Sinha had identified in his telegram, that included the Santhal Parganas in Mithila. During this period, there were significant debates in the Constituent Assembly regarding the feasibility of new states. As mentioned, the mandate of the Dhar Commission went beyond viewing language as the only basis of state formation. Instead, the Commission stressed on other issues like national security, geographical cohesion, capacity for financial independence, the future development plans of the state, and administrative convenience. Additionally, the J.V.P. Committee formed in December 1948, consisting of Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and Pattabhi Sitaramayya, was the first Congress body to shift focus from the earlier idea of a state formation organized along linguistic lines. Instead, the J.V.P. Committee presented state formation as a concern based on more widespread public interests (Fazal Ali 1955: 16). There were moreover obvious flaws in the Maithili movement. An elite movement, the public was hardly at the centre of the Mithila demand. Though a memorandum was submitted by the leaders of the Mithila movement to the SRC demanding a separate state (by Janki Nandan Singh in 1954), there was no pressure from the public to form the region.

The *Mihir,* for its part, focused mostly only on linguistic issues, urging the *Maithil* people to speak in Maithili. In March 1947, Sitaram Mishra wrote that if the Bengalis could speak in Bangla, then why would the *Maithil* people shy away from speaking in Maithili? The author urged the *Maithil* people living outside Mithila to also promote Maithili.[9] Parallel with this in the Hindi literary sphere, there was an independent endeavour to include Maithili as a dialect of Hindi. A separate council for Hindi was constituted at the Allahabad University in 1947 with the objective of writing a comprehensive history of Hindi, organized into three volumes. Maithili, Bhojpuri, Bundeli, and Awadhi literature was to be included in the third volume. The council invited Umesh Mishra (1895–1967), then a professor at Allahabad University and renowned Maithili intellectual (followed by his son Jayakant Mishra who was also a very active contributor of the *Mihir*) to contribute to the volume. But Umesh Mishra refused outright. Writing in the *Mihir* (09.10.1947) on behalf of the Maithili language, he pledged his support to the recognition of a distinct and separate Maithili (Kumar 2018: 17).

The *Mihir* also called upon Bhojpuri-speaking people in the eastern United Provinces to engage in a separate Bhojpuri movement. Even though political concerns in the period after the Dhar Commission included other criteria as the considerations of state formation; language had in the meanwhile, also evolved into a primary tool that represented regional polity and culture. The *Mihir* thus urged Bhojpuri-speaking people to pressure their State Assembly to raise the demand for a separate state in the Constituent Assembly. The Maithili people moreover promised to support Bhojpuri aspirations.[10] The *Mihir* argued that the Bhojpuri demand would be strengthened, if it were to be made on linguistic terms, based on the distinct cultural and historical legacy of the region. On the other hand, even if they used the same criteria in their own arguments for a separate state, there was no surety that the *Maithil* would

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[9] Sitaram Mishra (29.03.1947). "Maithili Prachar Au Pravashi Maithili." *Mithila Mihir*, p.6.
[10] Editorial (22.03.1947). "Vividh Prasang." *Mithila Mihir*, p.1.

ever win their demand of a separate Mithila. While some saw the future of Mithila as constituting a gateway for new funds and increased economic opportunities, others were sceptical. Many among the *Maithil* still cherished Mithila's old identity, based on the heritage of ancestors—legendary figures like Janaka, Yajnavalkya, Kanad, and Raja Saleh. Ordinary people on the other hand doubted whether there was any benefit to be accrued from a separate Mithila. Lower and middle castes from Mithila region like the Keot, Dhanuk, Baniya, Rajput, Yadav, Malah, Mushad, Dusad, Chamar, etc. did not have sufficient education. The editors of the *Mihi*r were thus confronted with new questions: if a separate state was created, would all castes get good education? There was an additional demand that dams be built on the Kamala, Koshi, and Gandak rivers to develop the region. There was a feeling that state funds were unevenly distributed—biases against Mithila from a Patna-centric point of view.[11]

While previously, the *Mihir* could afford to overlook political and economic factors, it now expanded its coverage. The *Mihir* now carried Maheshwar Prasad Singh's speech delivered in the Rajya Sabha (upper house of the Indian parliament), in which he raised the issue of a separate Mithila. Mithila, according to him, fulfilled all the criteria of state formation, whether economically, geographically, historically, or linguistically. Furthermore, Singh also pointed out that Mithila alone contributed 14 crore rupees to the exchequer of the Bihar government that received 30 crore rupees as state revenue.[12] The *Mihir* paid special attention to the political activities of Janaki Nandan Singh, an important political leader of the Mithila movement and an exponent of the Mithila state. On 22.01.1954, when 64 Congress workers including Janaki Nandan Singh (Member of Legislative Assembly from Asansol) were arrested under IPC 151 on their way to present their demands for a separate Mithila at the All-India Congress Committee in Kalyani, where the chairman Jawahar Lal Nehru was also present, this arrest was due to an apprehension about they breaching public peace. While Singh was soon released, he received support from different elite sections of Mithila: scholars, intellectuals, and political leaders.[13] Meanwhile, a resolution was passed at a *Mahasabha* meeting at Darbhanga, to promote the demand for a separate Mithila. This was perceived as necessary for the economic, social, and political development of the region and its people.[14]

Several proceedings of the Fazal Ali Commission (officially known as the SRC) and the principles of the central government surrounding state formation meanwhile debated whether the demand for a separate Mithila was anti-Congress, anti-government, and anti-national. *Maithil* intelligentsia argued that several countries in the world had a population smaller than Mithila. Mithila, on the other hand, had its own independent culture, history, and identity. They were moreover strongly opposed to being included in Magadh.[15] When the SRC was formed in December 1953, its purpose was to look into the demands of state formation, and in February 1954, the SRC invited different parties—people and organisations to present their state-formation demands. As mentioned, the memorandum on behalf of Mithila was presented by Janki Nandan Singh in 1954 and in the memorandum he reiterated how the "people demand the formation of the Mithila State" (Singh 1954: 55). But it is doubtful that the Mithila demand was really based on the will of the common people. As evident from the essays in the *Mihir*, mobilising people was still a primary concern for the Mithila movement. It can also be seen from Janaki Nandan Singh's memorandum that the demand for a separate Mithila underwent changes, especially as Ganganand Sinha and Kameshwar Singh included Santhal

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[11] Kanchinath Kiran (03.01.1953). "Mithila Prant." *Mithila Mihi*r, p.3.

[12] See (1953). "Rajya-Parishad me Mithilaprantk Prashan Shree Maheshwar Prasad Narayan Singh Garjan." *Mithila Mihir*, p.2. Also cited in (01.08.1953). "Mithila Prantiya Sammelank Safal Samaroh-Bhashadhar par Prant Nirmank Prashang Mithilak Nyayochita Dava." *Mithila Mihir*, p.1.

[13] Editorial (23.01.1954). "Mithila Prant ke Mang Kaynihar 64 Congress Jan Griftaar." *Mithila Mihir*, p.1.

[14] See (16.01.1954). "Prithak Mithila Rajya."*Mithila Mihir*, p.1.

[15] See (23.01.1954). "Prithak Mithila Rajya Nirmank Maang." *Mithila Mihir,* p.7.

Parganas into Mithila. Though Janaki Nandan Singh did not emphasize the Santhal Parganas, he considered it to be a linguistic part of Mithila. However, his main focus was on the area north of the Ganges and east of the Gandak rivers, and he reiterated how this northern part was historically, linguistically, and culturally homogeneous (ibid.). But as already discussed, caste-based practices of promoting the *Panaji-prabandha* system in the *Maithil Mahasabha*, also obstructed the emergence of any uniform culture. The SRC submitted its report to the Government of India in September 1955, self-reflecting its deviation from the previously-held linguistic basis of state formation. The SRC identified four major factors requiring of consideration for a state: (i) the preservation and strengthening of the unity and security of India; (ii) linguistic and cultural homogeneity; (iii) financial, economic and administrative considerations; and (iv) the successful working of the national plan. As far as language was concerned, the SRC Report summarized its view as (Fazal Ali 1955: 45):

> After a full consideration of the problem in all its aspects, we have come to the conclusion that it is neither possible nor desirable to reorganise States on the basis of the single test of either language or culture, but that a balanced approach to the whole problem is necessary in the interests of our national unity.
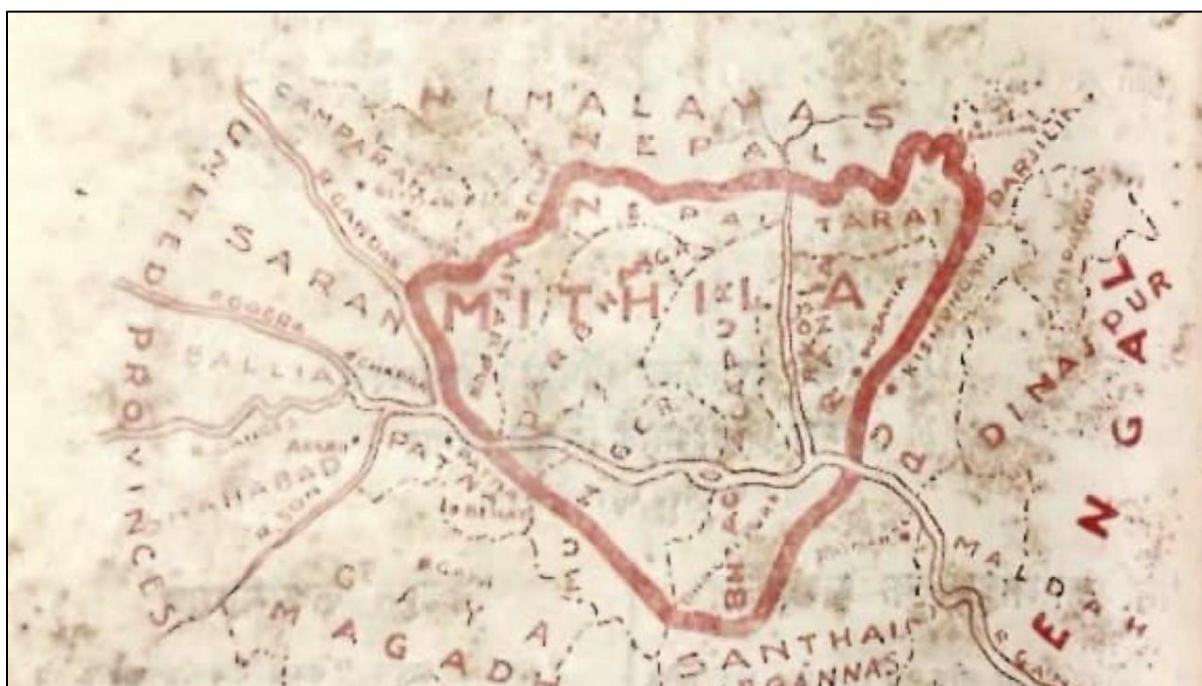
Image 2.1: The Outline of Mithila based on Language (source: [24.10.1948] *Mithila Mihir*, p. 28 / public domain).

Although the SRC did not specifically mention Mithila, one of its main concerns for Bihar was the division of Bihar into two parts, especially in relation to the formation of Jharkhand in south Bihar. This concern was complicated by the demand that Saraikela be included in Orissa, and problems about border disputes between Bengal and the northern regions of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Malda and West Dinajpur. The Commission was faced with the proposal of forming a separate Jharkhand after uniting the Chhota Nagpur region with the Santhal Parganas. Supporters of this view claimed that the tribal and indigenous peoples of the region were homogenous, based on their linguistic, cultural, and developmental needs. Opponents of this idea believed that the formation of Jharkhand would lead to the economic backwardness of both north and south Bihar. The SRC too came to believe that if Jharkhand were to be formed separately, then the centres of education in North Bihar such as Patna University and Bihar University would be separated from Jharkhand. The main concern for the Commission was the demand for a separate south Bihar, as the creation of Jharkhand would negatively impact

the economic development of both Jharkhand and Bihar. The areas of north Bihar that consisted of agricultural land was different from south Bihar that was industrial; the SRC believed that such a division would upset the balance of the state (ibid.: 168-171). Summarizing its recommendation in paragraph 629, the Commission stated that the "boundaries of the existing State of Bihar will remain unchanged" (ibid.: 171).

Although the SRC did not explicitly mention Mithila as North Bihar, partially accessible administrative archives of the time also do not provide any adequate picture of what the SRC's actual opinion about a separate Mithila was. Since the SRC was not in favour of separating Bihar into north and south, the formation of Mithila that would further divide north Bihar and take agricultural land away from it, made the formation of a separate Mithila a moot question. Neither did Mithila have its own university at the time—a situation similar to Jharkhand's. The *Mihir*, believing that a university was necessary for the development of Mithila, continued to demand a separate university for the region. Using an argument similar to the SRC's, the *Mihir* expressed the worry that since all notable educational institutions were located in southern Bihar (Patna), the people of Mithila would remain backward.[16]

It was not that linguistic and cultural bases for state formation were completely rejected; the Dhar Commission was mainly looking into the feasibility of state formation when making separate states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra. These states did indeed become separate entities based on cultural and linguistic concerns between 1953 and 1960. But, as mentioned, they also had other unifying features that supported its feasibility. One of the most favourable factors that these ethno-linguistic state-formation movements gained from was that their languages were listed in the 8th schedule of the Indian Constitution. Thus, there was a perceptible difference in the recognition of language as an important factor for these three other state-formation movements, when compared to Maithili and Mithila. Although the demand for a separate Mithila remained unfulfilled, the *Mihir* presented its readers and contributors with a staunch basis for future developments in the direction of building a separate Maithili, *Maithil*, and Mithila identity and movement. While Maithili was officially mentioned in the 8th schedule of the Indian Constitution; when it came into force, it only had 14 languages. The Constitution currently includes 22 languages, and in 2003, Maithili was included in the 8th schedule through a constitutional amendment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the *Mithila Mihir* played a crucial role in developing the closely interlinked ideas of Maithili, *Maithil*, and Mithila. There is no other primary source material that is of parallel importance to the *Mihir* that can help us explore the rise of Mithila and Maithili. But the *Mihir* alone was not powerful enough to unite *Maithil* society in the time when it was operative. While the *Mihir* focused on the upliftment of Maithili as a separate linguistic entity, it did not pay much attention to other social, political, or economic aspects of the region. As far as the *Maithil* identity was concerned, the *Mihir* became a mouthpiece of the *Maithil Mahasabha* and thus, it prominently discussed issues related only to the *Maithil* Brahmins and *Maithil* Kayasthas, thereby reinforcing the notion that the *Maithil* identity was primarily Brahmin and Kayastha. This was also the main reason for its inability to unite *Maithil* society. As far as Mithila was concerned, the *Mihir* tried to revive the debate of Mithila's ancient identity. Intellectual icons like Vachaspati Mishra, Vidyapati, Janaki Nandan Singh, and Dharma were described as embodiments of Mithila's distinct heritage and identity. Because of contributions of the *Mihir*, the demand for a separate Mithila also remained preoccupied with linguistic heritage. However, the SRC did not underline the importance of Mithila and this failure of the

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[16] See (22.05.1948) "Mithila-Vishwavidyalayak Prashan." *Mithila Mihir*, p.1.

Mithila movement can also be discussed through the archives of the *Mihir*, helping us to conclude that the very basis of the *Maithil* identity was non-inclusive.

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Research Article

Tale of the 'Twin City': Historicizing the Urban Form of Nagpur (1803-1936)

For the stories hidden underneath our buildings[1]

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The study attempts to analyse the applicability of global colonial theories at the grassroots levels through a case study of Nagpur. Nagpur was first the capital of Gond rulers, then the Marathas, and later the administrative headquarters for the Central Provinces in the colonial period. As the second capital of Maharashtra, Nagpur also continues to assert its position in the political realm in the postcolonial period. However, despite its prominence, there is an unusual gap in colonial records about the city. This study aims to fill these gaps and historicizes the formation of urban Nagpur. Categorizing key events in history based on archival sources under the three frameworks of colonial urban development, trade, and public culture, this study consolidates a cogent historical narrative especially by redrawing archival maps between 1818 and 1930 and linking them with important events, to reimagine the trajectory of urbanization. The study attempts to critically analyse spatial components from British governance: the administrative area, the railways, the cantonment, the civil lines, and the 'buffer space' to demonstrate how the emergence of a European environment distanced itself from the medieval city as a strategic defence mechanism. This buffer zone underwent transformation; the cordon sanitaire understood as that very component of colonial separation became the centre of trade and industrialization. This introduces the third entity in the development of urban Nagpur: its immigrant elites, and its labour force that complicates this urban form of the 'twin cities'.

Colonialism, Urbanism, History, Nagpur, Mofussil

Introduction

Kevin Lynch in *A Theory of Good City Form* describes colonial cities as bipolar, with two zones lying side by side: "old and new, crowded and extensive, disorderly and orderly, poor and rich, native and foreign" (Lynch 1981: 20-22). Anthony D. King similarly states that colonial cities are not a single unified entity, but two different cities physically juxtaposed to each other but remaining in distinction architecturally and socially because of their colonial legacy (King 2007: 36). Eric Lewis Beverley in *Colonial Urbanism and South Asian Cities* contradicts these theories of duality by arguing that their portrayal as two halves—black and white—is redundant to their complex urban forms which consist of multiple centres of growth (Beverley 2011: 489). Similarly, works by Prashant Kidambi (2017), Veena T. Oldenburg (1984), and Douglas Haynes (1991) step away from the preconceived notion of segregations and duality by putting forth narratives of political and cultural interdependencies between indigenous and western agencies. While many existing studies inspect the processes of colonial urban development in Indian cities, the principal focus remains on port cities or on princely states. There is a gap in the case of smaller cities that were provincial capitals, revenue centres, trade cities, and mining

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towns, which acted as a base to generate raw materials, and where colonization served to significantly transform the urban fabric. This study attempts to analyse the applicability of global colonial theories at the grassroots levels through the example of Nagpur. Nagpur had been a capital to Gond rulers, the Marathas, and later the administrative headquarters of the Central Provinces under British rule. It is presently the second capital of Maharashtra, and asserts its position in the political realm. Its medieval history is well documented. But despite its prominence as the capital of Central Provinces, there is a gap in its colonial records. Given the importance accorded to administrative capitals within records, and the scale of architectural and construction activities in the city under the British, this insufficiency of literature seems unusual. This study aims to fulfil these gaps. Historicizing urban Nagpur, this article categorizes the key events or triggers in the history of the city under the three frameworks of colonial urban development, trade, and public culture, as evidence. By redrawing archival maps of the city between 1818 and the 1930s and linking them with important events, this article attempts to reimagine the colonial urbanization of Nagpur. Such connections will help to locate key moments that acted as catalysts to the transformation of Nagpur's urban form. The study attempts to critically analyse spatial components that emergence from British governance: development of the administration area, railways, cantonment areas, the civil lines, and the 'buffer space', to demonstrate how a European-built environment distanced itself from the medieval city as a strategic defence mechanism. The paper analyses the transformation of this buffer space—the cordon sanitaire, understood in different cities as that very component of colonial separation, that developed as the centre of trade and industrialization. These observations bring forth the third entity that is important in the development of urban form: immigrant elites and labour forces that demonstrated the complexities of the urban form, that steps away from the notion of a 'twin city', while at the same time, representing fractures within the city's urban boundaries.
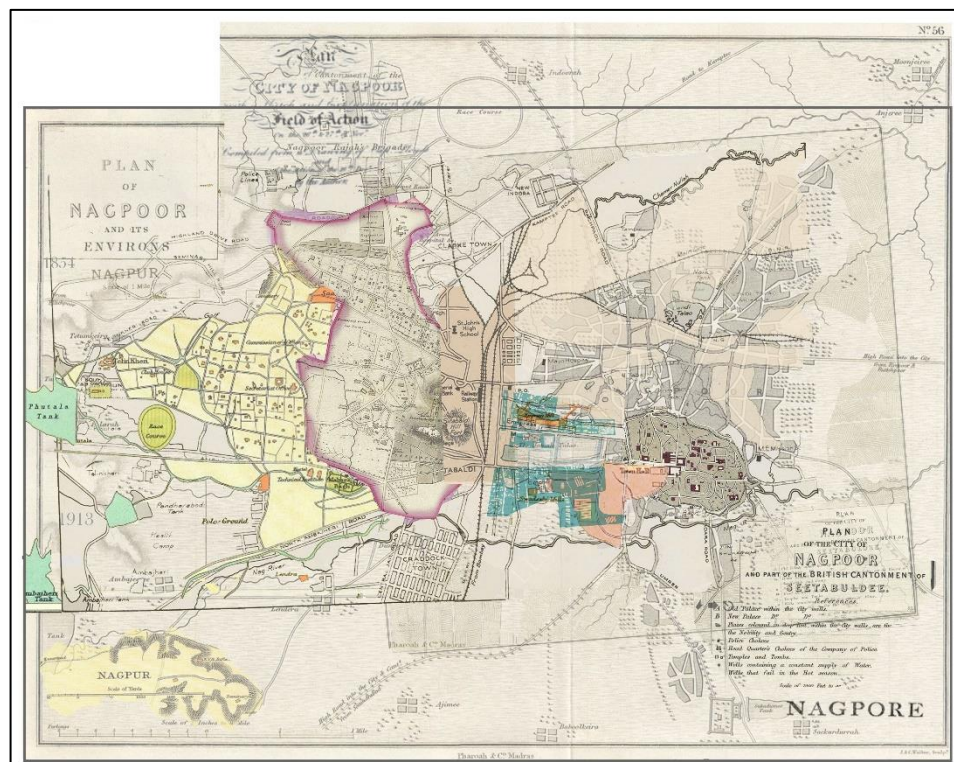
Colonial Beginnings

Image 3.1: Layers of the city; a Palimpsest of Nagpur (source: author).

This segment delves into Nagpur's colonial urban genesis, examining archives and techniques of cartography to reveal pivotal events shaping settlement between 1800 and 1854. The study explores the settlement's growth, emphasizing on segregation components employed by the colonizers to dissociate from the medieval city within Nagpur's evolving urban landscape.
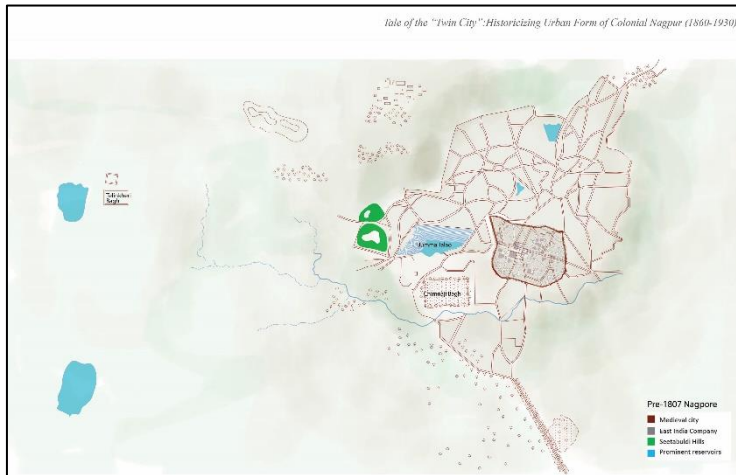
A Strategic Defence Mechanism

Image 3.2: Precolonial Reconstruction of Nagpur (source: author).

The tale began when H.T. Colebrook, an orientalist envoy, ventured into Nagpur in 1799. Welcomed warmly at the royal palace, Colebrook's initial experience was one of "embarrassing warmth" and civility. So much so that he stayed at the summer house of royalty for a period of two years. However, when his attempts to forge an alliance with Raghoji II failed in 1801, the harmony shattered, leaving him feeling more tricked than disappointed. The repercussions of this diplomatic failure could be observed in the Battle of Assaye in 1803, where the Bhosle rulers joined forces of the Scindias of Gwalior against the East India Company. Earlier during the Madras occupation, the British cavalry had to seek Bhosle ruler's permission to cross their territory, emphasizing Nagpur's strategic location for the Company and its intent to occupy the region. The abundance of geological resources in the region, with rich coal and manganese deposits, further solidified its significance. Arthur Wellesley was hence determined to occupy Nagpur. The 1803 loss compelled Raghoji II to concede Cuttack and Balasore in Orissa, effectively linking the regions between Calcutta and Madras for the Company and paving the way for British supremacy in India. For Nagpur it acted as the first jolt of gradual takeover through the treaty of Devgarh. Raghoji II thus surrendered not only his territories in Orrisa but also the independence of Nagpur, marking a loss of sovereignty to an alliance with the East India Company with the Devgarh treaty mandating a permanent British envoy in the royal court. For the next 15 years, Mountstuart Elphinstone (1804-1807) and Richard Jenkins (1807-1828) served as British envoys to Nagpur, stationed in the Bhosle court, pressing for the ruler's agreement to the subsidiary alliance.[2] But unlike Colebrook's residence at the royal palace in 1799, Elphinstone constructed 'Falconer's Hall,' and later Jenkins established a more permanent residency on the western slopes of the Sitabuldi Hills (Cotton 1896: 51).[3] This

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[2] Under the subsidiary alliance, Indian rulers had to pay a subsidy for gaining protection under the British and this would allow British administrators certain control over their foreign affairs in return. They maintained a thorough record of events in the city during their tenure such as the *Report of the Territories of the Rajah of Nagpore* (Jenkins 1827, Sinha 1950)*,* and the *Memoir of Mountstuart Elphinstone* (Colebrooke, Cowell, & Colebrooke 1873). *The Escheat of Nagpore* (India 1920) records the death of last Bhosle ruler and consequent discussions amongst stakeholders of the East India Company for the annexation of Nagpur.
[3] Sitabuldi/ Seetabuldee: Present day Sitabuldi area in Nagpur which was spelt and pronounced as Seetabuldee in the colonial period. The paper limits the use of the term 'Seetabuldee' in reference to the 'Battle of Seetabuldee', as referred in the archives.

residency placed beyond the hills becomes the first evidence and an urban demarcation of the strained relations between the two entities and the beginning of a twin city.
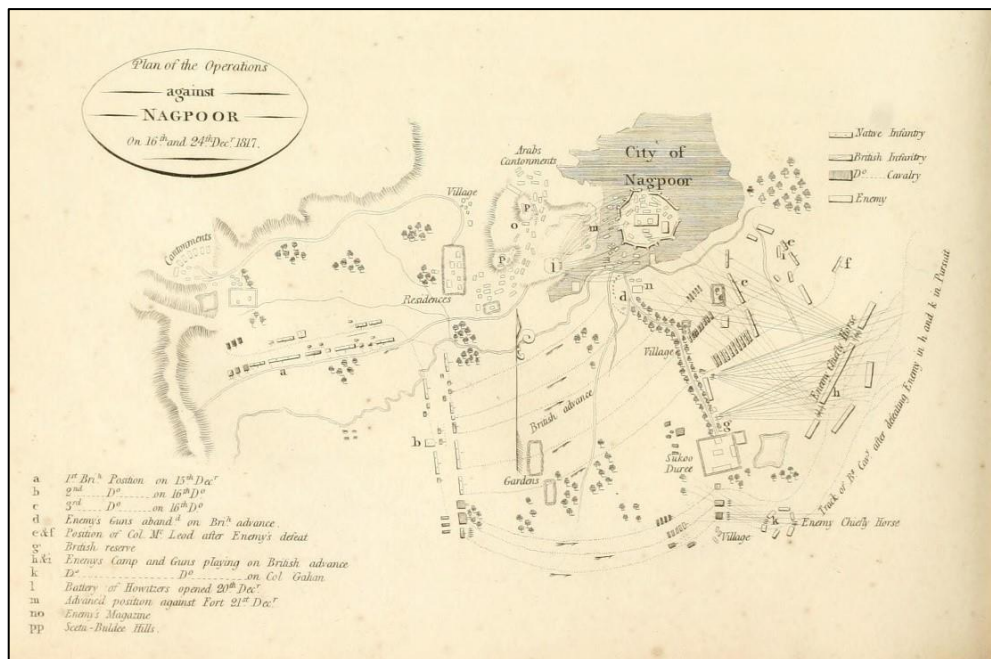
Image 3.3: Princep's Plan of Operations Nagpoor, 1817 (source: Prinsep 1820: 231 / public domain).

In 1816, following Raghoji II's demise, Appasaheb assumed the Nagpur throne. He further entered into the subsidiary alliance with the Company that had been carefully avoided by Raghoji II. This alliance brought into the city an army of British, stationed around the Sitabuldi Hills, constructing their military cantonment, and thus establishing an informal British power over the city. Some previous pacts between the two parties had mandated cutting Nagpur's ties with the Maratha counterparts in Pune and Satara, and a breach in one such treaty initiated the Third Anglo-Maratha War: the Battle of Seetabuldee in 1818. Appasaheb, post this defeat, lost his *musnud* (hereditary nobility position), leading his exile and Raghojee III's ascent to the throne under new treaty declaring Nagpur a princely state (Jenkins 1827: 317).[4] The treaty vested symbolic rule in Raghoji III, with actual control held by Resident Richard Jenkins. It mandated the Resident's administration of the town for six years, with a provision for the Bhosle ruler to assume full powers and territorial control after a certain age (Jenkins 1827: 338) (Jenkins 1827: 338). Raghoji III's heirless demise in 1853 provided the British an opportunity to seize control over the rich geological landscape of Nagpur.[5] This is well documented by Jenkins in correspondence to the Viceroy, Dalhousie:

> I hear from India that the Raja of Nagpur is dead… He has left no son heir and made no adoption, and it would give us if Rs 400,000 a year. I think this [is] too good 'a plum' not to pick out of the Christmas pie. Lord Dalhousie (Andhare & Sontakke 2015: 38).

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[4] *Masnud / masnad* Arabic term for Royal Throne

[5] Extensive Archaeological Surveys were carried out in Nagpur and its surroundings by Stephen Hislop. These surveys were later used to determine potential regions where further excavations and mining of raw materials could be carried out. By the mid-1800s, coal and manganese mines were initiated in Chanda, Umred, Kamptee and Balaghat. In 1871 when the Nagpur Central Museum was established, the surveys were exhibited and paved way for the establishment of Tata Steel Plant in Jamshepur after Dorabji Tata'a visit to the place.

The events leading to Raghoji III's death were discussed between various governors, stakeholders of the Company, and the Resident. A decision was made to forbid the queen from adopting an heir for the throne, citing the lost battle of 1818 and declaring that "the administration of Nagpur for last 40 years was already a gift" (India 1920: 40).[6] The Doctrine of Lapse was announced, and the Company established direct rule over the city. The royal family was discredited from all their possessions. Additionally, it was decided, to pay off all the debt incurred till now by the Company from the Nagpur treasury. This was a ruthless transition of power and caused extreme distress among the rulers and the public. Their lands were snatched, the livestock: horses, camels, and elephants sent to butchers; the royal treasury was spent on administrative expenses, the furniture was removed, the valuables were auctioned in Calcutta, and their palace was burnt (Majumdar 1957: 25).[7] The marks of these distressing events can be seen reflected on both social and urban landscape of the city.

Tracing the Colonial Beginnings: Cartographic Enquiries

Some of the first maps of Nagpur retrieved through archives are plans for the 1817-1818 Battle of Seetabuldee to conquer 'Nagpoor' drawn by the British military officers. According to one of these maps it was around 1816, when the East India Company first established its foothold on the outskirts of Nagpur (image 3.3). It map demarcates the city limits and the
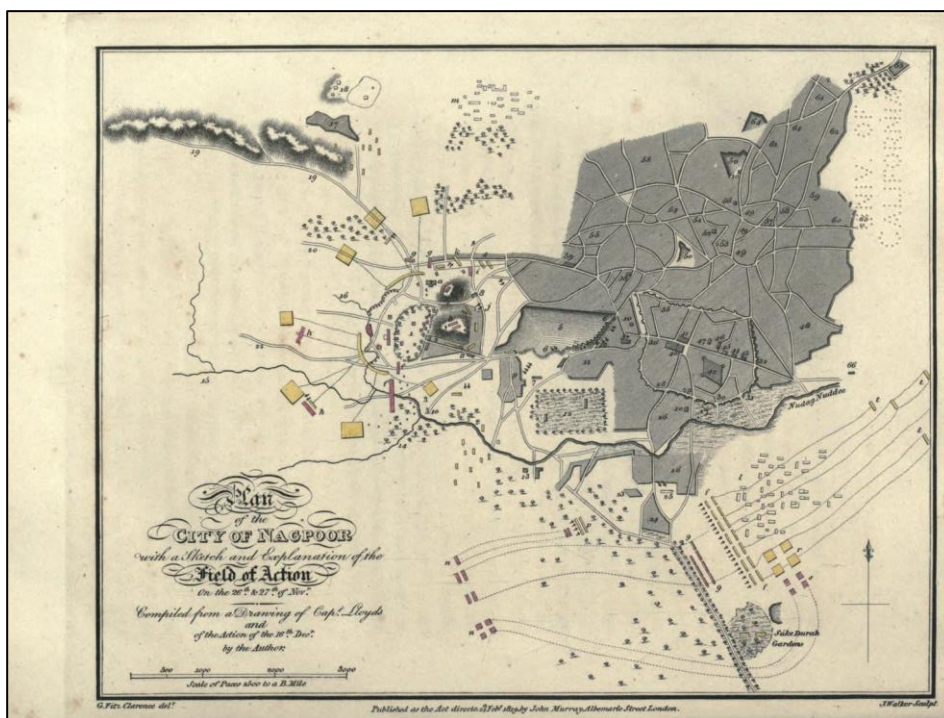
Image 3.4: Fitzclarence's Plan of Nagpoor with Sketch and Explanation (source: Fitzclarence 1819: 120 / public domain).

surrounding regions, where one can find indigenous settlements, reservoirs, gardens, and battlefields of the Bhosle kingdom. This map by Lt. Colonel H.S. Scott and H.T. Princep ascertains the original limits of the city and the initial positions of the Company military. The almost deserted surroundings of the city became the military bases and site of the battle.

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[6] Nagpore / Nagpoor: Present day Nagpur as spelt and pronounced during the colonial period.

[7] "Thus Dalhousie finally extinguished three of the great historic royal Maratha families…And I have heard it said that these seizures, these sales, created a worse impression not only in Berar, but in the surrounding provinces, than the seizure of the kingdom itself. It is no wonder that Nana Sahib and the Rani of Jhansi were in open rebellion, and both Nagpur and Satara showed strong symptoms of it during the dark days of the Mutiny" (Majumdar 1957: 25).
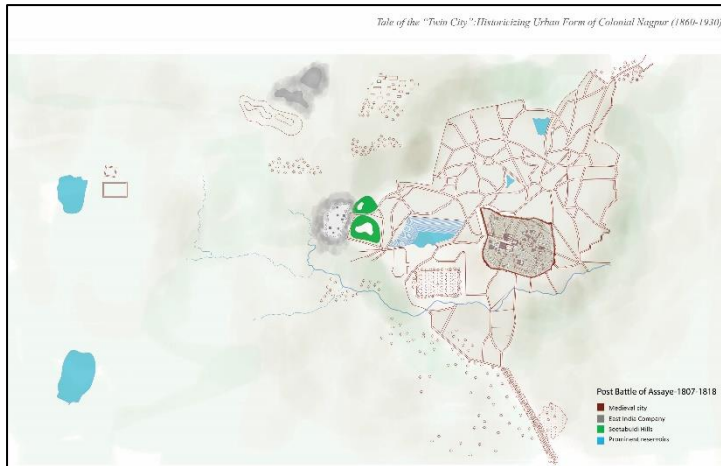
Image 3.5: Emergence of the Residency Compound between 1807 and 1818 (source: author).

Another map, drawn by Captain Lloyds during the 1818 battle and compiled by G.A. Frederick Fitzclarence, details the city's main quarters and the residences of the royal and noble gentry (image 3.4).[8] This map highlights the residency compound at the foot of the Sitabuldi hills, west of the medieval city (image 3.5). Resident Jenkins deliberately chose to position his residency near the hills for strategic reasons. The hills played a crucial role in the defence of British troops by offering a strategic vantage point despite their gentle topography.

During the 1818 battle, this residency, served as a shelter for the families of European military fighting against Bhosle cavalry positioned across the hills. The natural defence provided by these hills ultimately motivated the growth of the cantonment westwards (Fitzclarence 1819: 110). Post the 1818 battle, capitalizing on its natural defence advantages, Sitabuldi Fort was constructed over the two hillocks. Towards its east lied the Jumma Talao, an intermediary space, a tank defending the Bhosle fort city and simultaneously acting as a cordon sanitaire of the British.[9] Post 1818, indigenous settlements had naturally retreated towards the medieval city.[10] Many were later removed by the Company to create a 'greenbelt,' akin to New Delhi, serving as a clearance area for gunfire and rapid troop mobilization following the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny. Later, between 1818 and 1854, the residency compound evolved into a garrison west of the Sitabuldi Hills (image 3.6).
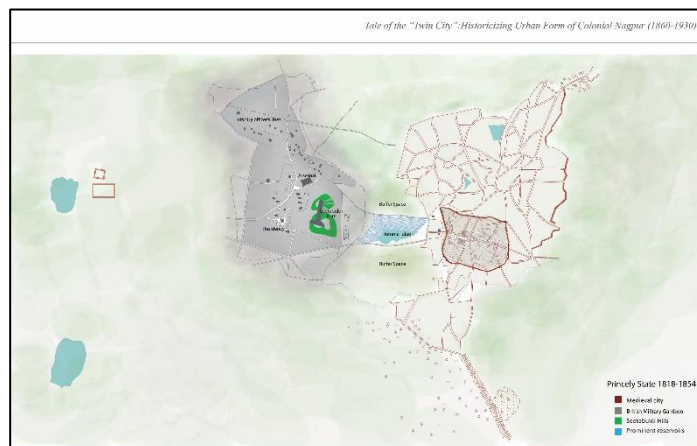
Image 3.6: Expansion of the British Military Cantonment between 1818 and 1854 (source: author).

Despite the city's complete annexation, it remained a princely state, with a persistent distrust between the two entities. The 1854 map reveals the residency compound's development into a military cantonment, encompassing functions like a church, infantry, arsenal, treasury,

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[8] Fitzclarence also provides a detailed description of the Battle of Seetabuldee and its surroundings: "From the top of this eminence the view was most extensive and almost panoramic. A magnificent tank, called the Jumma Talao, about three quarters of a mile long, extends from the suburb of the city, which is nearly due east of the residency, to the Arab village at the foot of the Seta Buldy hills. To the south-east, and round to the south of the residency, is the field of battle of the 16th December, and the plains on which the columns of attack were formed. To the west the whole of the country was whitened with tents, with the residency bungalows, and huts of the bazar at the foot of the hill directly beneath..." (Fitzclarence G.A. 1819: 104)

[9] Cordon Sanitaire: "An empty zone insulating the foreign from native quarters with a minimum separation of 2 kms in colonial cities", it was justified as a hygienic measure to safe keep its people from the diseases arising from the native town (Kostof 1992: 112)

[10] Population of city between 1820 and 1821 was 1,11,231 (Jenkins 1827: 20)

residential lines, parade ground, magazines, encamping grounds, and cemeteries (Pharoah 1854). However in these 36 years, the only British establishments developed in the medieval city, that too at its fringes were a Mission school and a hospital on its outskirts, evident of the socio-political rift between the British and the local communities.[11]

Railways: An Escape Route
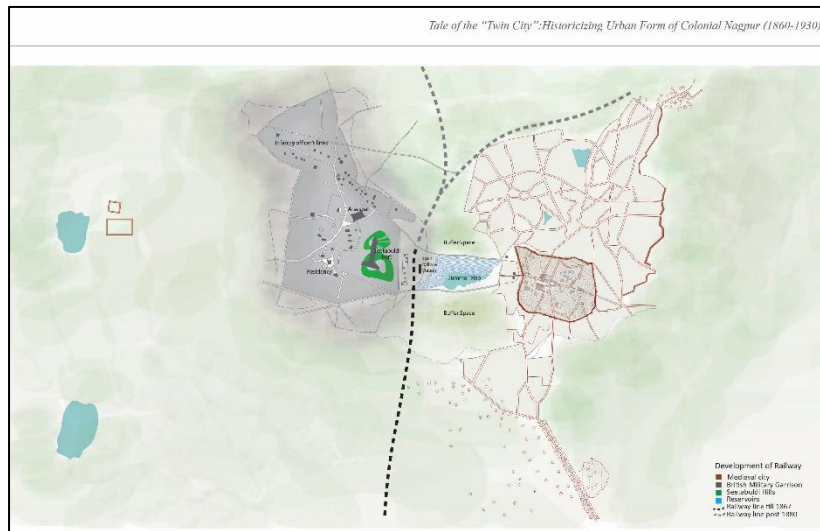
Image 3.7: Railways as a Means of Separation and Defence Mechanism (source: author).

The Nagpur railway station commenced operations in 1867, and its construction on the east of the fort physically divided the city into two sections. This railway was part of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway project (GIP), connecting cities like Bombay (1864), Delhi (1864), Lucknow (1862), Nagpore (1867), and Madras (1873). Across these cities, railway stations were strategically positioned as extensions of the cantonment, following a model exemplified by Veena Oldenburg in *The Making of Colonial Lucknow* (1984). The design aimed to serve as defence schemes post the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny, facilitating the rapid evacuation of Christians in case of another uprising. As George Wheeler notes, all stations were envisioned to be turreted and fortified in case of mutiny (Wheeler 1876: 217). Hence, it is speculated that the same logic determined the location of railway station adjacent to the cantonment, civil station, and Residency in Nagpur (see image 3.7).

> The Maratha country also was not altogether free from troubles. There was a plot at Nagpur, and it was reported that the First Cavalry would rise on June 13, 1857, and being joined by citizens, murder the Christians. But the major part of the sepoys remained loyal, and the cavalry was disarmed (Majumdar 1957: 64).

In Nagpur, the railway line physically severed connections between the medieval city and the colonial station through an elevated construction. The only links were an

Image 3.8: The Urban Growth of Nagpur from 1803 to 1854 (source: author).

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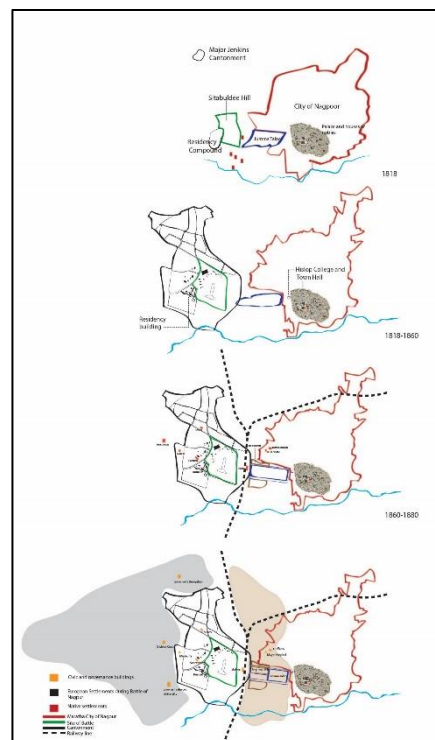
[11] The mission school and mission hospital was established by Stephen Hislop, a Christian missionary and an archaeologist. Christian missionary activities were predominant in the city, with an aim to 'educate' and 'civilize' the 'native' population, with contributions of education, famine relief, plague relief, and healthcare systems. Several churches, schools, and hospitals that still function in the city find their way back to an initiative that was started by missionaries (Wilson 1864: 21).

underpass and a bridge, minimizing the risk of attack and obstructing visual connectivity. This railway design followed the prototype strategy connecting multiple military cantonments for quick provision of military equipment and swift evacuation of the Europeans. It acted as a segregating element between the medieval city and the cantonment, alongside the buffer spaces. The lone residency that came about in 1803 had evolved into a structured garrison by 1854, housing a strong military force on the fringes of Bhosle territory while maintaining absolute distance from the indigenous city. There were multiple layers to this distancing- the green belt, the railway line, the fort, and the cantonment. This cantonment became a symbol of the military grandeur of the East India Company in Nagpur, intimidating the local populations perpetually and instigating fear of the colonizers. Thus from its very beginning, Nagpur's colonial urban development was conceptualized as a deliberately segregated defence mechanism against rebellion (image 3.8).

Establishing the Colonial Station and an Elite European Environment

This section examines the planning interventions of Nagpur's colonial station, emphasizing on its deviation in form and architecture from the medieval city. It analyses the developments from 1860-1930, a period crucial for the city's growth as the provincial capital. It scrutinizes European perceptions of the indigenous city by questioning the narratives of 'development'. In an effort to decolonize the urban form, the section also highlights erasures resulting from these 'developments'.

> Aimee gave her first impressions of Nagpur as something of a garden city…fine public buildings and an inviting looking public garden, with beautifully kept lawns and spreading trees, roomy bungalows each standing in its own grounds…they passed a dusty golf course…a palatial building on the hill was pointed out as government house. They drove along the ridge on the outskirts of the cantonment and saw the distant haze of smoke over the big native city pierced now and then by a tall factory chimney. They drove through another public garden, all lawns, and flowers…(Crouch 2015: 126)
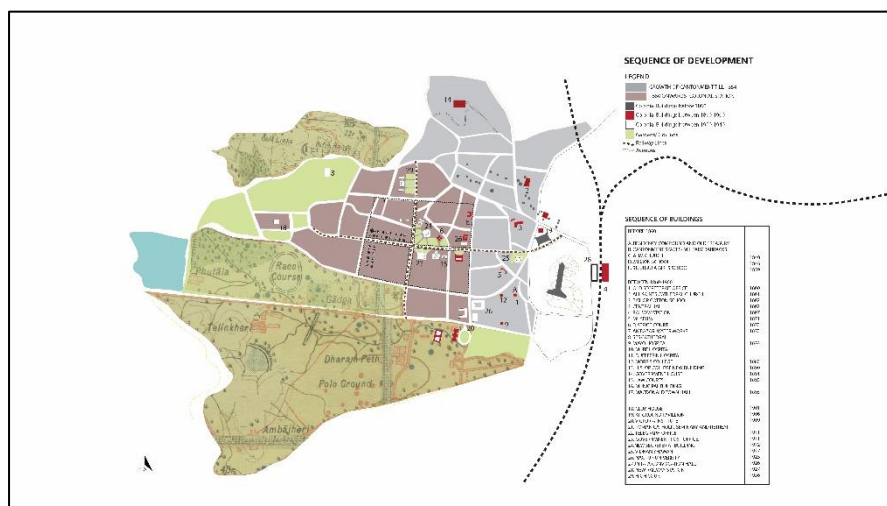
Image 3.9: The Sequence of Development of the Colonial Station (source: author).

In 1861, Nagpur became the capital of Central Provinces and Berar, marking the initiation of efforts to elevate the city to appear its Divisional Headquarters and Provincial Capital status. The newly formed government of Central Provinces aimed to emulate their contemporaries in Oudh and Punjab which largely influenced policies for rest of the country (Metcalf 1964: 37-65). To transform Nagpur from a garrison into a prestigious seat of power, the civil station project was initiated. In the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s, prominent buildings were erected, including a Roman Catholic cathedral designed by Major Richard Sankey (and later extended by George Friedrich Bodley) and key structures like the

Central Jail (1862), English Church, Central Museum (1871), District Court (1873), and Mayo Hospital (1874), constructed by Henry Erwing, a PWD officer. However, until the 1880s, there was no concentrated effort to establish a cohesive and formally planned city (image 3.9). The mentioned structures were primarily situated within the garrison, with only a few extending beyond its boundaries, such as Morris College, the jail, hospital, and the court. The lack of a city planning vision is evident in the inconsistent architectural styles and the placement of buildings scattered across the new developing civil station.[12] Hence, in 1884, a dedicated civil-station sub-committee was formed to create a planned intervention for the station. This committee was distinct from the Municipal council responsible for public works and medieval city improvement. The 1908 Central Provinces Gazette notes the transformation of approximately 15 short lanes into tree-lined avenues during this period, aimed at introducing a European aesthetic to street design in the station.

These avenues were then expanded in an irregular grid-iron plan, accompanied by large, landscaped compounds filled with flowering trees, transforming the station's appearance (image 3.10). Such grids, common in newly planned stations, expedited land allocation and resource distribution while facilitating user
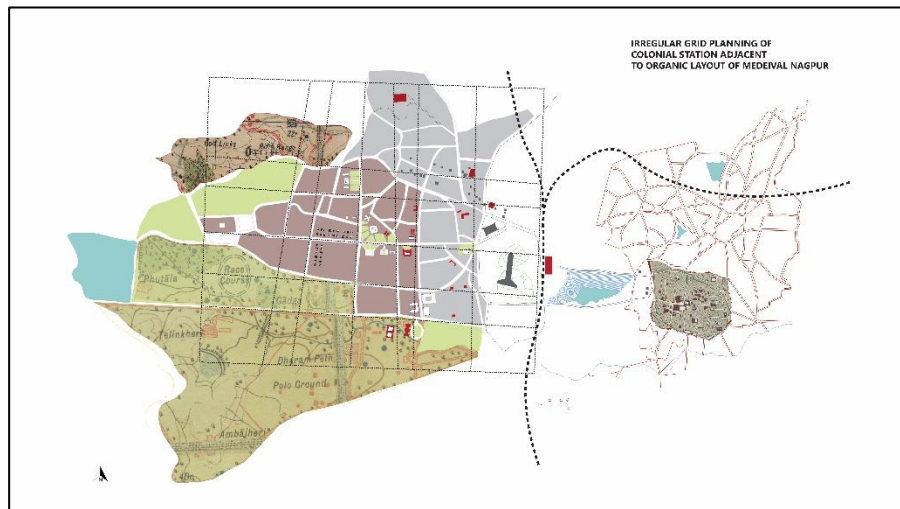
Image 3.10: Irregular Grid Form of the Colonial Station (source: author).

accessibility (Lynch 1981: 82). Beyond green spaces, the desire for familiar surroundings led to the creation of new public gardens like the Seminary Hills. Additionally, existing historical gardens like Ambazari, Maharajbaug, and Telinkheri, originally for Bhosle ruler's summer refreshment, were enhanced for the European community's use. Between 1880 and the 1900s, the city was designed along western ideals of a colonial garden city, featuring European-style structures, tree-lined avenues, gardens, and bungalows—a setting tailored to the cultural preferences of European elites (King 2007: 182).

It is believed that a control over urban lands results in the gain of the most tremendous power. And when the principal owner of the land is the state itself, it can use this power according to its fancies (Kostof 1992: 52). This control of land was predominantly evident in colonial cities across provinces in India. In 1869, Nazul land policy was initiated in Nagpur which allowed the government to acquire non-agricultural lands from the annexed rulers cost-free. The British Government allotted this land on 30 years lease which served various purposes including accommodating influential persons and for commercial, institutional and civic works. This policy facilitated the British government's acquisition of extensive land, enabling the expansion of the cantonment into a European station, and laying the foundation for the current Civil Lines. The Civil Lines and the colonial-era structures as we see today are largely a product attained

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[12] Russell mentions that as a whole, the government buildings in Nagpur were miserable and inconveniently scattered, causing inconveniences to the users (Russell 1908: 260).

through this Nazul policy.[13] An analysis of the 1880-1920 development reveals five primary zones: administration, residential, recreational, institutional, and power centres. While the power centres were strategically positioned in the north, administrative blocks in the centre were flanked by residential and institutional counterparts for convenient access. Recreational spaces and lakes were allocated on the station's outskirts, adjacent to residential bungalows, providing panoramic views and individual garden compounds (image 3.11).
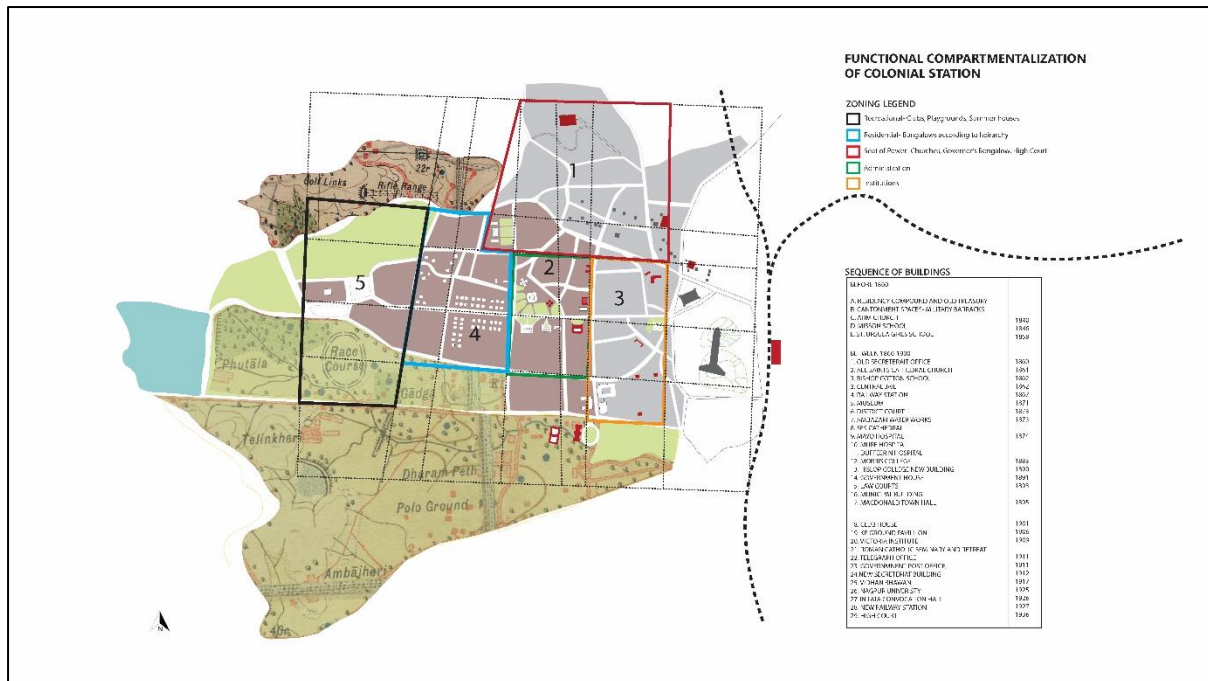
Image 3.11: Compartmentalisation of Functions in Colonial Station (source: author).

In 1891, the Governor's house was erected on a steep isolated hill in the northern part of the station surrounded by churches, cathedrals, and European cemeteries. The civic buildings occupied the centre, with residential and recreational spaces extending westward. The residences of European officers were organized hierarchically, aligning with their social class structures. Larger bungalows for senior officers were flanked by gardens and lakes, while junior officers' residences clustered near civic buildings. Sports facilities like golf courses, cricket and football fields, polo grounds, and racecourses adorned the flat plains, hosting an exclusive 'European only' club (1901) and the Victoria Technical Institute (1906). These developments reflected an organized approach to European city planning, consolidating the preliminary efforts. Concurrently, plans for water supply to the newly established settlement were underway, culminating in the 1873 Ambajari waterworks.[14]

Although the planned strategy for the civil station began early in the 1880s, it was the period between 1900 and 1920 that witnessed a pivotal transformation in Nagpur's urban landscape. Lands were procured for building 'several enlarged new courts and offices' (Russell 1908).

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[13] Under this policy, in 1869, the propriety rights remained with the government while the user would pay a rent of between Rs 7-10 (Government 1917: 63). Even today the properties these properties are held with the State Governments, and the owners have to renew the leases.

[14] Alexander Binnie, a British military and civil engineer proposed a scheme based on the gravitational supply of water, to transfer water from the Ambazari reservoir to the civil station in 1873. Prisoners from the Central Jail were employed as construction workers for this mega water supply project (Broich 2007). This exemplifies that while moderators and the authoritative decisions remained with British military engineers, it was the labour classes that were the builders of these massive projects in the city.

Departing from conventional construction practices, the city embraced a new era in congruence with its imagined and planned purpose with the involvement of consultant architects for the Government of India like James Ransome, John Begg, Henry Alexander Nesbitt Medd, and HV Lanchester. The cornerstone of this evolution was laid in 1906 with the commissioning of a new Secretariat building, designed by James Ransome.[15] This marked the initiation of a significant phase of experimentation with stone construction, employing locally sourced black basalt stone and yellow sandstone, a shift from the previous brick and lime mortar construction, undertaken for administrative buildings.[16] The resulting two-storied structure, characterized by its innovative octagonal plan, enclosed courtyard, and integration of vernacular elements for climatic adaptation, served as a pioneering example. Adorned with Italian marble flooring, the building, complete with advanced amenities like electricity and telephonic networks, set the stage for a series of subsequent grand architectural endeavours. This transformative journey was a deliberate effort to reflect the imagination of a provincial capital. In 1911, replicating the Secretariat prototype and continuing the experiments with local materials, John Begg constructed the Post office and the Telegraph office. This Post office was brick and sandstone composite structure, adorned by an imposing sandstone clock tower and a white marble statue of Victoria.[17]
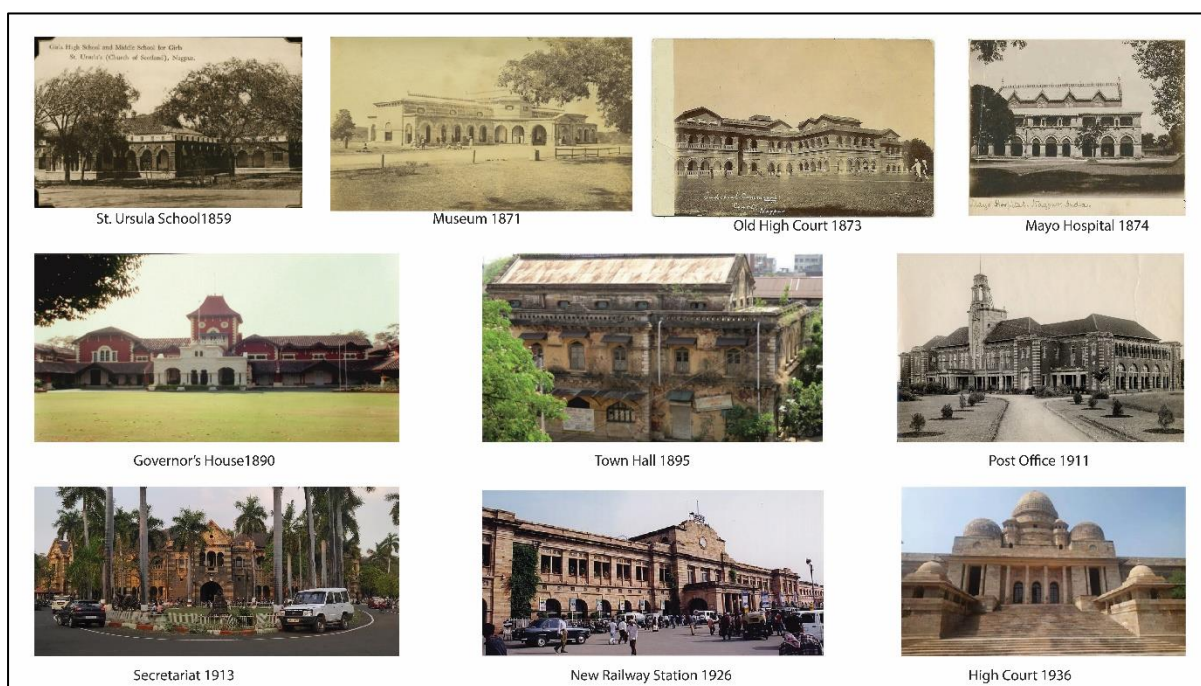
Image 3.12: Transformation of Architectural Forms in Public Buildings, 1859-1936 (compiled and sourced by author).

By 1917, a similar blend of brick and sandstone characterized the Vidhan Bhavan, a two-storied building with a pitched roof, typical of colonial structures in the city. With every building the architects were working with increasing scales and grandeur of these structures. The

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[15] The construction began in 1905 and was carried out by the Public Works Department. The officers in charge were L. Oldham, R.E., the executive engineer, and J. Desmond, assistant engineer, with the mouldings designed by L. Jennings. An archival newspaper article describes the architectural characteristics of this structure as "renaissance adapted to the climatic conditions." The exterior facades are entirely in stone masonry with banded blocks of basalt and yellow sandstone laid alternatively. The ornamentation such as cornices, pillars, mouldings, and entablatures have been carved out of yellow sandstone, and depict British emblems (Anonymous 1911).

[16] Prior to the Secretariat building, a small edifice for a Criminal Court was constructed 1893, most likely to experiment with the fusion of the black basalt and sandstone.

[17] John Begg was a Consultant Architect for Bombay Presidency in 1901 (Chrimes 2015: 130).

pinnacle of this stone construction was realized in 1926 with the new Railway station, entirely crafted from sandstone. Part of a broader trend across the empire from 1925 to 1930, this railway station marked the zenith of Nagpur's architectural transformation and paved way for the next grand edifice- the High Court. In 1917, Henry Vaughan Lanchester was commissioned with the town planning of the city.[18] Lanchester along with Patrick Geddes submitted a report on his proposed improvements, and through his intervention between 1925 and 1930, two main avenues were laid in the city. One connected the civil station to the medieval city called the Central Avenue (discussed in the next section) and the other was the East High court road which connected the Government house, the Secretariat, and the Central Post Office, all the important administrative buildings.

Image 3.13: The Urban Morphology of the 'Twin-City' (source: author).

Today, a leisurely walk along this avenue unveils colonial civic structures on one side and officers' bungalows on the other, each ensconced within expansive garden compounds. The avenue's unassuming monumentality provides a living testament to Nagpur's bygone era as a colonial provincial capital. Its pinnacle is marked by the 1936 High Court, an eloquent sandstone structure titled 'Poetry in Stone', by the viceroy. The structure echoes the architectural essence of New Delhi's Viceroy House, demonstrating its architect Henry Medd's previous experiences from the Imperial capital.[19] With an intersectional courthouse in 1860 in brick, a Gothic cathedral, a Victorian-Gothic-revival Secretariat, a modern railway station, and a Delhi order of the Nagpur High court in 1936, one can walk through the city comprehending different decades of colonial rule (image 3.12). It was not just a capital that was erected in one go, but a suture of progress made from one decade to another. It emerged as the governance hub for the Central Provinces, a constructed administrative capital designed to align with its intended purpose.[20] The construction of these buildings in a small-scale capital also represents that at least by the

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[18] Henry Lanchester was engaged to visit as consulting expert to provide advice for the site of the capital in New Delhi in 1912. With Patrick Geddes, he also prepared improvement reports for Baroda, Indore, Balrampur, Jubbulpore, Lucknow, Lahore etc. (Tyrwhitt 1947).

[19] Henry Alexander Nesbitt Medd had worked earlier for Edwin Lutyens on the design of the Viceroy's House in New Delhi, and with Herbert Baker on the Council House and Secretariat Buildings. He was also the architect of two churches: the Cathedral Church of Redemption and the Sacred Heart Cathedral in New Delhi. As consulting architect to the Government of India he was commissioned to design the Nagpur High Court in 1930s. After this, he was appointed Chief Architect for the Government of India between 1939 and 1947 (Morris 2005: 176, RIBA 1940).

[20] According to the classification of colonial cities made by Anthony D. King, cities can be divided into individual settlement area, district town, provincial capital, cantonments, major ports and colonial capitals (King 2007: 41).

1930s, the Imperial government did not slightly believe that India was to become independent in another decade.

The colonial urban development of Nagpur diverged significantly from the existing indigenous cityscape. By 1901, the civil station, with only 17,000 residents, stood in sharp contrast to the medieval city, which supported a population of 127,000. This data highlights the intentional planning of affluent zones designated for European residents on annexed land. An alien environment had evolved right next to the indigenous community, complete with elite suburbs, monumental buildings, and garden compounds. This was unlike anything in the medieval city, with its tangled and interwoven alleys. Apart from representing the notional capital, the colonial station served various other purposes. First, it segregated European members from the indigenous community, and reduced contacts between the colonial and colonized masses. Second, it acted as a symbol and instrument of control, both outside and inside its boundaries through its hierarchical subdivisions. Third, it helped the members of the community maintain their European self-identity and dwell in familiar European social environments. The station provided a culturally recognizable space, providing the members with emotional security in an uncertain, unfamiliar land (King 2007: 50). The seat of power thus transited from the Bhosle fort to this elite garden suburb laid with massive buildings of imported European aesthetics that were suffused with European ideals of beauty.

Indigenous City: European Perception and Decolonization

> The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types based on racial origin, to justify conquest, and to establish systems of administration and instruction (Bhabha 1994).

It is a fact throughout many South Asian colonial cities like Calcutta, Madras, Delhi, Bombay, or Lucknow that European settlers considered the indigenous part of cities to be a grossly unhygienic spaces with 'townspeople living above each other in houses clustered together accessed through narrow lanes'. The numerous descriptions of the medieval city by the colonizers describe it as an unhealthy, plague-infected environment. With epidemics like cholera taking its toll, the Fort city remained a distanced and unsanitary space for the British community in Nagpur. The patronizing reading of the indigenous city by orientalist writers was another factor that paved the way for the creation of 'clean and tidy' colonial stations across the country. In the Times of India from 1917, a writer urges the Government to move the capital of Central Provinces to a better, cooler location. He urges them to replace the capital and even build it from scratch if required. Describing Nagpur further, he writes:

> The place bears an ominous name, and it well deserves it. It is the haunt not only of the cobra but of the scarcely less deadly pestilence,-plague. Built on black cotton soil it can never be rid of malaria, while nature has denied it almost every amenity of life (Anonymous *The C.P. Capital* 1917).

Colonial establishments worldwide have triggered profound identity crises in their former colonies, extending beyond physical destruction into their minds. The colonizers' inherent superiority over the 'natives' permeated their perspectives, leaving an indelible mark on subsequent independent cultures, evident in art, writings, historical representations, and entrenched belief systems. Varied perceptions of colonists and locals on the same subject often led to the dominant story becoming the future narrative. In the mid-1800s Bengal, two Durga Puja paintings exemplify this disparity. Sevak Ram's work highlights the deity worship and the indigenous celebrations, while William Prinsep's painting emphasizes British entertainment rather than the deity itself. Similarly, James Fergusson's text *Architecture at Ahmedabad: The Capital of Goozerat* (cf. Hope 1866) adopts a Eurocentric lens assuming a

certain superiority over the east with use of European principles to study Indian architecture. In contrast, Maganlal Vakhatchand Sheth's personal descriptions of Ahmedabad in *Amdavadno Itihas* (1851) paints a nuanced portrait, delving into everyday lives, politics, and sociological aspects, providing readers with a more intimate understanding of the city's history. These examples bring forth an assumed intellectual hierarchy between the colonizers and colonized. For Nagpur, this dominant narrative predicated on the colonizers gaze was about the unhygienic situations of its medieval city, and the manifestation of diseases through it. The sanitation reports however describe the case to be the other way around. The first cases of cholera in the city were observed in 1865. Samples of water from the Jumma Talao were sent to Calcutta for tests which claimed that the water was contaminated. The sanitation report cites the reason for this contamination to be the surface drainage from the civil station and railways levelled at a higher stratum. The use of this contaminated water was the reason for the spike of cholera in the medieval city.[21]

Image 3.14: Lendi Talao in 1854 (source: Pharoah 1854 / public domain).

Across colonial cities in history, "dismantling the native settlements was deemed essential to the cultural rehabilitation of conquered population" (Kostof 1992: 111). When Patrick Geddes and H.V. Lanchester visited Nagpur city in 1817, the municipal committee emphasized solutions for the improvement of the 'native' city. The cited 'urgent problems' revolved around the 'removal' of congestion, and the restoration of public health and sanitation. There were additional suggestions made regarding the improvement of *nullah* (drains), prevention of dust, and a report about further available sites for the extension of the civil station.

Geddes in his response emphasized 'conservative surgery', 'diagnosis before treatment', 'repair and rebuilding', as he did for many other cities in India and Europe. In the Nagpur report, he questioned the British authorities across India for their stress on the term 'removal of congestion', forgetting to add to it the term 'elsewhere' to the sentence forgetting to imply relocation rather than 'removal'. The descriptions in the Gazette suggest the stubbornness of British authorities to justify mass destruction of the otherwise organic structure of Indian cities, under the western pretext of 'beauty'.

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[21] Report on the cholera epidemic of 1868, in the Central Provinces and Berar (Townsend 1869: 66).

There are still great areas of huddled huts and narrow lanes and some stagnant ponds and gravel pits, but wide new streets are being pushed further each year into the crowded areas… (Russell 1908: 380).

Image 3.15: Photograph from 1960 of the Central Avenue Road and Ganghibaug Park that replaced Lendi Talao (source: Deshpandi 1959: 29 / owned by author).

Geddes discarded plans of destruction, unless they were deemed absolutely essential. A specific case of Lendi Talao in the medieval city illustrates the bias held by authorities against the indigenous city (image 3.14). This reservoir was surrounded by squatters of weavers and brick makers, who supposedly used the water for their household utilities, and for brick baking. The reservoir, which was constructed by the Bhosles in the 1700s has been stated in the Geddes report as a site where cholera and malaria mosquitoes bred in the 1900s. The area surrounding the tank was marked for the highest number of civilian deaths due to fever. Geddes in 1917 suggested beautifying the Lendi Talao to reduce the spread of diseases (Geddes 1918: 5). But ignoring Geddes's suggestions to make a 'Tank Park', by reducing the size of the tank, the improvement authorities cut a 25m wide road through the surroundings of this tank, demolishing the settlements around it to de-congest it (image 3.15). Mass displacements and destruction followed in this de-congestion of the medieval city. The tank, rather than being beautified was filled with rubble and transformed into a garden. One wonders about the alternative solutions to build this 25m wide road connecting outskirts of Nagpur to the civil station rather than cutting through the existing fabric. No mention of the people whose residences were demolished, or information about their later settlements could be traced during the period of this study.

In the same report, Geddes is also asked his suggestions about decongesting the Dherpura locality. To this, he proposed against "removing of several houses from the area since it was sufficient to remove only a few" and cutting across a lane to open congested spaces (Geddes 1918: 10). The group of *mahar* (lower caste) community members that resided there was hence displaced to another locality. Dherpura, and its residents are today absent in the maps, archival documents, and memories of people. The making of the civil station too involved such displacements of indigenous communities. Four villages were absorbed into the European settlement under the Nazul land policy, and these residents were paid a certain amount in *muafi* (remuneration) for this. Another such case was that of Gadga village, where the indigenous community was relocated somewhere, and the village absorbed into the colonial station. The construction of Ambazari and Gorewada Waterworks too facilitated the displacement of indigenous communities from their villages that were present around these projects. The fact that people today justify the destruction caused by the Central Avenue road through the same narratives of 'unhygienic congested atmosphere' depicts the colonized mind-set inherited and preserved. Reinstating these erasures from the memories of the city in this article is a small attempt to decolonize the urban history of the city.

The making of the civil station of Nagpur was very much based on the lessons learned in previous colonial cities, and the culmination of those lessons that was projected onto one place. It was based on the already tried and tested strategies of defence, and reflected the ethos of strategy through its segregated components: the Sitabuldi Hills, the railway line, and the cordon sanitaire. The city grew into an organized military cantonment and then was developed as a provincial capital to serve and appear in congruence with its purpose. It was also a space that imposed power over the colonized population through its display of elitism and superiority. The imposing European structures, grand avenues, bungalows, and gardens, apart from being familiar built environments, were also symbols of British authority over the indigenous. The station itself was also categorically organized on the basis of class hierarchies. The civil station thus grew as one separate nucleus, along with its European ideals of reason and beauty, segregated from the apparently unhygienic and plague-infected another half.

The Buffer Space

Image 3.16: Map of the Trade Centre that Replaced the Buffer Space (source: author).

This section explores the 'buffer space' as a physical segregation component between the colonial station and medieval cities. It illustrates the transformation of this buffer space to driver of economic growth for the city, rather than what its original purpose was: of separating the two settlements. By examining the development of this area between 1860 and 1930, the article highlights the simultaneous emergence of a completely new settlement bridging the colonial station and medieval city, challenging the narrative of the 'twin-city' concept. In the 1600s, Chand Sultan of the Gond dynasty built Jumma Talao—a reservoir supplying water to his fortified city, strategically located on the outskirts near a city gate. Surrounded by gardens, it served as a recreational space, a role it maintains even today. Raghoji II later created a "*rainne*, similar to a fausse braye", a fortification as a measure of defence after the 1803 Battle of Assaye.[22] Facing the Jumma Darwaza and flanked by the Jumma Talao and Sitabuldi Hills,

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[22] Fitzclarence, in his text *Journal of a Route Across India* compares the defence scheme of Bhoslas fort to a *faussebraye*, an Italian terminology for a defensive barrier protecting the main wall of a fortification, placed outside the city gates, lower in height than the fort and preceded by a ditch (Fitzclarence 1819: 110).

the region remained a barren tract for decades after the 1818 battle. This land, a cordon sanitaire functioned as a barrier between the medieval city and the colonial station with the growing distrust and enmity between people after the two Anglo-Maratha wars. This reserved green belt in the form of a *maidan* (an empty ground) is a common component across colonial cities like Calcutta, Delhi, Bombay, Lucknow and Pune. From 1818 to 1854, this stretch of land in Nagpur witnessed no critical development, and it did not find any significant depiction within texts or maps of the region that showed the area around the reservoir. Several indigenous settlers around the hills had also retreated towards the medieval city, and the rest were displaced by the British to ensure an unobstructed view between the hills and the medieval city. Spiro Kostof's exploration in *The City Assembled* delves into the transformation of such areas, labelled 'Faubourg' or 'outside of the town,' as they gradually developed into distinct settlements, ultimately integrating with the main city over a period of time.[23]

> Passing tradesmen, the theory goes, attracted to a stable settlement with buying power, in time would plant themselves permanently, astride the highway, in shadow of the city gate, and develop their own organization, their own life (Kostof 1992: 53).

Nagpur's colonial development aligns with this theory, particularly in its history of cotton mills. In Nagpur, the 'outside the town' concept encompassed the peripheries of both the colonial and medieval zones, situated between them and encapsulated by the green belt that surrounded the Jumma Talao (image 3.16). For a long time, from 1818 till the advent of railways in the 1860s, this area lay largely vacant in terms of built environment, with only a few farms and gardens evident in archival maps, until Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata acquired the land in the 1870s.[24]

A Cotton Mill in Nagpur?

By the 1860s, Bombay was the world's third-largest cotton market, trailing only Liverpool and New York (Kidambi 2017: 18). In the early 1870s, as J. N. Tata sought a site for his inaugural textile mill, peers were perplexed by his consideration of a city other than Bombay, the 'Cottonopolis of India', where he also lived. J.N. Tata contemplated Jubbulpore in Central Provinces, almost choosing it, but a sage opposed, citing sanctity of the town and potential riots. Chanda, a coal-producing region, was also considered but dismissed for lacking road network. Eventually, 'Nagpore' emerged as a plausible location, and Tata acquired 10 acres of marshy land near Jumma Talao inexpensively. The decision puzzled traders and bankers in Nagpur; a Marwari banker initially refused funding, criticizing Tata for "putting gold into the ground to fill up the earth." Later, the banker acknowledged Tata's vision, stating Tata "had put in earth and taken out gold" (Lala 2004: 45). This decision was remarkable, given Nagpur's lack of history in cotton textile industries. By 1881 Nagpur was well connected to Bombay and Calcutta through railways. Connections were established with surrounding towns of Chandrapur, Balaghat, Umred and Katol all of which were treasures for coal, manganese and cotton. Nagpur thus turned out to be a pivotal site for collection and distribution of resources between small towns and metropolitan cities to be finally exported to destinations as far as China, Burma, and England. All of these served as a golden opportunity for Tata. It was a one-place-solution for the collection of raw material, production, acquiring resources for

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[23] Faubourg is a French word implying a suburb on outskirts of a town. The word is derived from *forisburgus* that means 'outside burg'.

[24] Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata (03.03.1839 – 19.05.1904) was an Indian industrialist, philanthropist and founder of the TATA Group. His first cotton enterprise was the Alexandra Mills in Chinchpokli, Bombay. In 1869 he had acquired this dilapidated oil mill and transformed it into a cotton mill. On the other hand he had established Empress mills from scratch.

production, trade, and transportation. The region was also conducive to cotton trade due to the numerous traditional weaving groups that were already involved in this business.[25] The rise of railways and the influx of inexpensive European cloth adversely impacted Nagpur's handloom weavers, leading to financial ruin and a halt in local weaving industries. Many of these weavers subsequently became the primary workforce for the cotton mills established by J.N. Tata. Consequently, Tata's Nagpur enterprise directly competed with European products in the Central Provinces' markets.

Modernity between Medieval and Provincial

Image 3.17: A General View of 'Seetabuldee' and the Expanse of Jumma Talao and the Sitabuldi Hillocks in the Background before the Establishment of the Mills (source: British Library 1860 / public domain).

The inaugural mill, 'Empress Mills', commenced operations in 1877, coinciding with the Queen Victoria's coronation. J.N. Tata, the visionary behind the enterprise, initially took residence in Nagpur to oversee its establishment. However, in 1880, he entrusted the managerial responsibilities to Bezonji Mehta, a former railway employee from Pune, who served as the stalwart manager for several ensuing decades. In the same year, 1880, the second mill was

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[25] These weaving groups were immigrants from different geographical regions. They settled in Nagpur after an invitation from the Bhosle ruler Raghojee II. While the Muslims arrived from Mirzapur, the Koshtis immigrated from Umred, a town near Nagpur. In the medieval period, local handloom clothes were supplied from Nagpur to the royals and to nobility and gentry in Poona. With the annexation of Nagpur and surrounding princely states by the British, this export and culture of expensive fine clothing was lost in the annexed courts, damaging the industry (Harnetty 1991: 456).

set into motion, its construction funded by the profits generated by the first mill. Notably, the site for the second mill included the acquisition and utilization of the Jumma Talao reservoir.
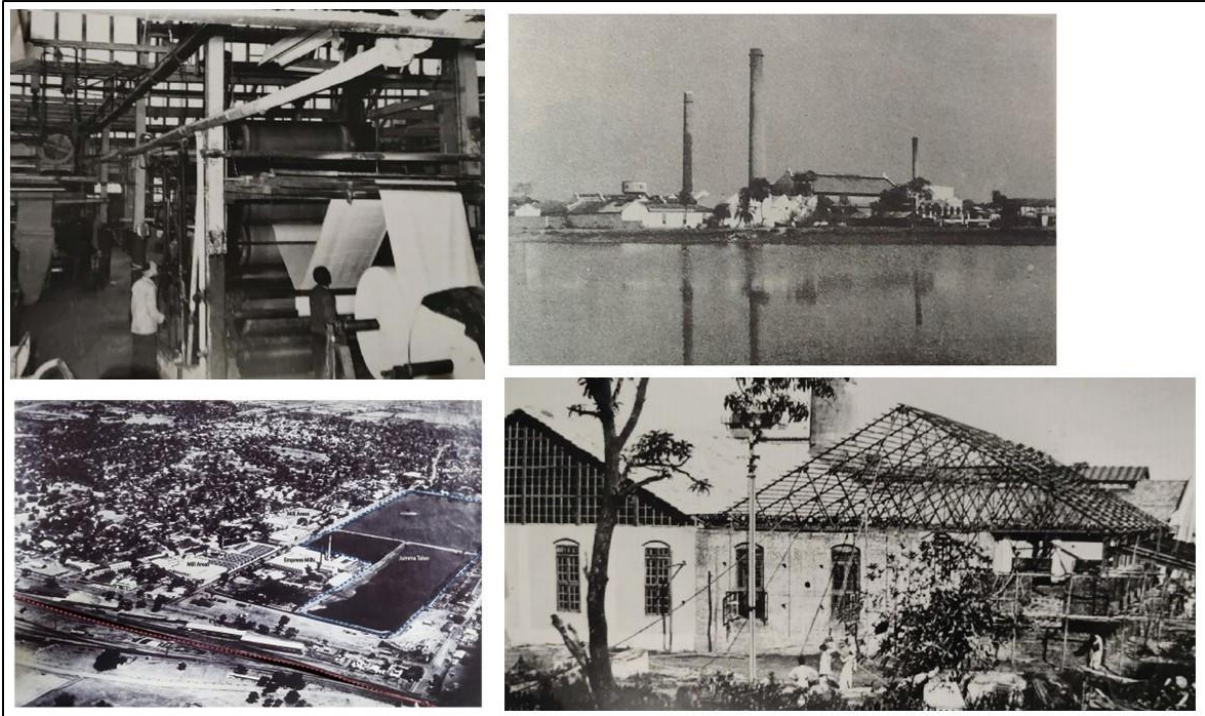
Image 3.18 (bottom left): Ariel Image of Empress Mills and its Built Environment of the Transformed Jumma Talao, the Proximity of the Railway Station, and Road Connectivity (source: Jayant Harkare / owned by author).

Image 3.19 (bottom right): Archival Photograph Demonstrating the Scales of Structures, Depicting the use of Steel and Glass (source: Jayant Harkare /owned by author).

Image 3.20 (top left): Archival Photograph Highlighting the Scale of Mills (source: Jayant Harkare / owned by author).

Image 3.21 (top right): The Post-Establishment Skyline of Nagpur at Jumma Talao (source: session 1950 / public domain).

To facilitate the foundation's construction, an ingenious approach involved filling a portion of the reservoir with mounds of soil strategically gathered from the surrounding area. Examining archival maps and texts unveils the gradual division and utilization of Jumma Talao for mill and market construction. The initial mill, erected with brick masonry and lime mortar, exhibits an entrance façade demonstrating an intersection of both colonial and indigenous ornamentation. Before establishing mills in Nagpur, J.N. Tata visited Lancashire mills. Upon learning about poor working conditions there, he prioritized the well-being of his Nagpur workers and hence the first mills featured innovations like an air dehumidifying apparatus and sprinklers. This was unlike anywhere in Lancashire or other Indian mills. Adopting to foreign expertise for technical purposes was very common in Bombay, where mill owners would hire trained personnel from Lancashire in their mills. Following the Bombay trend, Tata hired Lancashire's James Brooksby as a technical manager (Headrick 1988: 363-364). Brooksby introduced state-of-the-art machinery, making Empress Mills the most technologically advanced in India by 1878, significantly boosting production quantity and quality. Empress Mills thus developed as the most modern mill in the country. Archival photographs from 1918 depict newer mills that were being constructed in steel, a departure from traditional structures (image 3.18). This new innovation helped in attaining a massive scale, featuring glass facades for natural light and roof ventilators and marked a significant shift in Nagpur's urban landscape (images 3.19 and 3.20). The space between the medieval city and colonial settlement became a unique amalgamation of architectural styles, unlike anything seen before. The mills transformed the skyline,

introducing tall structures and brick chimneys, while affluent traders' bungalows adorned lake-view plots.

Analysing archival maps unveils the gradual changes spurred by this development. The reservoir, once undivided, was split to accommodate mills and a cotton market built in 1901. Lanes around the reservoir evolved into metalled roads connecting the cantonment, colonial settlement, and medieval city. The economic impact extended beyond the mills, catalysing ancillary industries like dyeing, bleaching, spinning, weaving, ginning, and pressing factories, along with markets (Russell 1908: 184). Following the 7th Congress session in 1890, indigenous elites established the Swadesi mills in the same area. This complex evolution added layers to Nagpur's palimpsest character, creating a multifaceted and dynamic urban environment. Prashant Kidambi notes for Bombay:

> The state of cotton trade determined levels of employment in the docks and on the railways, while the cotton and cloth markets were intimately connected with the industry (Kidambi 2017: 21).
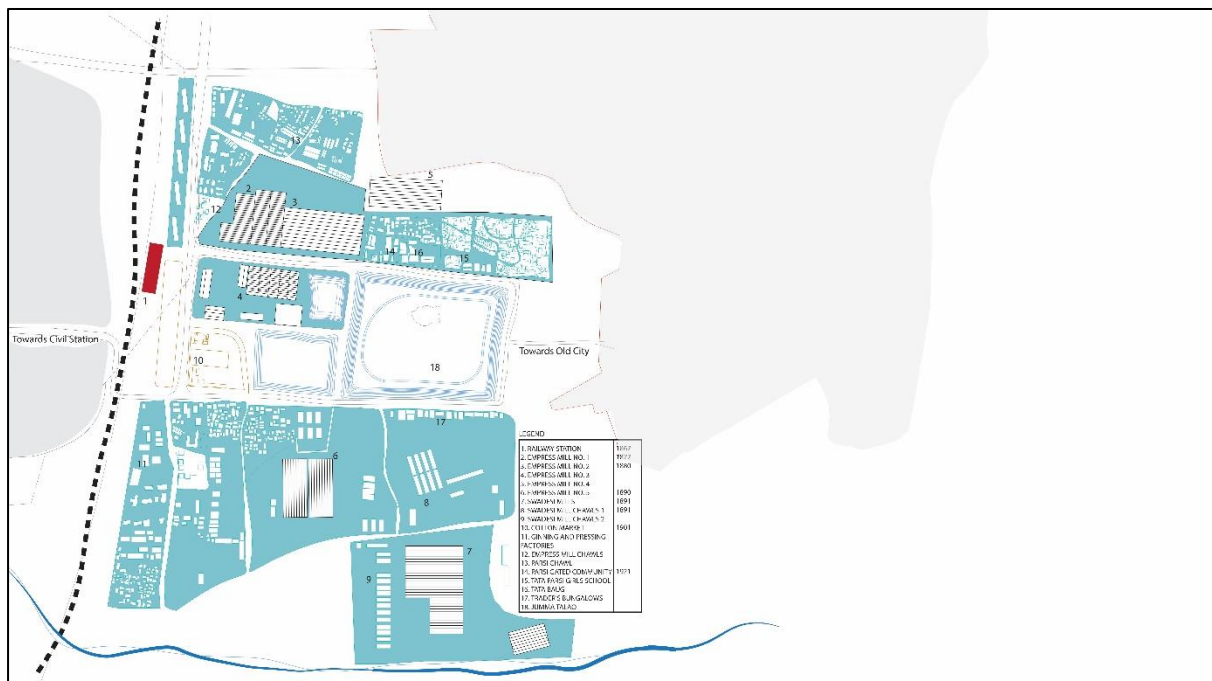
Image 3.22: Mapping the Mills and their Surroundings (source: author).

The area surrounding the Empress Mills boomed as a marketplace for the trade of cotton, oranges, and other raw materials. As the exports increased, the requirement for permanent employees in the railways was also amplified. In 1890, this 'buffer space' accommodated a railway workshop and the Ajni railway village. This colony was planned with a series of row houses for employees of the railways, complete with a playground, a church, and a school. By 1925 this small tract of land with an area of about 3.5 sq.km incorporated 7 mills, ancillary factories, and settlements of immigrant workers and labourers. It transformed the skyline of the cordon sanitaire with its industrial modernity (image 3.21). In the centre of this British Indian heartland were a section of mills that competed with Lancashire through the cotton revolution. Today, hardly any of these spaces exist. The mills were shut in 2002, and between 2002 and 2012 all of them were demolished and replaced by the Empress Mall and the Empress City residential society. The demolition of the Ajni railway colony will pave the way in the coming years for a new metro station.

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Immigrants, Labour Colonies, and Urban Growth

After J.N. Tata started the empress mills, many Parsi traders and industrialists immigrated to Nagpur. The 1908 Central Provinces Gazette states an increase from 346 persons to 481 persons between 1898 -1908 in Nagpur, and by 1911, this number for the province increased to 1757. The 1929 labour report states the predominance of the Parsee element in the managerial staff of the larger cotton mills and large Parsee interests is a very prominent feature in the central province (Russell 1908). The Parsi elites who moved to the province became directors of coal and manganese mines in the region, and entirely or partially owned 7 out of the 15 cotton mills in the province, 5 of which were located in Nagpur itself. Most of them had migrated from Bombay and established a Parsi community around Empress Mills. Alongside residential areas, cultural spaces like the Agyari, Billimoria Dharamshala, and Tata Baug emerged around the mills. A vast land was allocated for the Parsi cemetery as well. This reflected Kostof's description precisely of the passing tradesman who would implant himself permanently, and develop his organization and life on the outskirts of a foreign city (Kostof 1992: 53). Initially located around the mills, these Parsi gated communities also started emerging within the colonial station by the 1920s. The immigrant workforce significantly contributed to reshaping the cordon sanitaire. The labour commission reports from 1908, mention how, unlike Bombay and Ahmedabad, the immigrant workers of Nagpur were permanent dwellers, with an average work span of 7.89 years per person in the cotton mills. These labourers, when they migrated to the city, also brought their families with them and their accommodation was, therefore, a crucial factor for the growth of the city.
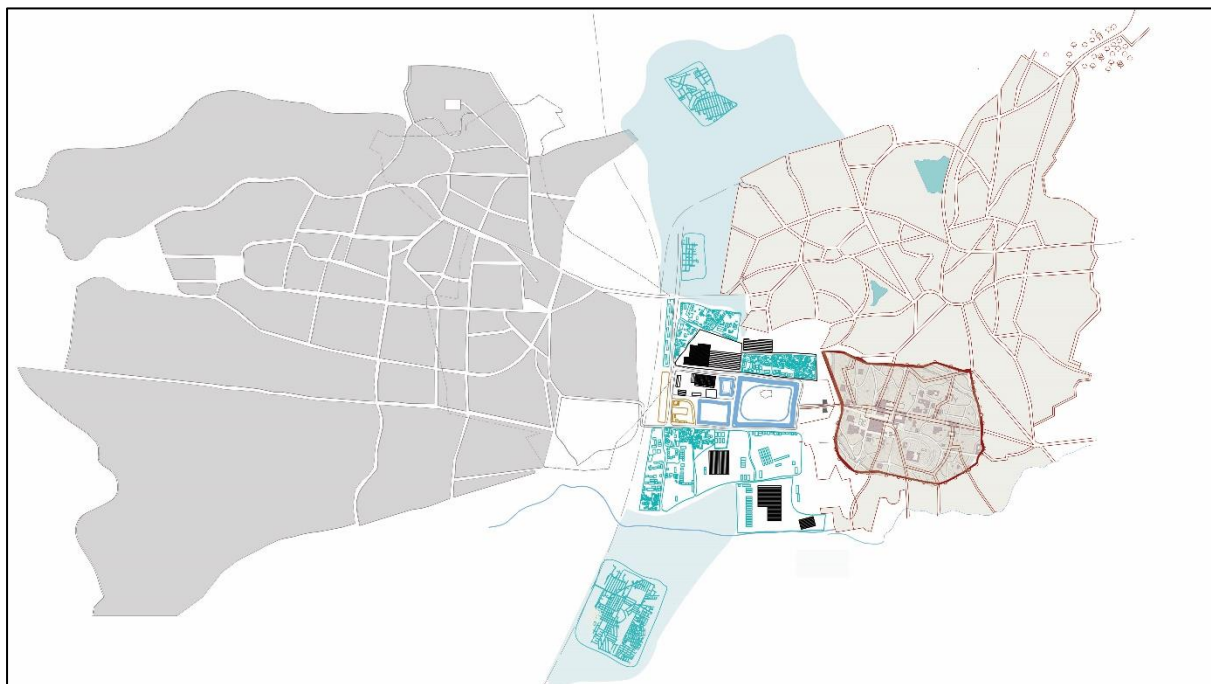
Image 3.23: Map Illustrating the Growth of the 'Buffer Space' by 1925 (source: author).

While specific area-wise population distribution data for Nagpur is lacking, insights can be drawn from available immigration data to make comparisons between the civil station and mills areas. The 1908 Gazette provides population figures, noting that in 1901, the civil station had 17,328 residents out of a total population of 127,734, encompassing the mill surroundings and the medieval city. In the Nagpur division, the immigrant population in 1901 was 170,000, primarily composed of mill workers from Akola and Nagpur. The Empress Mill, a major employer, had approximately 4,300 workers in 1901. The report highlights that a significant

proportion, around 90-100%, of immigrants in Nagpur were regarded as permanent settlers. By examining maps, it's estimated that the combined area of mills and worker settlements is around 5 sq.km in contrast to the 8 sq.km of the civil station. This suggests that during the same period, the buffer space likely had a higher density than the civil station. This comparison reveals distinct growth patterns for both areas and argues for the buffer space serving as a third focal point of development based on demographic contrasts. The influx of labour into the city necessitated housing provisions. The mill-surrounding areas saw the development of affordable residential units, with mill owners actively contributing to constructions like the Empress Mill *chawls* (residential unit typology) and the Model Mill *chawls*, an example of which is Sheth Jamnadas Pottdar, an industrialist and stakeholder in the Empress Mills.[26] Additionally, families were provided with facilities of a primary school, hospital, and a playground (Govt. 1929: 24). A crèche was established for the children of workers and in 1921, the J.N. Tata Parsi Girls school was instituted, located adjacent to the reservoir. The space was thus developed with J.N. Tata's radical and progressive approach, and through his labour welfare schemes.

In over a century, between 1877 and 2002, this locality absorbed the industrial culture of Nagpur. The Parsi *chawl* still has family members of the older generation of Parsi mill-hands residing in row house garden residences, whereas the Model mill *chawl* is a series of three two-storied structures with small compartments running on both its sides, above and below.[27] By 1923, labour housing extended to a 2 km. area in the Indora complex, designed as a garden township for Empress Mills's employees. Spanning 200 acres with 1500 blocks, it was named Bezonbagh in honour of Bezonji Mehta. Inspired by the civil station, it featured independent row houses with individual compounds, water, and toilets facilities (image 3.23). Construction costs ranged from Rs. 300-600, depending on dwelling type of *kuccha* (temporary structure) or *pucca* (permanent structure) houses. The complex incorporated roads, lighting, and numerous trees for a 'shady and beautiful' environment, as per the Labour Commission report. The buffer space, originally a zone of segregation, thus evolved into the epicentre of urbanization in Nagpur, aligning itself parallel to and extending the colonial developmental phase. During this era, the city assumed a prominent role in trade, prompting a transformation in its urban fabric to meet these economic demands. It developed into an independent economic entity, fostering an industrial culture. What was once a mere buffer space now housed seven mills and a colony of 1500 hutments. Interestingly, for the neighbouring European community, this space did not deviate significantly from the typical 'unhygienic' indigenous localities. This perhaps explains why colonial narratives overlooked it as a distinct settlement, contributing to the narrative of the 'twin city'. In this way, Nagpur stands out as an anomaly compared to the perceived dual character of other colonial cities, where multiple nuclei emerged simultaneously from scratch.

Conclusion

The transition of Nagpur between 1803-1930 was a complex, non-linear process. The city is a palimpsest made from the local Gond kingdom, the Maratha capital, a British garrison, a princely state, an administrative capital, and a trade and industrial centre. The transitions were

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[26] Sheth Jamnadasji Potdar came to Nagpur in the year 1875 as agent to Empress Mills. He called his brothers Jetmalji and Jivrajji for assistance in the city. Potdar was also responsible for opening brances of Empress Mills shops in several places such as Bankura, Calcutta, Layalpur, Madras, Rangoon, Ahmedabad, Bezwada, Karachi and smaller towns around Nagpur. He also took agency of Advance Mills in Ahmedabad. In Nagpur, he was the patron of Ram temple and a Dharamshala near station (Joshi, Huddar, and Kedkar 1941).

[27] The Model mill chawl still accommodates around 1000 persons. It has been unsafe and poses a risk to its residents with multiple cases of accidents. The recent one was in 2017 where a roof collapsed.

far from seamless, particularly during the tumultuous first half of the 19th century. The aftermath of the 1857 Mutiny prompted the implementation of defence strategies as a town planning mechanism in colonial cities nationwide. Drawing from precedents set in Lucknow, Hyderabad, Calcutta, and Bombay, Nagpur's colonial settlement inherited prototypical principles of segregation. The construction of a fort on two hillocks, along with the displacement of indigenous settlements to form a green belt, maintained a spatial distance between the medieval and western settlements. The strategic placement of the railway line acted as a final barrier, serving both as a visual and physical obstacle and as means to facilitate quick escape for Europeans during potential crises like the Sepoy Mutiny. The resultant colonial station in Nagpur thus emerged with planned execution aimed at separation, resulting in the discursive description of it as a 'twin city'. The planning of colonial station underwent significant changes due to shifting political dynamics. Initially intended as a military cantonment for the princely state, its role transformed when declared the capital of the Central Provinces and Berar, serving as a divisional headquarters. Its development, marked by scattered growth between 1860 and 1880, lacked coherence and largely adhered to the cantonment boundaries. The subsequent establishment of the civil station sub-committee in the 1880s introduced a more deliberate planning strategy, imposing an irregular grid-iron form on Nagpur's hilly topography. This development, rooted in colonial motives of asserting authority and intimidating the local population, featured an elite urban environment with large Europe-inspired buildings and garden compounds alien to the region previously. In the making of the 'civil station', still known as the 'civil lines', one finds several erasures of the city's pre-colonial urban past, which are still framed as colonial 'developments' rather than an 'elimination of indigenous cultures'. As the 19th century progressed, Nagpur witnessed the emergence of not just one but two new settlements adjacent to the medieval city: the colonial station and the trade centre. While one grew as a planned intervention, the other was simultaneously growing through the very components designated for separating the British military from locals. These elements of segregation, including the railways, Jumma Talao, and the green belt, became the catalyst and space for the development of a new, third settlement.

Spiro Kostof in *The City Assembled* defines a city as a congregation or an assembly of people who "come together to live a better life, to live it at their ease in wealth and plenty." He adds that "the greatness of a city is not the largeness of the site or its boundaries, but the multitude and number of its inhabitants and the power they hold" (Kostof 1992: 7). Building upon this perspective, it becomes apparent that the buffer space, or the cordon sanitaire within the British defence system, organically developed into a distinct microcosm between the twin cities. This challenges the conventional theory of binary or dualistic attributes typically associated with colonial cities. The growth began with one cotton mill in 1877, expanding to seven by 1890. This transformation affected a 5 sq.km. area, introducing factories and markets. Mill establishment attracted labour migration, fostering urban growth with new accommodations. The contrast between the emerging settlements was significant. One, an elite, monumental garden city with a grid form and urban hierarchy; the other, organic and clustered, featuring long-span mills, modern materials, innovative machines, and towering chimneys. The colonial settlement retained a European setting, while the industrial centre became a hub of innovation and modernity with new building materials. Parsi immigrant industrialists, joining J.N. Tata's endeavours in Nagpur, achieved success, elevating themselves to the elite class. Nagpur's colonial urban development thus deviated from the typical binary model, presenting an anomaly. The boundaries dividing these three microcosms were permeable to some extent. Post the 1857 revolt, British administration across India formed a landlord class from existing power structures to negotiate with indigenous populations. In Nagpur, these elites included former ruling members, traders, immigrant Parsi industrialists, and English-educated individuals. Charged with colonial ideals of city improvement and public welfare, these elites were elevated to authoritative positions, receiving

titles and invitations to imperial events. The elites from the three nuclei engaged cordially pertaining to their positions of power. These became transformed into porosities that were important for the maintenance of urban boundaries as well. It is, therefore, no wonder that in the 21st Century, a sense of elitist dynamic still prevails despite the city having culminated into a large and radial form. As Beverley states (2011), the theory of duality is redundant in colonial cities, to the various complex amalgamations that cities withhold in their urban histories. Therefore, this article asserts that Nagpur's colonial station exemplified a prototype of segregation, akin to other colonial cities. However, what is not typical in the case of Nagpur is its description as a 'twin city'. From 1860 to 1930, a complex negotiation of space and power unfolded among the medieval city, colonial station, and mill areas. This negotiation, centred on social class, revealed the fractures or porosities within the segregations simultaneously manifesting in the urban form. The city can thus be better described as a suture of three different microcosms: the medieval, the British, and the industrial, feeding into each other with a tripartite negotiation of space and power structuring the three centres.

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Research Article

Fragmented Planning and Splintered Urbanism: A Spatio-temporal Study of Ghaziabad

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This paper engages with debates on the transformation of towns near metropolitan cities in India. Through the case study of Ghaziabad, a city located in the eastern periphery of Delhi in Northern India, we examine the interconnections between industrialisation, urbanisation, and planning. Our paper maps the trajectory of urban morphological changes in Ghaziabad and its development from a town to a city in the post-independence period. Our purpose is to historically document the urban transition in the region of Ghaziabad by focusing on the continuous shift in economic activities, the expansion of planned and unplanned areas, and the incessant flow of poor and middle-class migrants to the city. In doing so we argue that though the planning process in Ghaziabad looks congruous from a distance, yet in reality it is fragmented to the core, resulting in dispersed industrialisation and the formation of a mosaic of residential segregation. The paper also discusses how Delhi's urbanisation and planning interventions have reconfigured the socio-urban changes in Ghaziabad. The growth of an urban agglomeration under the shadow of a metropolitan city, apart from influencing its salient identity, has also hindered its independent growth in comparison to other satellite cities like Faridabad, Gurgaon, and Noida.

Satellite-towns, Urban-planning, Industrial-urbanisation, Ghaziabad, Delhi-NCR

Introduction

This paper engages with debates on the transformation of towns near metropolitan cities in India. Through the case study of Ghaziabad, a city located in the eastern periphery of Delhi in Northern India, we examine the interconnections between industrialisation, urbanisation, and planning. Our paper maps the trajectory of urban morphological changes in Ghaziabad and its development from a town to a city in the post-independence period. Our purpose is to historically document the urban transition in the region of Ghaziabad by focusing on the continuous shift in economic activities, the expansion of planned and unplanned areas, and the incessant flow of poor and middle-class migrants to the city. In doing so we argue that though the planning process in Ghaziabad looks congruous from a distance, yet in reality it is fragmented to the core, resulting in dispersed industrialisation and the formation of a mosaic of residential segregation. The paper also discusses how Delhi's urbanisation and planning interventions have reconfigured the socio-urban changes in Ghaziabad. The growth of an urban agglomeration under the shadow of a metropolitan city, apart from influencing its salient identity, has also hindered its independent growth in comparison to other satellite cities like Faridabad, Gurgaon, and Noida.

The imagination of the city through the ages has been associated with the questions connected to progressive aspirations and upward mobility (despite the attendant social ills) whereas, the vision related to the building of towns is mostly defined in terms of demographic growth, or

according to their functional requirements. In today's parlance, the prefix 'small', 'medium', or 'large' is used to specify the size of a town based on its urbanisation trends and occupational status, but in the 19th century when Engels coined the epithet of 'The Great Towns', it was to reify the ironic reality of a rapidly industrialising England, where poverty and slums had become the hallmark of manufacturing regions in one of the most advanced nations of the world then (Engels 1953). The story of industrial urbanisation as it unfolded in towns and cities in other parts of the world turned out no different. In the Indian scenario, the pattern of urbanisation is characterized by the continuous concentration of population and activities in large cities or towns, which have been demographically upgraded to be cities. Davis used the term 'over-urbanisation' for scenarios wherein urban misery coexists simultaneously with rural poverty with the result that cities can hardly be called dynamic any more (Davis and Golden 1954). In a sense, this is a form of 'pseudo urbanisation' wherein people embrace cities, not owing to the urban pull, but due to rural push (Breese 1969). This kind of dysfunctional urbanisation and urban accretion results in the concentration of population in a few large cities without a corresponding increase in their economic base (Raza and Kundu 1978). Extending this discussion to Northern India, this paper will bring out the interplay of the rural-urban dichotomy in Ghaziabad, and outline Ghaziabad's atypical transformation from a nondescript town to a city with dispersed industrial growth.
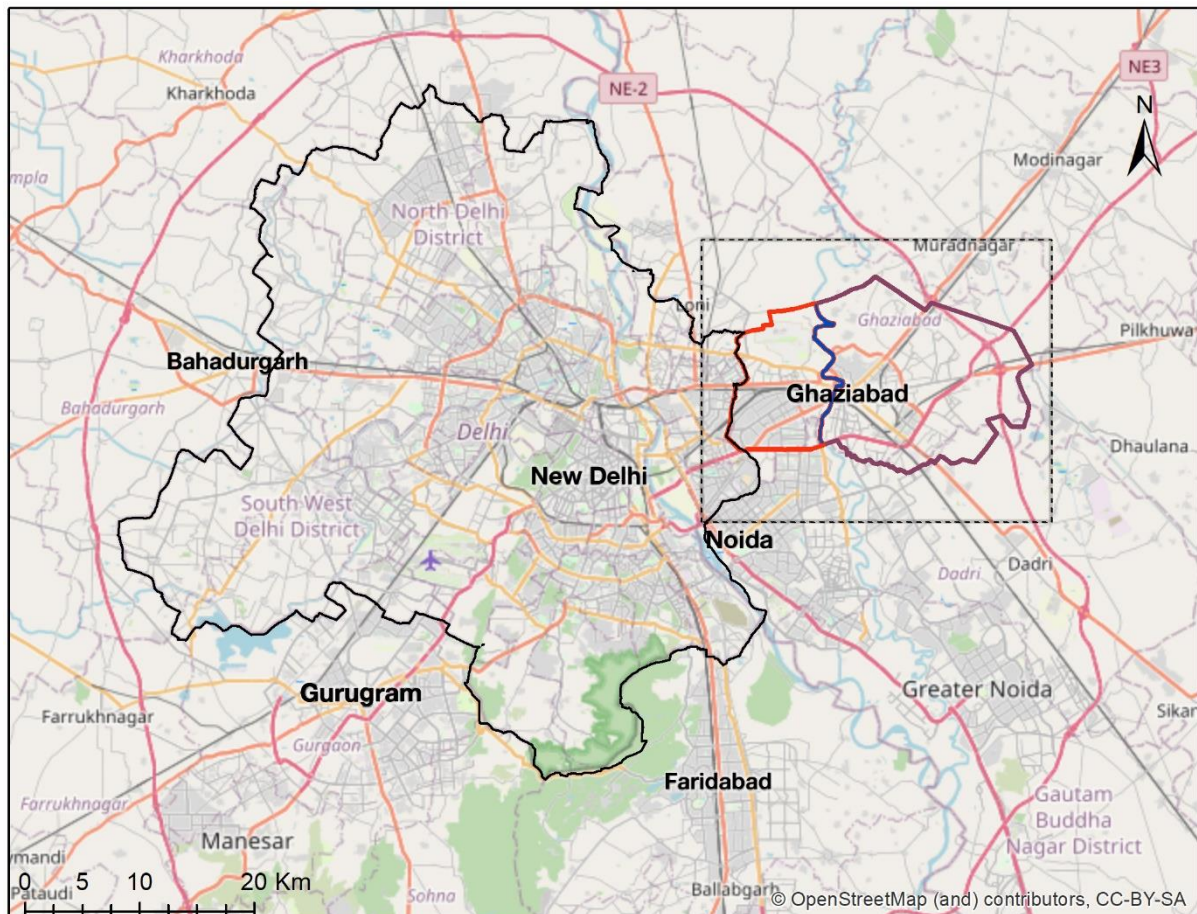
Image 4.1: Map of Delhi and its Satellite Towns (source: Open Street Map / authors).

Ghaziabad, as a city lying on the periphery of Delhi, has not drawn any notable scholarly interest except for the fact that it enjoyed proximity to the capital, hence most studies on this region focused on the fallout of this inter relationship. In contemporary secondary literature, there are important insights on diverse concerns of sustainability in Ghaziabad from a 'peri-urban' perspective (Randhawa and Marshall 2014, Mehta and Karpouzoglou 2015, Priya et al. 2017, Waldman et al. 2017), without scholars really engaging with the historical urban process

that moulded it from the beginning of the post-independence period. This paper looks at how Ghaziabad which was in the mid-19th century perceived *as anaj and sabji mandi* (food and vegetable market) town later grew into a burgeoning industrial city, based on its location, peculiarity, and urban expansion. In this regard, it is crucial to look into the economic, spatial, and social changes in Ghaziabad after India's independence to understand the nature of urban planning in this city. Additionally, Delhi as the capital of the country and an adjoining metropolitan city has had a spillover effect into Ghaziabad which in turn impacted its overall urban growth. Some of the observations in this paper will contribute to certain key issues emerging out of the transformation of towns near metropolitan cities in India. The paper mainly draws on primary sources such as government documents (census data and reports, Ghaziabad Master Plans, Delhi Master Plans), academic publications, media and web reports, and oral interviews. Structured into five sections, the first segment, following the introduction, briefly outlines the study area and reviews existing literature on Ghaziabad. The second section engages with discussions on transforming towns near large cities in India. The third section delineates the economic, spatial, and social transformation of Ghaziabad since independence, with the next section exploring the relationship between industrialisation, urbanisation, and urban planning. The final segment discusses the influence of the Delhi Master Plan on the process of urbanisation in Ghaziabad. We conclude by summarising certain key findings that place the historical and urban development of this city in relation to the metropolis and its implication in the larger context of urbanisation in India.

Studying Ghaziabad

Image 4.2: Map of Ghaziabad Depicting Trans- and Cis-Hindon Areas (source: Open Street Map / authors).

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The city of Ghaziabad is located in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (UP), on the eastern periphery of Delhi across river Yamuna. Owing to its proximity with Delhi, it has developed into one of the satelli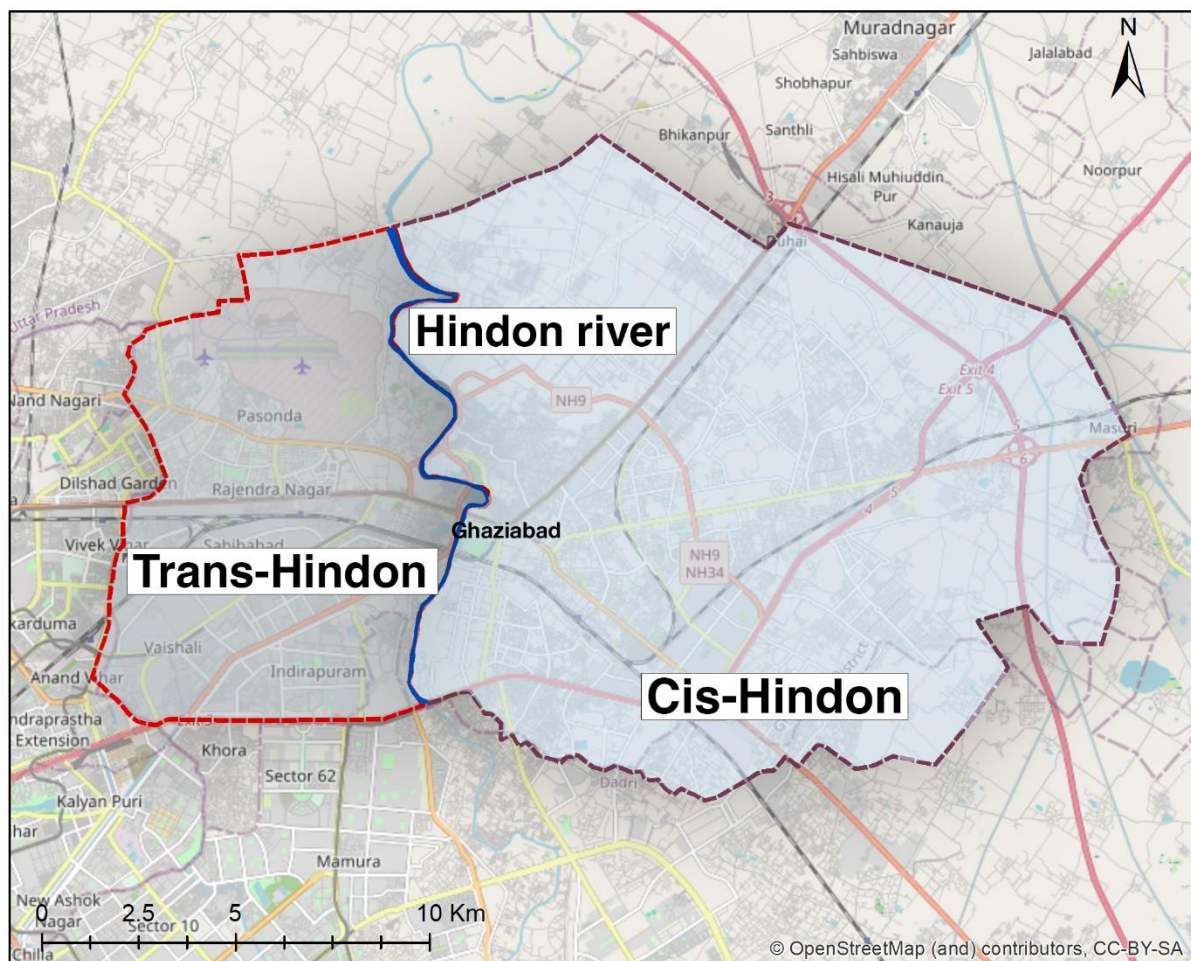te towns of the national capital along with Noida, Faridabad, Gurgaon and others (see image 4.1). It is also one of the largest cities in Northern India with a population of 1.6 million, wherein 82.5% belong to the Hindu community, followed by 14.18% Muslims. The remaining 3.4% belong to the Sikh, Christian, Buddhist, Jain, and other communities (GOI 2011). The river Hindon flows through the city dividing it into the Cis-Hindon Area (CHA) on the east and the Trans-Hindon Areas (THA) on the west that adjoins Delhi (see Image 4.2). While CHA constitutes two thirds of the area and population, THA constitutes one third of the area and population.

Currently, Ghaziabad has been divided into 80 wards for which elections are held every five years.[1] In the past few decades, it has witnessed rapid commercial development accompanied by the relocation of many small-scale industrial units from Delhi. This in the context of a Supreme Court of India ruling in the early 2000 that ordered the closure of polluting / non-polluting industries from non-conforming zones in the city. This has influenced the land-use plan and livelihood practices of the city to a great extent, as agriculture was negatively impacted to accommodate the mushrooming commercial, industrial, and service sector activities. There has also been a construction boom in recent years with new middle-class colonies emerging in Trans-Hindon region close to the Delhi border. Being located inside the periphery of Delhi, the city has come under scrutiny mainly owing to the ill effects caused by industrial pollution, and the rapid transformation of agricultural land into a built-up area for residential and commercial purposes (Mehta and Karpouzoglou 2015, Mohan 2013). This industrial and residential growth in the city followed a peculiar trajectory which will be explored later in this article. However, at this moment, it is important to look at different kinds of scholarly contribution that have focused on varies aspects of this city.

Ghaziabad, so far, has been studied as an industrial city, a peri-urban interface, and through a spatial analysis perspective. There are also some technical studies on the impact of different types of pollution in the Trans-Hindon region. However these attempts are few and far between in comparison to other cities in Delhi's vicinity, such as Gurgaon and Faridabad. Aruna Saxena's book (1989) was an early study of Ghaziabad, focused on the industrial development of Ghaziabad from a geographical perspective, and the book outlined the spatial pattern of industrial land use in different phases of its industrialisation. By analysing specific types of industries such as metal, agriculture, chemical, and others, Saxena brought to light, problems of industrial development in Ghaziabad. Though this work is an important contribution to mapping the historical trajectory of industrialisation in Ghaziabad till the period of the early 1980s, it does not engage with the patterns of urbanisation emerging out of that process. In fact, one barely finds any scholarly work on Ghaziabad in the next two decades that focusses on this issue. It is only in the past decade that scholarly interest has again emerged, using the concept of 'peri-urban' lens that influenced research outlook for this region. The conceptual framework of peri-urban is characterized by the dynamic flow of commodities, capital, natural resources, people, and pollution, and a range of processes that intensify urban-rural linkages, activities, and institutions (Marshall et al. 2009). Studies that view Ghaziabad as a peri-urban space are mainly focused on understanding its sustainability, using an analytical lens that evaluates water supply, pollution, agriculture, health, and the environmental activism in the region from the post liberalisation period onward (Randhawa and Marshall 2014, Mehta and Karpouzoglou 2015, Priya et al, 2017, Waldman 2017). Alongside the analysis of Ghaziabad as a peri-urban space, there is another study that analyses the urban land use patterns and trends from Ghaziabad, using spatial methods. Such research illustrates how the built-up area

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[1] "Ghaziabad Population, Religion, Caste, Working Data Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh–Census 2011" (https://www.censusindia.co.in/towns/ghaziabad-population-ghaziabad-uttar-pradesh-800734), accessed on 12.08.2023.

of Ghaziabad has significantly increased between 1972 to 2009, which is at the cost of a drastic reduction in the cultivable land of the region (Mohan 2013). In addition, there are several technical papers that evaluate the water quality of river Hindon, groundwater issues, heavy metal contamination in the vegetables grown around industrial clusters, air pollution, etc. (Suthar et al. 2010, Chabukdhara and Nema 2013, Sajjad, Jyoti, Uddin 2014, Chabukdhara et al. 2016, Gupta et al. 2021). While each of these studies is a significant contribution to understanding the contemporary challenges of Ghaziabad in a neoliberal context, a socio-historical understanding of the city remains elusive. It is imperative to study the past, to trace changes and plot specific moments in time that made the space amenable to rapid and enduring growth in the last three decades. Moreover, a comparative perspective of urban development in areas near the metropolis or the National Capital Region (NCR), will reveal both the generality and distinctiveness of the changes witnessed in Ghaziabad. Hence, we use the framework of relational space to study satellite towns, and specifically, the nature of urbanisation experienced in Ghaziabad.

Studies on Transformation in Towns near Metropolitan Cities

Binaries such as city and small town, core and periphery, legal and illegal space, reflect a relational aspect where one variable is defined in contradistinction to another. Similarly, a spatial comparison becomes conspicuous when the surrounding areas of a core area or a metropolitan city are identified as peripheral 'satellite' towns. It was in the 1880s in America that the industrial exodus from the city centre to suburbs came to signify the emergence of satellite towns (Taylor 1915). In outer space, the role of a satellite is to revolve around a more dominant object. It is perceived as a relationship that depicts subjugation as the smaller body orbits around a significant and larger entity. When a town is designated a satellite area, it indicates deference to the metropolis, and the subordination of one's own concerns and interests to the core region. In the period between 1960s and 2000s, urban development policies in South Asia indicated a shift in emphasis from metropolitan growth-control strategies to policies that enabled the diffusion of urbanisation (Shaw 2004). Satellite towns were partially effective in meeting the original objectives of absorbing the excess population of the metropolitan core, but this was at the cost of ecological transformation. In the Indian context, a number of satellite towns have been planned, using a land acquisition based development mechanism approach, to supply serviced land to urban markets. Most of them that have been created since independence include Faridabad, Gurgaon, and Noida near Delhi, Bidhannagar near Kolkata, and Navi Mumbai near Mumbai. These projects and their continuous growth, have led to considerable land acquisition and their development as residential and commercial enterprises by the private sector, unlike the largely state-led growth of the metropolis.

The early development of Navi Mumbai is interesting from this angle as it was conceived by the government of Maharashtra, but its implementation was entrusted to City and Industrial Development and Corporation of Maharashtra (CIDCO), a parastatal body, signifying state-market partnerships. Navi Mumbai has an area almost equal to Greater Mumbai, and it was initially supposed to be made up of 14 New Towns that would act as a counter magnet, to draw away potential migrants from the old city, and resettle a part of its existing population. Mumbai is located on a series of small, joined islands reclaimed from the sea. Hence the physical expansion of the built-up area of the city cannot continue beyond the existing land surface. Shaw contends that since India's independence (from 1950s onwards), many such urban settlements and new towns like Navi Mumbai have come up, and this development has coincided with rapid industrialisation in those areas that aimed at easing the burden of core cities (Shaw 2004: 8).

In the case of Delhi, the planning of the capital city in a regional and relational context began in 1960s, with a mention of the Delhi Metropolitan Area (DMA) in the Master Plan of Delhi (MPD) in 1962. Later, the idea of planning the National Capital Region (NCR) was mooted in

1985, which had included more areas beyond the Delhi Metropolis. This notion of planning had major implications on urbanisation trends, reflected in the relationship between the core city and its peripheral regions (Mehra 2020). The MPD 1962 acknowledged the significance of 'ring towns' located within a 25–30 km radius around New Delhi. These ring towns (for example, Loni and Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh; Faridabad, Ballabhgarh, Bahadurgarh, Gurgaon in Punjab; and Narela in Delhi) were supposed to serve as counter magnets to the national capital, to accommodate surplus migrant populations, and to offer stable employment opportunities. They were initially planned as self-sufficient regions sharing a symbiotic relationship with the metropolis city. In the period of 1970-1980s, the national capital region plan brought more areas under its purview of planning (ibid.). If we look at each of these towns, they have each become different cities, owing to the distinct forms of urbanisation and urban culture that distinguish one from another. We will discuss the peculiarity of planning in Faridabad, Gurgaon and NOIDA, before we come to the city of Ghaziabad.

The district of Faridabad shares its boundaries with the national capital of Delhi in the north, Gurgaon in the west, and Uttar Pradesh in the east and south. The river Yamuna separates the district boundary on the eastern side, which is contiguous to Uttar Pradesh. In the city, the old Faridabad area was primarily an agglomeration of villages that was sparsely inhabited prior to Partition. Its development as a town became intertwined with the development of the New Industrial Township (NIT) region, which was planned in the post-Partition period to resettle about 40,000 displaced populations that arrived from West Punjab. In the 1950s, the town served as an important bastion for the resettlement of refugees. However, by the 1970–1980s, Faridabad crystallized from a ring town to a satellite industrial town of Delhi. While initially, the town was built to resettle refugees, it buckled under increasing demographic pressure by the late 1970s owing to migrant flow from other states into this region. The infrastructural lacunae failed to attract middle and high-income groups from outside. Thus, private developers in the town's early stages of development did not have any incentive to supplement the public sector efforts to develop housing or create recreational facilities in the area. As regard to leisure activities, facilities like community halls, theatres, cinema halls, clubs, swimming pools, and playgrounds were practically missing in Faridabad. In the 1980s, social life was dull, and people looked to Delhi for these amenities, especially with regards to entertainment or shopping. Nonetheless, Faridabad managed to gain a reputation of being an important industrial city, and by the 2000s the private real estate magnates got a foothold into the city to provide it with residential and recreational amenities, making it more self-contained and independent, a city in its own right (Mehra 2020).

The study of Faridabad can be compared and contrasted to the urban growth of Gurgaon, as they were both in the same district until 1979. It is interesting to note that Gurgaon, owing to its natural disadvantage of a scarce and low water table, was given a moderate share of burden in terms of demographic growth in the MPD 1962. But certain impulses thereafter led to its transformation into a glitzy city with a robust population and tremendous real estate growth that surpassed many other cities in the NCR. It was the free hand given to private developers like Delhi Land and Finance Limited (DLF) that enabled the meteoric rise of this cosmopolitan city in the post 1990s. Shubhra Gururani labels the urban planning of Gurgaon as 'accommodation and concessions' that went along with the practice of redefining, manipulating, and relaxing development plans under the rubric of 'Flexible Planning'. This strategy encompasses a range of political techniques, through which exemptions were routinely made, plans were redrawn, compromises were made, and brute force was executed. Not a random act, it had a cultural logic that allowed for the material and discursive manoeuvring of state power, the building of legal and extra-legal networks, and of relations of influence. Gururani stretches the scope of her definition of accommodation and concession to include economic practices like 'foreign investments', 'partnership with large private developers', and the setting up of Special Economic Zones through which the state was able

to change the rules of land use, land transfers, tenancy and eventually plan for flexibly in the context of a changing capitalist political economy (Gururani 2013).

The third contiguous area in the Delhi NCR region is NOIDA (The New Okhla Industrial Development Area). The Planning Area / Notified Area of Noida city falls entirely within the district of Gautam Budh Nagar. Surprisingly, this city does not have a name of its own, named after the authority that built it. The genesis of this city has an interesting story. The development of industrial units and warehousing at various locations around Delhi led to speculative land dealings that resulted in unauthorised development. Therefore, on 17 April 1976, the Government of Uttar Pradesh notified and demarcated 36 villages of the Yamuna-Hindon Delhi Border Regulated Area as the New Okhla Industrial Development, under the provisions of the U.P. Industrial Development Act, 1976 (Bali and Bhatia 2022). According to Robert B. Potter and Rita Sinha (1990: 63):

> The establishment of new urban communities in order to decentralise population and activities from primate cities and core regions is a well-known weapon in the armoury of the town and country planner. The development of a planned township to house small industries of the informal sector which have been operating in an unauthorised and illegal manner in non-conforming areas of the capital city is an interesting variation on this theme.

The fate of urban development in NCR was evidently tied to the requirements of Delhi whether it was to resettle excess population from the capital city, as in the case of Faridabad in 1949, or to remove the industrial informal sector to NOIDA in 1976 or reposition the service sector of Gurgaon in the 1990s. While each of these cities have made their distinct mark and are recognised for their own standing in the Delhi NCR region, Ghaziabad followed a distinct developmental path. We now turn to the case of Ghaziabad city, which is different from other cities in the NCR region.

Ghaziabad: Transition from a *Mandi* Town to a City

The history of Ghaziabad dates back to the 18th century with the development of three villages, namely *Jatwara*, *Kaila,* and *Bhainja*. In 1740 Ghazi-ud-Din, the *wazir* (minister) of Mughal emperor Mohamad Shah founded the town. Ghaziabad was originally known as Ghazi-ud-dinnagar (Government of Uttar Pradesh 1981). The *wazir* built a fort in the northern region of the Grand Trunk (GT) road, and there were 120 rooms in that fort, which were used as *serai* (resting place) by the Mughal army. Later, he developed a town surrounding the fort and named it after himself. The town had four gates: the *Jawahar* Gate, the *Dilli* Gate, the *Dasna* Gate, and the *Sihani* Gate (GDA 1986). Ghazi-ud-dinnagar was shortened to Ghaziabad in 1865 when Ghaziabad railway station was built by the British (District Gazetteer 1922).[2] It was a junction for the East Indian Railway and for Sind, Punjab, and the Delhi Railways. During the same period, local farmers and traders established a food and vegetable market (*anaj and sabji mandi*) in town that boosted the urbanisation process.[3] This *mandi* was not just helpful for enabling local consumption, but it also catered to the city of Delhi. In 1847, the town's population stood at 5112, and this number almost doubled in the next five decades to 11275 in 1901. In 1941, Ghaziabad was still a small town with a population of 23534, and the people were mainly dependent on trade and a business-based economy (GDA 1986). It is interesting to note that while it took five decades during the pre-independence period for the

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[2] District Gazetteer of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh Meerut Vol-IV (https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.16071/2015.16071.District-Gazetteers-Of-The-United-Provinces-Of-Agra-And-Oudh-Meerut-Vol-iv-1922_djvu.txt), accessed 17.12.2023.

[3] The food and the vegetable market were managed by the farmers and traders till the Ghaziabad municipality was created in 1924.

population to become double in size, there was significant demographic change after partition that surpassed the expectation of each master plan that tried to contain the town's exponential growth. We now turn to the rapid economic, spatial, and social transformation of Ghaziabad in the post-independence era.
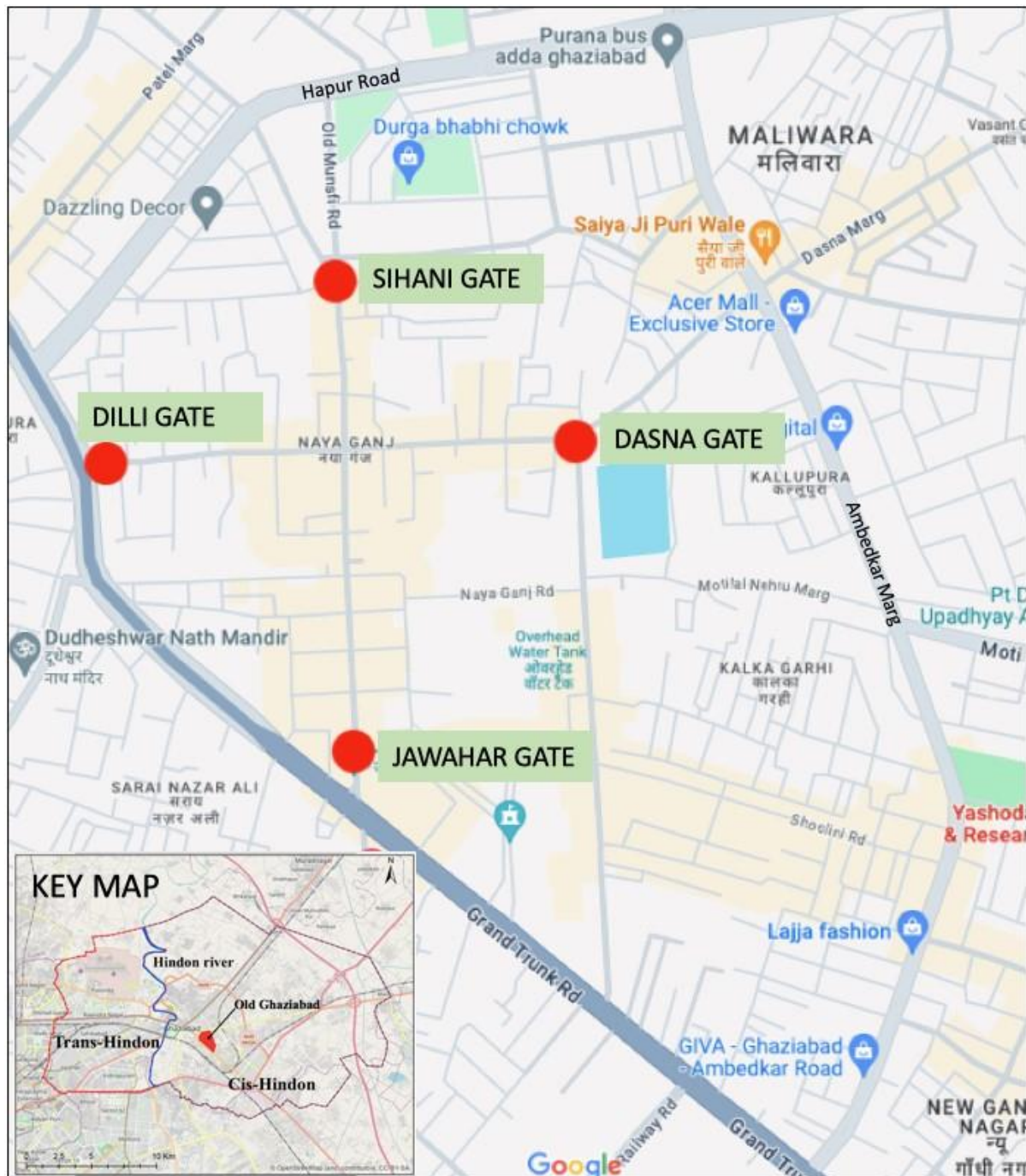
Image 4.3: Map of Old Ghaziabad with its Four Gates (source: Google Maps / public domain).

Economy

At present, the economy of Ghaziabad is dependent on diverse sectors, but starting from the early years of independence till the 1990s, the manufacturing sector was considered Ghaziabad's economic backbone. In the period following Partition in 1947, the national capital of Delhi and many other towns adjacent to it, including Ghaziabad, received refugee populations, displaced from West Punjab (Pakistan). This sudden influx resulted in the addition of about 20,000 new people to the town. The population count of 23534 in 1941 thus shot up

to 43745 in 1951. The inflow of refugees continued through the next decade as well, ensuing in the further growth of the population that stood at 70438 in 1961 (ibid). This was also when the first phase of unplanned industrialisation took place, with 8 industrial units in the town in 1947increasing to 86 units in 1961 that had 6520 industrial workers (Saxena 1984). Most of these industrial units were set up by refugee entrepreneurs, and the town's economy, chiefly based on trade and business earlier, now had an industrial foundation. The process of planned industrialisation began in the early years of the 1960s, and the period between 1962 and 1981 was considered a peak period in the history of Ghaziabad's industrial growth. From 86 industrial units in 1961, the number increased to 452 in 1981, employing a total of 37731 people (ibid.).[4] Between 1981 and 1991, there were further expansions to the number of units with 54558 industrial workers being employed.

By this time, Ghaziabad was transformed into an industrial city, where the manufacturing sector was contributing significantly to the economy, employing a total of 37.98% of the population in the workforce (GDA 2007). Along with manufacturing, there was a growth in the business and commerce sectors as well. While in 1971, people employed in business and commerce numbered 6350, this figure significantly grew to 29953 (20.8% of the total workforce) in 1991 (ibid.). Between 1991 and 2001, despite economic turmoil in the country and the closure of a few industries,[5] the manufacturing sector continued to contribute to the economy by giving employment to 39% of the total workforce, followed by 20% workforce in the business and commerce sectors (GDA 2007). The early years of the 2000s decade was a period when, due to the curtailment orders of the Supreme Court of India, several polluting industries from Delhi were also shifted across industrial areas in Ghaziabad (Randhawa and Marshall 2014). By this time, Ghaziabad was the second largest industrial city in UP after Kanpur, and it was home to different kinds of large, medium, and small industries that included steel plants, industries manufacturing electroplated items, tapestries, diesel engines, bicycles, railway coaches, heavy chains, brass brackets, lanterns, glassware, pottery, paint, and varnish. Ghaziabad also developed an electronics sector and set up several tobacco farms and cigarette factories at this time.[6] As an important centre of business and commerce, Ghaziabad was supplying various products and equipment to regional, national, and international markets (Asian Development Bank 2010).

The economy of Ghaziabad started transforming from 2001 onwards as a result of neoliberal economic policies, wherein the emphasis was to shift from manufacturing to the finance and service sector. The contribution of manufacturing decreased from 39% in 2001 to 35% in 2011. There was a further decrease between 2011 and 2020 in manufacturing along with a decrease in the business and commerce sectors. While the share of the construction sector went up, the contribution of manufacturing decreased from about 35% in 2011 to 30% in 2020. The contribution of business and commerce also went down from 20% in 2001 to 15.5% in 2020. The share of construction increased from 13% to 18% in the overall economy of Ghaziabad. Interestingly, construction was less than the state average (14.3%) between 2011 and 2012, but it has since risen steeply again (Das and Vaibhav 2021).[7] The proximity of Ghaziabad to Delhi is generally seen as the biggest reason for the booming construction sector. In other words, the economy of Ghaziabad is slowly moving towards real estate, which is one of the

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[4] Apart from the establishment of Hind Cycle Limited (Government of India Undertaking), all other industrial units were owned and managed by private entrepreneurs till the early 1980s. Later, other public sector units such as Bharat Electronics, Central Electronics, and others were established.

[5] Alongside economic turmoil, industries were also closing because the technology used became outdated. According to one estimate, 20% of the industrial units in the Meerut Road Industrial Area were shut down.

[6] "Ghaziabad: India" (https://www.britannica.com/place/Ghaziabad-India), accessed 25.08.2023.

[7] "Noida is Growing, Ghaziabad is Fading. The Story of Uttar Pradesh's Two Boom Towns" (https://theprint.in/opinion/noida-is-growing-ghaziabad-is-fading-the-story-of-uttar-pradeshs-two-boom-towns/710074/), accessed 08.08.2023.

most prominent trends of the neoliberal economy across the country. However, though Ghaziabad is also witnessing this shift, it is much slower than the other satellite towns of Delhi that include Noida, Gurgaon, and Faridabad (ibid.).

Spatial Change

Comparison of Proposed and Developed area in Ghaziabad (in hectares)

Urban Area in 1961	Proposed developed areas in GMP 1961	Actual Area Developed in 1981	Available developed area in 1984	Proposed developed area in GMP 2001	Actual Area Developed in 2001
573.52	5853.50	4365	5933	10039.23	8485.00

Source: GDA 1985, GDA 2007

Image 4.4: Comparison of Proposed and Developed Area in Ghaziabad in Hectares (source: GDA 1986, 2007 / authors).

For several decades before independence, Ghaziabad was still located within the limits of its four medieval gates, but from 1941 onwards, it started expanding outside these gates in an unplanned manner. In 1947, Seth Chabil Das and Seth Mukund Lal arrived here from Yamuna Nagar (earlier in Punjab and now in the state of Haryana) and established Mukund Nagar.[8] In the same period refugee entrepreneurs established industries on the Bulandshahar Road that was outside the four gates. From the early 1950s to 1961, industrial expansion took place mainly in the form of roadside establishments on Patel Marg (the western-most road of the city) and in Mukund Nagar. Together it was called the Patel Nagar-Mukund Nagar Industrial area. This phase presented a haphazard growth pattern because of the intermingling of industrial units with residential areas (Saxena 1984). Planned industrial and residential development began in the early 1960s, initiated by the Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Corporation (UPSIDC) and the Ghaziabad Improvement Trust (GIT). The table below (Image 4.4) provides details of differences between proposed and actual developed areas in the different master plans of Ghaziabad from 1961 to 2001. It shows that there was a significant increase in the development area of Ghaziabad during this period, increasing from 573 hectare in 1961 to 8485 hectare in 2001.

We try to investigate what this expansion entails in terms of actual development on the ground. In the early 1960s, 3800 acres of land was acquired by the UPSIDC for industrial development (GDA 2007). Thereafter major industrial areas were developed in different parts of the town including the Meerut Road Industrial Area, Anand Industrial Estate, Prakash Industrial Estate, Rajender Nagar Industrial Estate, and Loni Road Industrial Area. There was also a vast industrial expansion in the oldest industrial area of Bulandshahar Road. While industrial development was undertaken by the UPSIDC, the GIT was responsible for other urban development activities that included building new residential colonies. The area under Ghaziabad Municipality that included Loni Town along with an additional number of 137 villages in the vicinity, was declared a 'regulated area'. For the development of this area between 1961 and 1981, a special development scheme (also known as the first master plan of Ghaziabad) was prepared by the Town and Country Planning Office of UP. A scientific land-use plan was made to demarcate areas according to different functional purposes (GDA 1986). Planned residential areas that were developed between 1961 and 1981 included Raj Nagar, Kavi Nagar, and Shastri Nagar in the east and Lohia Nagar in the north. A few other areas included Shalimar Garden, Rajender Nagar, and Lajpat Nagar. The new residential areas were

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[8] Interview with Ved Prakash, Retail Shop Owner, Age 65, Old Ghaziabad (09.02.2023).

also developed in the Trans-Hindon Region of the north of the GT Road (GDA 1986). While new residential areas had low density of population with middle and upper middle-income housing having well-ventilated structures, wide roads, parks, and other community facilities, the old residential area of Ghaziabad had high population density and narrow lanes with no parks or open spaces. There was mixed use of land in the older areas for both residential and commercial purposes. Many Punjabis who had relocated to India after partition, over a period of time acquired wealth as entrepreneurs (industrialists and businessmen) and preferred to shift to new colonies from old Ghaziabad.[9] Alongside the district headquarters-related state government offices, Ghaziabad also had many central government offices. Most of them are located today in the Cis-Hindon Region of Raj Nagar, Navyug Market, and Hapur Road. There are very few government offices in the Trans-Hindon Region (GDA 2007).

Land Use Change in Ghaziabad from 1972 to 2009

Class	1972	1975	1989	1997	2001	2006	2009
Build-up	37.74	43.61	34.83	49.47	48.87	57.43	63.17
Cultivated Land	52.53	51.26	51.32	34.42	33.11	24.99	21.13
Forest	3.81	3.59	2.60	8.97	12.97	11.73	6.80
Water Bodies	1.16	1.34	1.58	3.54	0.85	0.79	2.09
Transport Network	4.66	0.15	9.46	3.29	3.94	4.86	6.59
Others	0.10	0.05	0.20	0.32	0.26	0.20	0.22
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Mohan 2013: 11 (owned by authors)

Image 4.5: Land Use Change in Ghaziabad from 1972 to 2009 (source: Mohan 2013: 11 / public domain).

Between 1982 and 2001, while there was some expansion in industrial areas, there was also significant development in the construction of new residential areas. In 2001, there were eight industrial areas in Ghaziabad including Dasna, Loha Mandi, GT Road, Kavi Nagar Sector 17, Bulandshahar Road Site 1, Loni Road Site 2, Meerut Road Site 3, and Sahibabad Site 4 (ibid.). The newly planned residential areas that were developed during this period included Govindpuram, Pratap Vihar, Swarn Jayanti Puram, Chiranjeev Vihar, Avantika, Vasundhara, Vaishali, Indrapuram, and others. While the first five residential areas are located in the Cis-Hindon Region with 3-story apartment blocks, the last three are located in the Trans-Hindon Region with multi-storey apartments. Till the early 1990s, residential areas were mainly developed by the Ghaziabad Development Authority (GDA) and the Uttar Pradesh Housing and Development Board (UPHDB). Later, many private developers also bought land from the villagers to build housing and commercial complexes.[10] By the year 2001, a total of 4670 hectare of land had been developed for residential purpose in Ghaziabad, which amounted to 55.03% of the total development area of the city. This was followed by industrial use (20.16%), with 6.13% being used for roads and bus stands (GDA 2007). The major development of residential areas was also due to the rising value of land and housing in Delhi. Apartments in Ghaziabad were approximately half the price of apartments in Delhi, and there was a significant increase in the number of people who worked in Delhi but lived in Ghaziabad (Randhawa and

[9] Interview with Sunil Khaneja, Punjabi Industrialist, Age 79, Nehru Nagar, Ghaziabad (10.03.2023).
[10] Interview with Sushil Raghav, Freelance Journalist and RTI Activist, Age 52, Karkar Model village near Site 4 Industrial Area, Sahibabad (15.03.2023).

Marshall 2014). Since 2001, there has been a further expansion of residential areas in both the Trans-Hindon as well as the Cis-Hindon Regions. While development mostly took place within preexisting areas in the Trans-Hindon Region, in the Cis-Hindon Region the residential and commercial property was mostly developed on acquired agricultural land located beside Meerut Road. Earlier, people were buying apartments to live in them, but now people are also buying apartments for purposes of investment, due to the immense growth in the real estate sector. This period also witnessed the conversion of roadside industrial units into shopping and commercial areas.[11] The process of industrial, residential, and commercial development in Ghaziabad has resulted in the major transformation of agricultural land use, both in a planned and unplanned manner. A study by Mohan (2013) shows the details of land use and the changes it underwent between 1972 and 2009 in Ghaziabad.

The table (image 4.5) demonstrates the total cultivated land that comprised the largest proportion (52.63%) of the total geographical area of Ghaziabad in 1972. Over the years, there has been a steady decline in the proportion of agricultural land. Particularly from 1997 onwards, this proportion decreased from 34.42% to 21.13% (in 2009). In other words, the amount of cultivated land has shrunk almost to half between 1972 and 2009. While agricultural land has decreased, there has been a corresponding increase in built-up land area. From 37.74% in 1972, the built-up land has nearly doubled to 63.17% in 2009. Besides planned development, land use patterns have also changed due to the massive conversion of agricultural land for the development of informal settlements. Though industrialisation was a significant feature of urbanisation in Ghaziabad, there was no provision for housing and infrastructural services for industrial workers.[12] In the absence of affordable housing for industrial and other unorganized sector workers, there has been a massive growth of unauthorised colonies and slums in different parts of Ghaziabad developed by local private builders (mostly erstwhile farmers).

According to the latest figure, there are 321 unauthorised colonies in Ghaziabad (GDA 2023).[13] Most of these are built on agricultural land with no regular ownership titles, which are outside the ambit of municipal intervention and services. As per government estimates, 33% of Ghaziabad's population lives in slums (GDA 2007) and many of these informal settlements are located adjacent to industrial areas. For example, the informal settlements inhabited by workers near the Sahibabad industrial areas include Indira Colony, Rajiv Colony, Shaheed Pyarelal Colony, Arthala, and others (ibid.). In addition, about 1000 hectares of rural land has been developed into urban villages. There has been a massive expansion of built-up areas beyond the boundary of the *lal dora*, literally the 'red thread' (the classification assigned to villages for habitation, referred to as *abadi*) in these villages.[14] Some of these villages include Karheda, Raeespur, Harsanw, Indrapuri, Makanpur, Sihani, Khukna etc. (GDA 2007). Though these villages are within the municipal jurisdiction, they are treated like other informal settlements that lack basic amenities.

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[11] Interview with Sushil Raghav, Freelance Journalist and RTI Activist, Karkar Model village near Site 4 Industrial Area, Sahibabad (15.03.2023).

[12] Interview with Brajesh Singh, Age 70, Secretary, Ghaziabad District at the Centre of Indian Trade Union (CITU), Site 4 Industrial Area, Sahibabad (30.03.2023).

[13] *Ghaziabad Vikas Kshetra me Jonvar Chinhit Avaidh Calaniyon ki Soochi* (https://gdaghaziabad.in/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/avedh-colony-list.pdf), accessed 23.04.2023.

[14] *Lal dora* villages are part of municipal wards, governed by the Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation. Though *lal dora* villages in urban areas are administered by urban local bodies and represented by the ward councilor, our past studies show that some villages continue to have *panchayats*. These *panchayats* do not have access to government schemes / programs anymore. They only play a role in intervening / resolving social conflict in the village or organize village social events.

Social Milieu

Along with economic and spatial transformation, the social character of Ghaziabad also underwent significant change, with different communities migrating and competing for shelter, jobs, and services. These social groups included the inhabitants of old villages, people displaced after Partition, employees of the state and central government departments, migrants who have been continuously arriving since the process of industrialisation began, and the aspiring middle and upper middle-class residents of Delhi and other major cities seeking affordable accommodation. The majority of earlier inhabitants continue to live in villages, defined as *lal dora* areas. There is a domination of Gujjars and Rajput castes over here, with a significant presence of backward and Dalit (untouchable) castes. Most Gujjars and Rajputs have lost their agricultural land that was acquired either for industrial, residential, or commercial development by UPSIDC, GIT and GDA.[15] Agriculture continues to be the source of livelihood for a significant number of people in the villages that have so far survived land acquisition. Despite being powerful inside the village, it is noteworthy that middle-class and upper-caste farmers today cannot be equated with the urban middle classes. This is for two reasons. First, they do not have the social and cultural capital that is required for people in a globalising world, and second, compared to the urban middle-classes, they have been adversely impacted by industrialisation and urbanisation that depleted the region's natural resources, environmental stability, disrupting the social structures that enabled their interaction with small, or lower-caste farmers (Priya et al. 2017). As far as Dalit populations are concerned, many of them were earlier landless peasants, working on lands owned by the Gujjars and Rajputs. After the acquisition of cultivable land, not only did they lose their livelihoods, but they also did not receive any compensation for it. Some of them started working in industries, while others were forced to take up their ancestral profession as sanitation workers in the public and private sector.[16]

In the post-independence period, refugee migrants to Ghaziabad settled in Ghandhi Nagar and Mukund Nagar areas that were within the old town. While a majority of them started their own businesses, there were a few who established industries. Till date, many of them continued staying in those colonies within the old town, but those who acquired wealth and status settled in middle and upper-class colonies like Nehru Nagar, Kavi Nagar, and others.[17] During the 1960s the refugee population outgrew the older populations of Ghaziabad, but continuous labour migration for livelihood opportunities in the industries, once again changed the social milieu of the town. The lower labouring classes usually resided near their workplaces, either in slums or unauthorised colonies. Many of them also resided in rented accommodation inside *lal dora* villages. The migrant populations generally received little or no recognition from the state and were often looked down upon by village residents as well. The relocation of polluting industries from Delhi to Ghaziabad resulted in another wave of migrants who added to the woes of resettlement colonies and squatter settlements (*bastee*): areas such as Rajiv Colony, Ambedkar Nagar, Chitrakoot, Ramnagar, and Balaji Vihar (Karpouzoglou et al. 2018).

Apart from lower working-class migrants, there was also a significant increase in the white collar migrant population in Ghaziabad who worked in government sectors and the service economy. The majority of people working in government offices reside in the Cis-Hindon region, with those working in the service economy largely located in multistorey residential apartments of the Trans-Hindon area in places like Vasundhara, Indirapuram, Vaishali,

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[15] Interview with Sushil Raghav, Freelance Journalist and RTI Activist, Age 52, Karkar Model village near Site 4 Industrial Area, Sahibabad (15.03.2023).

[16] Interview with Ram Sahay, Age 86, Born in Ghaziabad village in Indargarhi (09.02.2023).

[17] Interview with Sunil Khaneja, Punjabi Industrialist, Age 79, Nehru Nagar, Ghaziabad (10.03.2023)

Kaushami etc. Many from the latter category also work in Noida and Delhi. As Priya et al. (2017: 12) puts it:

> Locally, the popular perception divides people on either side of the river. The Cis-Hindon area is perceived as socio-culturally a part of UP while the Trans- Hindon, even while being located in UP, has the image of being more a part of the metropolis of Delhi.

The discussion above illustrates that there has been significant economic, spatial, and social transformation of Ghaziabad city from the post-independence period till date and that there seems to be a deepening chasm between residents from either side of the Hindon River. Having taken place in a span of just a few decades, these transformations have been rapid. The town before independence burgeoned into a city with migrant populations working in dispersed industrial enclaves. Government officials, planners, builders, property dealers, industrialists, rural residents, and migrant workers have all contributed to these changes. The *mandi* town which had seen its first stage of expansion through business and commerce, became transformed into an industrial city in the post-independence period. In the past twenty years, Ghaziabad has been reconfigured in accordance with neoliberal principles, favourably disposed towards the service sector. The continuous growth of population along with the expansion of economic activities, has demanded and led to the rampant transformation of agricultural land into build-up areas meant for industrial, residential, and commercial development. Along with state-driven market-led initiatives, the local private builders also played an important role in this development. These economic and spatial transformations have been accompanied by a continuous shift in the social character of Ghaziabad which now comprises erstwhile villagers, relocated populations from Punjab, industrial workers (mostly migrants), and middle-income groups. The next section will focus attention on the urban planning and governance of Ghaziabad by keeping in mind the social flux the city witnessed in a short span of time.
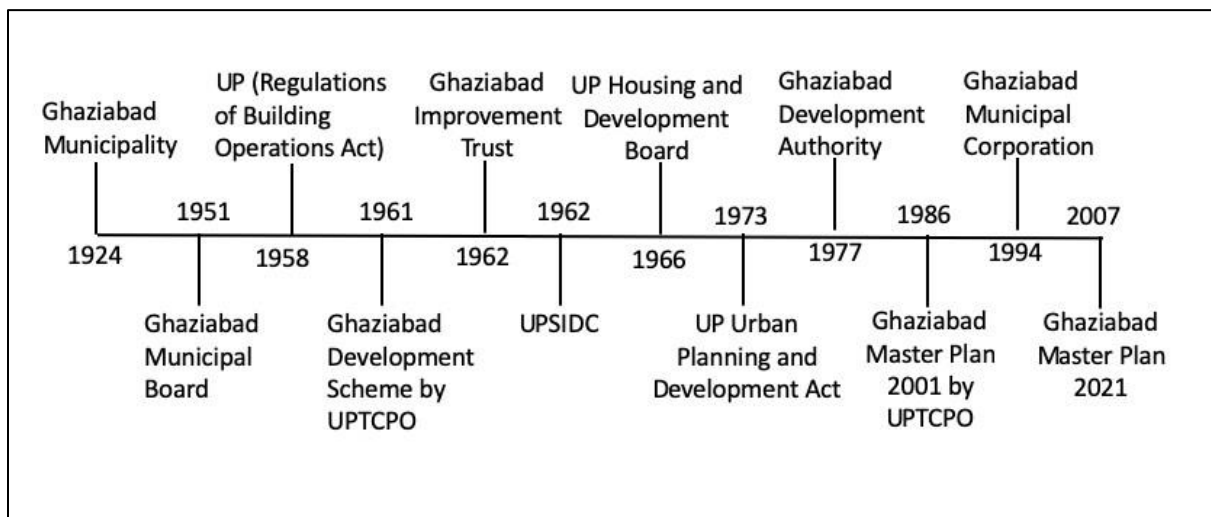
Dispersed Planning and Governance

Image 4.6: Urban Planning and Governance in Ghaziabad (source: authors)

The story of the creation of governing agencies, the formulation of regulations, and the drafting of urban plans in Ghaziabad can be comprehended in the form of a timeline, demonstrated in Image 4.6. From 1924 onwards, the town was under the jurisdiction of a municipality, which

was upgraded to the level of a Municipal Board in 1951 and later to a Municipal Corporation in 1994 after the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act.[18]
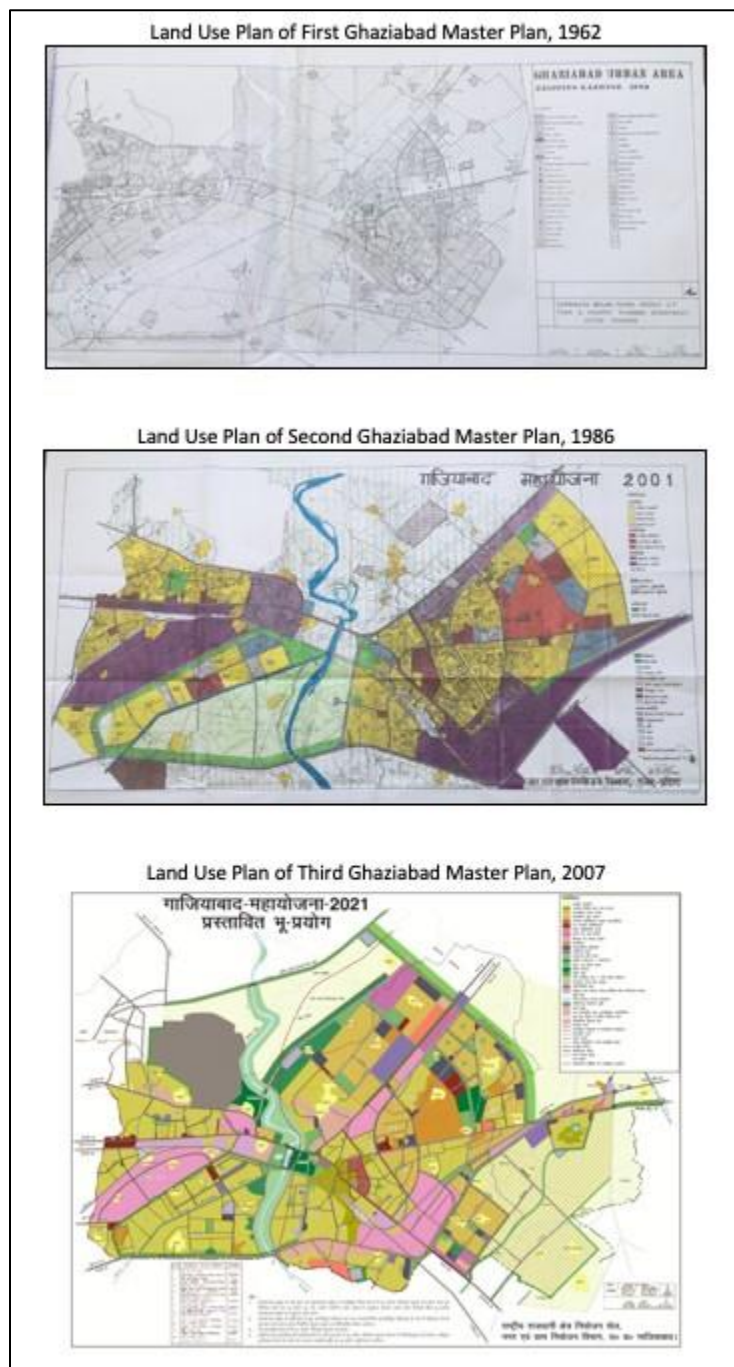
Image 4.7: Land Use Plans of Ghaziabad (source: GDA 1986 / authors).

The early years after independence witnessed unplanned industrial and urban development in Ghaziabad. Proper institutional planning began only after the formulation of the UP (Regulations of Building Operations) Act in 1958. Based on this act, the Uttar Pradesh Town and Country Planning Office (UPTCPO) drafted the Ghaziabad Development Scheme. At the same time, two important agencies were simultaneously created: the UPSIDC in 1961 and the GIT in 1962. The UPSIDC was responsible for planning industrial areas. Along with providing licenses, it also gave loans for buying land to establish industries (GDA 1986). The GIT was responsible for implementing the development scheme. The development scheme had a land-use plan, which demarcated areas according to different functional purposes e.g., educational, market, business, industrial, residential, recreational zones, parks, etc. In 1966, the UP Housing Board was additionally created, which gave a further boost to the development of planned residential areas in Ghaziabad. After a few years in 1973, the UP Urban Development Act was passed, and this act led to the formation of the GDA in 1977. The GIT was merged into this newly formed authority. The role of the GDA surrounded the preparation of a master plan for the planned development area, the acquisition of land, the construction of houses, and the provision of physical and social infrastructure. In 1985, the second Ghaziabad Master Plan was prepared by UPTCPO, and declared by the GDA in 1986. The third master was due in 2001 but it was declared by the GDA only in 2007.

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[18] The 74th Amendment Act of 1992 provides the basic framework for the decentralisation of power and authority to the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) or city governments.

From the above timeline, it looks like there has been a smooth transition between haphazard urban growth to planned settlements in Ghaziabad owing to the creation of agencies, the formulation of acts, and the drafting of plans, which would have systematically administered the process of urbanisation in the town. However, a closer analysis of this planning process reflects a different ground reality. There has been a rapid growth of unauthorised colonies and slums since the formulation of the first plan but none of the plans recognised their existence. For instance, the land use maps of the second and third plans show unauthorised colonies and agricultural land as recreational areas or vacant land, fit for future development. In India, there are planned industrial towns, also called project towns (Sivaramkrishnan 1977, Meher 1998), or cities where industries were established later (Sandesara 1988, Dupont 1990). While project towns were mostly located in dispersed rural locations, the others were located in the proximity of large cities or towns that already existed across the country. Industrialisation in both categories was the outcome of the national industrial policy, formulated in the early years after independence—during the first and second five-year plans (Jakobson and Prakash 1967, Sandesara 1988). In the former, planning preceded the growth of the town; in the latter, planning was often seen as an afterthought to stem the sprawl caused by industrial growth.

Ghaziabad is indicative of the latter trend, where industrial and urban planning began 20 years after the first phase of the unplanned industrialisation and urbanisation process unfolded. The creation of agencies like UPSIDC and GIT did not address then existing problems and challenges of the town rooted in the history of its urban process; rather they focused on establishing new industrial and urban development areas. Alongside neglecting the problems faced by old Ghaziabad, and the urban sprawl that had already taken place between 1940 and 1960, the first development plan and later the other master plans did not take into consideration the requirement of housing for industrial and migrant workers. The plans also neglected the needs of existing villages (*lal dora* areas) already within the municipal limit, and of the villagers who lost their farms because of land acquisition. This negligence led to a housing shortage for migrant workers and resulted in the growth of unauthorised colonies and slums that seemed intentional especially because there was no dearth of land for building residential colonies for middle and high-income groups. Urban planning in Ghaziabad has hence always overlooked socio-economic realities, which have resulted in dispersed industrialisation and the creation of segregated residential spaces within the city. Moreover, being in the proximity of Delhi has had its pros and cons as the planning of the satellite town was overshadowed by the needs of the Metropolis which lay adjacent to the city. This is evident from how differently the Master Plans of Delhi framed policies on the contiguous regions, especially Ghaziabad.

Delhi-Ghaziabad Relations in Official Framing

Ghaziabad has always been viewed in relation to Delhi in the strategic scheme of things. Whether it is the Delhi or the Ghaziabad master plan, the thrust has always been on how Delhi's pressure of urbanisation could be systematically apportioned. As discussed earlier, Ghaziabad was a part of DMA in the MPD 1962 along with other 'ring towns' of the capital. The Trans-Hindon region of Ghaziabad was part of the land use plan of the MPD 1962 (Image 4.8). It stated that Ghaziabad would ideally be considered a future industrial town, which would employ approximately 50,000 workers in the manufacturing sector, which had a total population of 3,57,000 in 1981 (DDA 1962). Though this projection could not be met in 1981, eventually, Ghaziabad became a major industrial hub by 1991, with a population of 5,11,759, and employing 54,000 industrial workers (GDA 2007). Even the succeeding master plans envisioned Ghaziabad as part of the larger entity of Delhi. The year 1985 saw the declaration of Delhi as the National Capital Region (NCR). The objective was to reduce Delhi's urbanisation

burden through the creation of 11 regional centres that were located at distances of 60-160 km from Delhi in Haryana and UP (Nath 1993).[19]
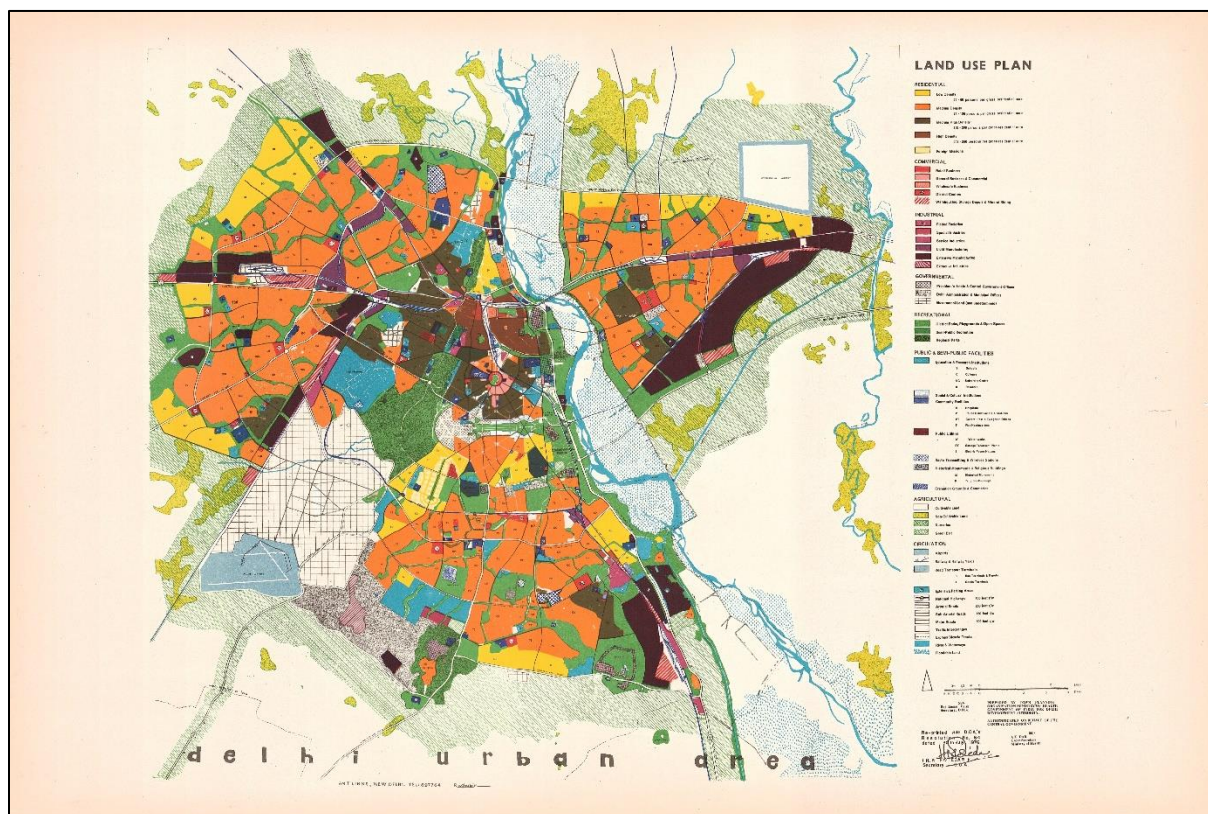
Image 4.8: Land Use Map of MPD 1962 (source: https://dda.gov.in/sites/default/files/inline-files/Proposed_Land_Use_Plan_1962.pdf / authors).

Ghaziabad as a part of DMA was further mentioned in the MPD 2001 where the stated purpose was, "to bring in decentralization in whole sale trade, new markets especially space extensive should be located in the towns of DMA", and to establish wholesale market for "iron and steel" in Ghaziabad (DDA 1990: 30). Similar kinds of proposals were made for Faridabad and Gurgaon. The third master plan of Delhi renamed the DMA as the Central National Capital Region (CNCR). Among others, Ghaziabad was also part of the CNCR. The plan suggested that the opportunities presented by the CNCR should be maximized to enable it to effectively compete with Delhi, offering comparable employment, economic activities, a comprehensive transport system, housing, social infrastructure, and quality of life and environment. Alongside, it recommended that larger industries be located in the urbanised areas of this zone (DDA 2007). The idea of CNCR has been rearticulated in the Draft MPD 2041 (DDA 2021). It was not just that the Delhi plans viewed Ghaziabad as a satellite town (in the form of a ring town of CNCR), but that the Ghaziabad plans also began to conceive of the region in conjunction with Delhi. The second Ghaziabad Master Plan recognises Ghaziabad as a ring town of Delhi, and at the same time also a gateway to Delhi for UP and other Northern States. The Ghaziabad plan reflects on its role as a ring town to oblige the metropolis by accommodating various activities outsourced from Delhi, including setting up of government offices, the offices of the public sector industries, warehouses for raw material and finished products, iron and steel business etc. In light of these recommendations, the proposed plan systematically promoted

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[19] These regional centres include Meerut, Ghaziabad, and Bulandshahar from Uttar Pradesh, Panipat, Rohtak, Sonipat, Gurgaon, Rewari, Alwar, and Faridabad from Haryana.

the activities of Delhi in an organized manner in the development area of the Ghaziabad master plan (GDA 1986).

There is however a sudden shift in the tone of the third master plan of Ghaziabad. It states that Delhi has unfavourably affected the independent identity of Ghaziabad. Though the plan is critical of Delhi's detrimental impact on the urban changes of Ghaziabad, it also suggests that proximity to Delhi can be used to improve the economic activities of ring towns by developing its institutions, entertainment activities, and modern technology parks. This bears deep resemblance to the third master plan of Delhi, both in terms of its overall vision, as well as the type of uses for further development that are defined under the plan. For example, the third Ghaziabad plan is highly focused on 'regional integration' and the development of commercial centres, multiplexes, and 'planned' residential localities that are similar to those in the capital (GDA 2007). The formulation of the master plan of Delhi and Ghaziabad brings out the constrained relationship between the metropolis and its adjoining urban areas where socio-spatial changes and environmental degradation becomes part and parcel of the overall economic growth of both regions. One can only speculate on whether overall pecuniary gains surpass the damage caused by the ecological degradation entailed in allowing such processes to continue.

Conclusion

In this paper, we attempted to historically analyse the significant changes that have transformed a small *mandi* or market town of Ghaziabad into a burgeoning city replete with industrial enclaves. We suggest that there is a speculative urban transformation afoot, owing to a neoliberal influence and real estate development that has had far-reaching consequences. These economic changes and expansion have led to a rapid transformation of cultivable land for other purposes including a rise in the built-up areas for industrial, residential, and commercial development. There has also been a constant shift in the social milieu of Ghaziabad. A town with an erstwhile population of Gujjar and Rajput villagers, and Dalit communities was overshadowed, first by the dislocated populations of Punjab who settled there in the post-Partition period, that later accommodated the incessant flow of low-income (mostly industrial workers), and middle-income migrants. Presently, the social character of Ghaziabad represents a mosaic of diverse communities that inhabit different parts of the city.

Urban planning in Ghaziabad began in the aftermath of a period of haphazard industrialisation, resulting in an unbridled sprawl. While the first master plan demarcated industrial zones and development areas for residence and other projects, it overlooked the extant challenges of old Ghaziabad, which was to provide housing for industrial workers. This negligence led to the growth of unauthorised colonies and slums. Most of the new residential areas that were developed as a part of the plan only catered to the housing needs of middle and high-income groups. In sum, urban planning in Ghaziabad has been fragmented, resulting in dispersed industrialisation and the creation of segregated residential spaces. Apart from internal factors, Ghaziabad's proximity to Delhi has resulted in the incessant movement of people and commodities, which has added to the woes of this city.

The analysis presented in this paper indicates, that unlike other satellite towns of Delhi, which eventually acquired a distinct identity, like the planned industrial city of Faridabad or the cosmopolitan city of Gurgaon, Ghaziabad is yet to claim any specific characteristic that encapsulates its independent urban existence. In fact, despite witnessing rapid industrial urbanisation, one finds a deep disconnect between the economic opportunities provided by the industrial enclaves and the residential requirements available for migrant labour. It is also a suburb or satellite town of Delhi, where the Trans-Hindon region, which is closer to the capital city, seems to be well-connected to the Delhi transportation or Metro system. But, on the other hand, the internal transport and communication infrastructure of Ghaziabad remains

neglected. Those residing in the immediate suburb of the Trans-Hindon region relate more to Delhi's culture as they regularly commute to work to the national capital. But within Ghaziabad city itself, there is limited interaction between CIS and the Trans-Hindon middle-class residential colonies. This implies that the city lacks a uniform urban culture or resists any particular classification where urban taxonomies such as 'suburb', 'satellite', or 'industrial' fall short of describing it's character in any cogent way. Hence, we argue that fragmented planning, splintered residential urbanism and dispersed industrial urbanisation represent the urban processes of change in Ghaziabad.[20] In a relational sense, the policy decisions of the Delhi metropolis impinges upon this city, which has prevented it from acquiring a singular identity in comparison to the other cities like Faridabad (industrial city), Gurgaon (cosmopolitan culture), and NOIDA (industrial cum residential city), and this is despite of Ghaziabad being considered part of the NCR as a distinct and recognised entity. Nevertheless, the socio-spatial changes in Ghaziabad over the past several decades indicate that it is an evolving dynamic space, where possibilities of urban growth never cease to exist.

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[20] 'Splintering Urbanism' is a term coined by Steven Graham and Simon Marvin (2001) to refer to ways in which infrastructure, information, communication, and technology fragment the experience of living in a city.

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Research Article

Arabi-Malayalam Disaster Ballads: Performative Poetry and Community Resilience

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This paper presents three disaster narratives in Arabi-Malayalam *Typhoon Ballad* (*toofaan maala*) by Kattilveettil Ahmed Koya (1909), *Flood* (*vellappokkam*) by Mundambara Unnimammad (1924), and *Flood Ballad* (*vellappokka maala*) by Pulikkottil Haidar (1961). We explore the aestheticized expressions of flood disasters, their impact on landscape and people, and the role of cultural and artistic productions in enhancing community resilience and risk perception. We approach these Arabi-Malayalam disaster ballads as deliberate engagement with the mechanisms of the disaster cycle of preparedness, response, and recovery. Arguing that these compositions constitute vital strategies in cultivating effective response to disasters, we relate them to official and historical records as well as an ethnographic account following the 2018 Kerala floods. We conclude that the tradition of Arabi-Malayalam disaster ballads constitutes an attempt to standardise and aestheticize spontaneous post-disaster narratives that survivors and rescuers tell and retell for sharing their experiences. Our analysis builds on the concept of local and indigenous knowledge systems (LINKS) to argue that such compositions are crucial for producing knowledge on participatory and organised decision-making processes, desirable leadership skills, and collaborative action aimed at survival, relief, and rescue.

Disasters, Resilience, Arabi-Malayalam, LINKS, Environment

Introduction[1]

The flood disasters that hit Kerala in 2018 disrupted the lives and livelihoods of millions in the densely populated state, sandwiched between the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats and interlaced by over forty rivers (PDNA 2018, CWC 2018, Joseph *et al.* 2020: 1–2, Raman 2020: 323–25). Kerala's government, local self-governance bodies (*panchayat*s), and non-partisan and community organisations coordinated swift and efficient disaster response, with fisherfolk trade unions at the forefront (PDNA 2018: 13–14, 305; Kuttappan 2019, Eswaran and Devika n.d.). The consecutive flood and landslide disasters of 2019 alerted experts, policy makers and communities to the growing need for better preparedness in the future. Deliberate preparation for disasters is known as disaster risk reduction (DRR), which is closely related to disaster management policies relying on technological and technocratic strategies such as forecasting systems and disaster management agencies. Such mechanisms and organisations are embedded in technoscientific frameworks informing top-down responses to climate change (cf. Nightingale *et al.* 2020: 348). While exposing relatively poor technoscientific DRR

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[1] This article is based on a jointly written paper presented by Kalluvalappil in the *International Convention for Asian Studies'* ICAS-12 Forum: *Climate Change in Coastal Cities*, in August 2021.

infrastructure in Kerala, the 2018 and 2019 floods also demonstrated the significance of effective societal organisation (Eswaran and Devika n.d., Joseph *et al*. 2020, Raman 2020, Martin *et al.* n.d.). The devastating floods also reminded Keralites of the mega-floods of 1924, and of the flood literature that emerged soon after in Malayalam novels and short stories. The tradition of the Arabi-Malayalam flood ballads too caught the attention of scholars, noting their importance for "understanding of and expectations for future disasters" (Ul-Ihthisam and Menon 2022: 1038, 1040–42); this can be paraphrased in terms of DRR as risk perception and preparedness for disasters. These aspects of DRR primarily rely on cultural and societal attitudes, beyond the reach of technoscientific fixes (Nightingale *et al.* 2020: 345).

DRR and LINKS

Organically developed mechanisms of preparedness for and response to disasters are conceptualized as *local and indigenous knowledge systems* (LINKS) by the United Nations' (UN) policy guidance *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction* 2015–2030 (SFDRR). It prescribes LINKS as "traditional, indigenous and local knowledge and practices" to complement and inform "scientific knowledge in disaster risk assessment and the development and implementation of policies, strategies, plans and programmes of specific sectors, with a cross-sectoral approach, which should be tailored to localities and to the context" (UNDRR 2015: 14, see also Rahman *et al*. 2017, McWilliam *et al*. 2020: 7–8). Studies on forecasting, management, and mitigation of floods were developed over centuries of collective experience, demonstrating how "indigenous knowledge is a precious national resource that can facilitate the process of disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response in cost-effective, participatory and sustainable ways" (Dube and Munsaka 2018: 6). It is, however, difficult to pinpoint what precisely constitutes indigenous knowledge systems in relation to disaster risk reduction beyond practical knowledge such as building traditions (Ortega *et al*. 2017) or strategies that enhance resilience to environmental risks and hazards (Ford *et al*. 2020).

Arguably, traditional knowledge developed in response to recurring disasters produced varied cultural forms from literature to rituals that may be less obviously related to DRR mechanism. In his analysis of traditional knowledge production, Rajan Gurukkal (2019: 23–24) states that:

> [k]nowledge is not always rational, although it pertains to the material processes of subsistence and survival. Bizarre beliefs and practices often go mixed up with the use of technology and the communities seldom make any separation between the material tools and magical rituals. In pre-capitalist social formations, rational knowledge and irrational practices were inextricably commingled. Time and again, the rational knowledge owed its origins to irrational beliefs. The rise of ancient Indian astronomy with advanced mathematical tools is a good example for this.

Ostensibly, the same can be said about the production of traditional knowledge on disaster management. Take for example a story transmitted orally over the generations, branching into different tellings. We would not expect such an inaccurate means of transmission to invoke a quick, efficient response to disaster. Yet, one such story-telling tradition is widely discussed in relation to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, namely the tsunami story (*cerita smong*) of Simeulue Island in Indonesia (Yogaswara and Yulianto 2005, 2008, Rahman *et al*. 2017, 2018: 16–17). While limited in scope (Lauer 2012), their contribution to community resilience and organisation is remarkable. In this respect, the Malayalam flood literature emerging after the 1924 floods is significant (Arafath 2018: 42–43, cf. Sankar 2018: 385–86).

How does literature composed in response to disasters contribute to the management of 'riskscapes', to use Ravi Raman's (2020) terminology? Such culture-centred responses to disasters operate at the grassroots levels of society, in contrast to elite cultural forms that tend to gloss over unpredictable disruption to human-centred modernity predicated above and against nature and its uncertainties lurking in the unknown. Amitav Ghosh (2016: 3–84) notes this reluctance to meaningfully reflect on environmental disasters in relation to the plots of modern novels, naming it as the "great derangement", a symptom of modern society failing to address the disastrous implications of anthropogenic climate change.[2] To paraphrase Ghosh, the hegemonic literary imagination is limiting in its portrayal of reality as the backstage for the human, individual subject, undisrupted by non-human, disastrous infiltrations into the mundane, self-centred human experience. The modern novel, argues Ghosh, falls short of addressing natural disasters, leaving it instead to religious traditions or, alternatively, to sci-fi literature replete with 'unrealistic' doomsday scenarios (cf. Määttä 2015: 426–29). In this sense, Arabi-Malayalam flood ballads constitute a counter-hegemonic literary formation. How to construe their contribution to community resilience at the face of the Anthropocene's great derangement, is the main question addressed in this study.

The Flood Ballads: Language, Literature, Performance

Arabi-Malayalam flood ballads depict disasters as perceived and managed by affected communities in the Malabar district, previously administered within the Madras Presidency during British colonial rule (1800–1947). The name Malabar, however, was coined by Arabic speakers, who gradually settled in the region since the 10th or 11th centuries, forming coastal communities of Muslim traders and seafarers (Kooria and Pearson 2018, cf. Wink 1990–2003). Centuries of cross-cultural exchange and language contacts between Arabic and Malayalam speakers engendered Arabi-Malayalam literature sometime around the early 17th century (Ilias and Hussain 2017: 9–47). The corpus of Arabi-Malayalam literature is an amalgamation of oral and written transmission with the Arabic script slightly revised to represent Malayalam phonemes (Shamsuddin 1978).[3]

Arabi-Malayalam literature features both performative and written stylistic conventions. Its most notable feature is the *ishal*, 'tune', or 'musical chapter', signifying strophes with differentiated rhythmic and melodic styles. Each *ishal* is indicated by the first word or two of the model *ishal* to signal which rhythm and tune the performers should follow. The contents of Arabi-Malayalam literature vary from devotional poetry to historical songs narrating foundational events in Islamic history such as the battle of Badr (624 CE). The flood ballads in this tradition can be seen as a conscious attempt to aestheticize disaster narratives in a process of advancing disaster risk perception from experiential to tacit knowledge. Arabi-Malayalam flood ballads thus offer a case study for analysing the intersection between LINKS and community resilience. We propose, however, going beyond typical disaster management concerns such as forecasting and evacuation routes, and rather address irrational aspects of effective response such as actions motivated by faith and religiosity.

In the following sections, we introduce selected verses of two flood ballads and a full translation of a third, the most recent and the shortest of the three, for investigating the intersections between literature, performance, religion, and community resilience at the face of disasters. We do so by converging DRR approaches, literary analysis, and ethnography in relation to four disaster events over a century-odd span. The earliest example for a flood ballad available to

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[2] See also Nightingale *et al*. (2020: 346) for a discussion on Ghosh's *The Great Derangement* and attitudes towards uncertainties and indigenous knowledge production.

[3] For more on Arabi-Malayalam literature and language, see Karassery 1995, Valikkunnu and Tharamel 2006, Kutti 2006.

us is the *Typhoon Ballad* (*toofaan maala*) on a cyclone that hit the port of Calicut in 1909.[4] The longest and most complex one in the corpus is *Flood* (*vellappokkam*), narrating the flood disaster of 1924 (Abdullah and Abinshah 2015).[5] The most recent and the shortest is the *Flood Ballad* (*vellappokka maala*) composed by Pulikottil Haidar on the 1961 floods (Karassery 2007 [1979]). The article concludes with an ethnographic account of the 2018 flood disaster for analysing the flood ballads as a cultural production in response to social-ecological systemic shocks and the contribution of such bottom-up cultural responses to community resilience.

The *Typhoon Ballad*

The full Arabi-Malayalam title is *Typhoon Ballad: A New Poem about a Broken Boat*.[6] The author is Kattilveettil Ahammad Koya, the grandson of the Qadi of Calicut Abu Bakr Kunji. The scribe is Marakkar Ibn Kammu writing in 1909/H 1327, July 19/Jumada al-Akhira 30, and the publisher is Cambakassery Parambil Valiya Todika Alikkutti. The typhoon hit the port of Calicut some nine weeks earlier, in May 7/ Rabi'a al-Akhir 16. In fifteen *ishal*s, the poet describes the damages caused by the cyclone—the destruction of boats, ships, and goods in the port—supplemented by short verses of *madh* (praise poetry) and two lines describing the prophet's marriage.

Besides being the earliest available Arabi-Malayalam disaster ballad, the *Typhoon Ballad* is also the only known historical record of the 1909 Cyclone, a frequent event in the Indian Ocean, even if less so in the Arabian Sea (Jalal Uddin *et al*. 2021: 2). The memory of devastation caused among fisher communities by a recent cyclone disaster, Ockhi (November 30, 2017), is still fresh, adding to the records of recurring experiences of storm surges in the region (Martin *et al*. 2018; Ul-Ihthisam and Menon 2022: 6–8). The first *ishal* introducing the disaster as the main actor in the plot is thus an important ethno-historical record:

In world-famous Kerala, the most precious town is Calicut.
In that port, to be more specific, in the 16th day of the Second Rabia month,
From a thick, dark blanket of heavy rain clouds,
There emerged a fierce storm hitting with thunders and rain,
The earth shook and the water of the ocean turned around in waves.[7]

The second *ishal* describes the impact on the port area and the people's response, framed in religious terms:

By God's command, the ocean turned ferocious.
Big waves rose and invaded the shore,
Roaring, swelling with water, mightily high.
At the time of that terrifying disaster,
There were rows of many boats in the water.
They were approaching loaded with goods.
The sailors were about to set sails, but

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[4] A lithograph manuscript of the *Toofaan Maala* is kept in the British Library and remains to be catalogued and digitized. A scanned copy was rendered available to us by the Mappila Heritage Library (MHLD: 1277) in Calicut (Kerala), with the first two pages in colour and the remaining folios scanned in black and white.

[5] We are indebted to T. B. Venugopala Panicker, K. M. Abdullah and M. U. Abinshah for their guidance during several joint online reading sessions in 2021.

[6] *toofaan maala enna kottika polinja puthiya paattu*; we use the term 'ballad' for rendering the Arabi-Malayalam term *maala*, which literally means 'garland'.

[7] All the translations are by the authors of the present paper, based on MHLD: 1277.

Fearing the mighty threatening wind,
They cried out loud and jumped off the boats.
Some of them were anchored there.
The fierce wind hit, they started sinking,
[and they cried out] Ayyo! And ran.
Turning upside down, they ran towards the shore,
Some were crying, [and others] recited prayers while trembling.

Such expressions of religiosity seem to be embedded, perhaps even inherent, in disaster response mechanisms. Religion-oriented response is highlighted further, for example in the third *ishal*:

The people praying were pained and drowsy; they fainted, they sobbed:
"Oh God! Deliver our bodies ashore with our life!"
"Roam with God, the guarding Judge,
Behave well!" They cried.
They were beating the back of their necks, their chests, faces, heads,
While praying in this manner.

In response to the cyclone, the distressed people grab whatever they can to rescue themselves and others as the vessels are tossed in the water:

Two people were approaching the shore,
Tied to a big, strong steering pole, they turned over.
"We are stuck!" The two kids were shouting.
All those on the ship were petrified.
They shouted the cry of Takbeera (allahu akbar)
Everyone was deeply distressed, praying to God for rescue.
Within half an hour that ship too was brutally shattered.
Quickly jumping off the shore,
Many people immediately reached out their hands
And pulled them ashore.
 [....]
They got closer, reaching out to the shore, all the while,
Fiercely beaten by frontal waves,
As the steering rod cracked into two.
Instantly [...] a bigger boat was fast approaching,
It too was tragically destroyed.
Once more, suddenly, everyone was equally thrown back into the ferocious water.
"We'd better approach the shore in a row."
Coming one by one all at once
They started colliding against each other, undergoing terrible accidents.
[…] suddenly the boats got scattered into rows
Nearing the shore, as the waves hit and break them.
Those who were standing ashore, on the sand, were deeply distressed.[8]

We propose to read such accounts as disaster management advice, whereby religiosity activates survival and rescue response mechanisms. This proposition can be tested in another Arabi-Malayalam disaster narrative, Mundambara Unnimammad's *Flood*.

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[8] The bracketed dots denote obscure verbal or nominal formations that we left out of translation.

Flood

The mega-floods of 1924 are told in numerous stories and songs in Malayalam, among which the best known is *In the Flood* (*vellappokkattil*) by Takazhi Shivashankarapillai. The whole of Kerala was flooded due to extreme rainfall during July 1924 (Ramaswamy 1985: 4–12, CWC 2018: 1–2). So devastating was the impact of the overflowing rivers, that the railway to Munnar was completely destroyed never to be rebuilt again (Sivaraman 2018). The Arabi-Malayalam *Flood* composed by Mundambara Unnimammad narrates the events unfolding during the disaster in towns and villages along the Chaliyar River, starting from Nilambur, on the slopes of the Western Ghats, and progressing with each *ishal* westwards, towards the shore.[9]

Flood was transcribed into the Malayalam script and printed along with an explanation-cum-adaptation into Malayalam prose by K. M. Abdulla and M. U. Abinshah in 2015. Since the poet mentions buildings that were rebuilt after the disaster, it is plausible that *Flood* must have been composed sometime soon or during the post-disaster recovery stage. The detailed, high-resolution account of the impact of the flood on individuals, communities, specific buildings and agrarian plots of land indicates the freshness of an account that must have been compiled soon after the actual events.

Flood is exceptionally complex and long compared with other Arabi-Malayalam disaster narratives (T. K. Hamza 2015). Apart from Arabic loanwords typical of Arabi-Malayalam, it also uses loanwords from Hindi/Urdu (e.g., *jaroorinaal*, or 'out of necessity') and English (e.g., *fittaaye*, 'fit'). It freely moves between registers, incorporating also Sanskrit lexemes (e.g., *jhatutiyil*, 'suddenly').[10] The rhyming scheme is typical of Arabi-Malayalam, combining Dravidian-style first-phoneme rhymes (*mona* or *kambi*) with end-rhymes that are more typical of Arabic poetry.

In its detailed account of the impact of and response to the disaster, *Flood* is also unique in comparison to Malayalam literature responding to and narrating the mega-floods of 1924 (Abdullah and Abinshah 2015: 32–37). It is effectively an ethnography of flood experiences of affected people, rich and poor, vulnerable and marginalised or affluent and powerful. Performative features like the *ishal* musical chapters, alliterations, and rhymes, coupled with figurative speech endow it with an epic-bardic character. Remarkably, though, the title of the poem is but a single word, *Flood*, with no generic specification such as *maala* (ballad), *paattu* (song), or *kissa* (story), which is typical of Arabi-Malayalam song titles (Ilias and Hussain 2017: 109–159). *Flood* is thus an innovative composition of Arabi-Malayalam poetry, disaster narratives, and ethnography.

Take for example the second verse of the fifth *ishal*, focusing on the flooded Puthalam, a small place near Areekode, where the poet himself resided at the time. This verse gives details of damages, spontaneous relief operations, and the names of leaders effectively responding to the disaster impact.

The number of people was not reduced,
Thanks to God's grace.
As that place, Puthalam, *was filled with water all over,*
Many people had to quickly salvage all their belongings.
They haphazardly sheltered at the great house of the affluent Kunjoyan Kutti,
a man of means of the Madassery family.
Several people likewise resolved to save their lives

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[9] The area of Nilambur was again badly hit in 2019 by heavy floods and landslides (Naha 2019).
[10] Abdullah and Abinshah (2015: 42, 55).

Carried pillows, mats, some coins, chicken, mortars, and winnows,
And were seeking shelter at Chimoon's house in Mannutodika.
But women and children were crying out,
"The water is rising here too!"
Prompting many people to let go of their stuff,
to haphazardly shelter anywhere, even in bungalows.
(Abdullah and Abinshah 2015: 55)

This account is almost journalistic in its enumeration of casualties or their lack thereof, albeit its religious framing. It credits by name those affluent people providing shelter for flood refugees, while relating to risk assessment and decisions to take or leave property behind or enter a bungalow without permission. The sense of urgency highlighted throughout the verse is heightened by describing the flood refugees entering the bungalow, a colonial residential area purposefully kept at a higher ground, segregated from indigenous residential areas (King 1975: 47–48). Such verses are comparable to ethnographic descriptions of immediate responses to disaster (Lauer 2012: 179–81, Carlin and Park-Fuller 2012), but the poet-ethnographer of *Flood* is embedded within his own composition-cum-ethnography, zooming in unto his own community in the seventh *ishal*. The poet shifts to prose for describing the relief operation to purchase grain supplies from Calicut, thirty miles away westwards, to provide his own village, Areekode. As all the roads are flooded, the only way is sailing along the river with gushing floodwater threatening to carry the boat away to the ocean. The thrilling drama is reflected in suspended lengthy, winding subordinate clauses enabled by serial verb constructions and participial phrases. These subordinated clauses are reproduced here as separate sentences in English for the sake clarity, at the expense of the suspense generated by the single, lengthy chain of verbal and adjectival phrases preceding the main verb phrase at the finite sentence position.

> "Now, if all the rice we can purchase here is consumed before the floodwaters recede, there is no way to replenish the rice supplies. Everyone will starve to death." This was intensely distressful for the venerable Nur Husain Chaudhari Sahib and Mr. M. M. Yakko Sayippu. Sahib was a Punjabi merchant who was, at the time, staying here in Areekode with Pareekuttayi. He came from Punjab to run the coir business of the Jami'a Committee made of important citizens in the renowned city of Pune, to support the poor people of Areekode. Mr. M. M. Yakko Sayippu was the secretary of the YMCA Company. He was running weaving workshops of silk and spun cloth in exchange of timber and rice-grain revenue for those left destitute here in Areekode and other places after the Eranad Rebellion. These two merchants were ready to buy twenty sacks of rice grains from Calicut, thirty miles away by sailing down the river from this Areekode
>
> (Abdullah and Abinshah 2015: 63).

The decision-making process described above in response to the unfolding disaster formulates disaster management from the perspective of bottom-up and local self-governance organisations (cf. Raman 2020: 325–26). It starts with expressing the concern of two merchants—one is a Muslim merchant from Punjab, Nur Husain Chaudhari, and the other is a Christian manufacturer, Yakko Sayippu—each is affiliated to a faith-based organisation, the Islamic Jami'a committee and the Young Male Christian Association respectively. They both run businesses for supporting the local population affected by the devastating impact of the anticolonial revolt, the Malabar Rebellion of 1921/1922 (Menon 1967 [2006]: 360–61, Gopalankutty 1989). Remarkably, the trade network run by Muslim and Christian merchants in response to colonial oppression is activated in response to the climate-induced disaster,

offering an important lesson on the potential for intercommunal solidarity to contribute to resilience when the community at large faces external threats.

However, these two business leaders depend on a wider, all-inclusive process of decision making:

> As these matters were reported to the market-town leaders, they all said in great distress: "The whole country has been turned into an ocean. If you sail now to Calicut, you risk drifting into the sea without reaching Calicut, and therefore, even if we all starve here to death, we must not send you to get rice grains and other supplies in the current situation." Hearing of the disrupted plan, one of them said:[11] "Since I go to help the unfortunate people, firmly trusting the All-Merciful God to protect me, I will safely reach Calicut, purchase the rice and return quickly, Insha'Allah." Hearing this courageous statement, the leaders decided there was no use in objecting. They deposited issues such as worry, anxiety, and distress in the golden box of trust in God, and locked it with the key of prayer, "Oh Allah! Take care of our needs!" Thus, it was agreed to permit this righteous person to sail to Calicut (Abdullah and Abinshah 2015: 63).

The disaster response is thus explicitly guided by faith, while the continued impact of the flood, as opposed to the sudden cyclone in the *Typhoon Ballad*, enables community organisation to process collaborative response mechanism, in which the poet too, Mundambara Unnimammad, participates as the events unfold.

> Then, the important, beloved, and wealthy Unni Muhammad, the most venerable man in the ancient house called Mundambara, called out and asked: "Who will take the coir luggage of these two people to Calicut on a first-class boat, built to resist any cracks, and return the boat back here for helping us?" The situation, however, was such that no one was ready to do this, not even for fees worth ten lakhs of gold pounds, as they all cherished their own life above all. Finally, three men of strength and courage rose as one from among the crowd. They were Arinjeerimmal Kuttoosakutti, Kunnalath Ahammad, and Methalayil Mammad from the port town adjoining Areekode called Pattanapuram. They said: "By the command of the beloved God no harm will occur to endanger our life, so we are ready to go on this journey (Abdullah and Abinshah 2015: 63).

The three volunteers were all from the nearby town, with a small wharf connecting the river to the marketplace. They are mentioned by name, while the God, *arima-thiru-paran* (loved and venerable Lord), remains unspecified to include all the faith communities in the audience.

Flood may signal a peak in the evolution of Arabi-Malayalam disaster literature, after which disasters generated shorter, less detailed Arabi-Malayalam ballads like *Flood Ballad* of 1961 discussed next.

Flood Ballad

The *Flood Ballad* is composed by Pulatt Pulikkottil Haidar (b. 1879) and penned down by his best friend Ahmed Molla, who was living off selling the printed copies of Haidar's compositions. *Flood Ballad* constitutes two relatively short *ishal*s narrating the 1961 floods that wreaked havoc in Kerala and other Indian states. Even though *Flood Ballad* originated in Malappuram

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[11] It is probably an implicit reference to the Punjabi merchant who later joins the people embarking on the perilous journey.

district, home to the poet's native place, Wandoor, it describes the impact of and response to a disaster that affected the whole country on a much broader scale. The flood described hits the country in a period that produced meteorological and disaster records readily available, allowing us to compare the poet's experience of the flood with the perspective of governmental agencies as narrated, for example, in the CWC Report (2018: 2–3):

> [T]he year 1961 [...] witnessed heavy floods and rise in the water levels of reservoirs. Usually in the State [of Kerala], heavy precipitation is concentrated over a period of 7 to 10 days during the monsoon when the rivers rise above their established banks and inundate the low-lying areas. But in 1961, floods were unusually heavy not only in duration, but also in the intensity of precipitation. During the year 1961, the monsoon started getting violent towards the last week of June and in the early days of August [sic!],[12] the precipitation was concentrated on most parts of the southern region of Kerala. By the first week of July, the intensity gradually spread over the other parts of the State and the entire State was reeling under severe flood by the second week of July. The worst affected area was Periyar sub-basin and it also impacted other sub-basins.

The *Flood Ballad*, like the *Typhoon Ballad*, states the date right at the outset according to the Malayalam Kollam era leaving out the Hijri dates, which would be expected in an Arabi-Malayalam composition.[13]

In the Kollam year of 1136 (=1961)
When we suffered
A massive flood disaster,
Hills and mountains burst, embankments collapsed,
Soil and stones washed the sandy paddy fields,
Such an excessive destruction befell us!
The rain was heavy with ceaseless downpours,
The water was forceful; canals and rivers
Poured into paddy fields, the roads too were inundated,
Flowing into our homes, walls sank under water,
Cracking and breaking, full houses collapsed.[14]

According to the records, the neighbouring district, Calicut, topped the charts in terms of extreme rainfall, with 234 mm for a single day in mid-July 1961, an average rainfall of 56% above normal (CWC 2018: 2). The poem, accordingly, reflects the devastating impact on the landscape, as well as the agrarian and urban environments:

As homes fully collapsed, all their belongings
Were abandoned.
All their property was submerged in water.
Makeshift boats and bamboo rafts
Were built and taken over to the river,
But all the joints broke, and they sank in the water.
So many people left their homes
To stay in the forest. Mighty bridges and roads

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[12] The reference here must be to July.

[13] We owe this observation to an anonymous reviewer, and leave the question of the reasons behind this choice for a future study.

[14] The translation is based on the text reproduced online in Mathrubhumi 2018 after Karassery 1979 [2007]. Accessed on: 04.12.2023.

Were washed away by the floodwaters.

It then proceeds to narrate the 'riskscape', to use Raman's (2020) term, the semi-urban environment typical of Kerala with domestic animals that are particularly vulnerable to floods. Their vulnerability translates into the resilience capacity of the affected community, whose livelihood depends on chicken, goats, and cows. Moreover, the corpses of animals in the floodwaters pose serious risk to health, especially the eruption of leptospirosis (Amitabha *et al*. 2019). The poet seems to be aware of further hazardous developments following floods while expressing innate perception of risk:

Swollen corpses were floating—
dogs and cats and chicken
And many goats, cows, and cattle—all perished.
The cattle perished, and water covered the paddy in the fields
All the plantain groves got rotten,
Severe damages incurred to the tapioca as well.

The official records corroborate this description: "Many of the important infrastructures like highways etc. were submerged. The damage caused by the floods had been severe and varied. It is understood that 115 people lost their lives due to floods and landslides. Over 50,000 houses were completely and partly damaged and about 1,15,000 acres of paddy were seriously affected" (CWS 2018: 2).

The *Flood Ballad* poignantly describes the disruption, an utter mishap in a world turned upside down:

All the transport ceased, paralysed.
Cars and buses, lorries and transport, all stopped
As if by all-pervasive transformation.
The same mishap that befell people drowning to death,
Was also met by snakes, pigs, monkeys, and deer.
Even elephants died.

Importantly, the poet explicitly presents his objective to educate and inform future generations on response to such disruptive disasters:

Then came the news of the massive disaster;
I am telling this long story for people to know in the future.
So, a boat capsized with a huge number of people drowning.
The corpses of the dead were hand-dug out of the mud.

The poet thus consciously transmits risk perception from one generation to the other, reflecting the motivation behind this unique Arabi-Malayalam literary genre. When compared to the *Typhoon Ballad* and *Flood*, the *Flood Ballad* is significantly less religious, possibly reflecting the *zeitgeist* of communist, secular Kerala of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Nevertheless, there are interesting markers of religiosity, such as attributing anger to the restless ocean, perceived by Kerala fisherfolk as a female entity, a sort of a mother goddess (*amma*, *kadalamma*) with emotions and 'bodiliness', (Hoeppe 2008: 308–9).

I say, the ocean turned furious,
Approaching the shore with roaring waves,
Inflicting so many more damages.

Like his predecessor Mundambara, Haidar too relates starving communities stranded with no access to food supplies:

That day all the shops and restaurants were shut,
And all businesses stopped.
Even a little bit of rice was nowhere to be found;
Women and children were stranded at home,
Starving with empty stomachs.
Such a disaster and so much more.

The second *ishal* highlights the national scale of the disaster and its impact in stark contradiction to the earlier compositions that focused on small, regional localities. Nevertheless, the poet also narrates disastrous landslides in specific places, Attappady and Kuttiady, that were hit by deadly landslides in 2018 and 2019 as well (Premlet 2019, Wadhawan *et al*. 2020).

The tragedy in Kerala and so many other places…
It is beyond comprehension and evaluation.
The losses that befell my Kerala by the disaster…
Only those I can enumerate.
In Attappady, a hill collapsed and brought calamity on people.
Then, in Kuttiady a mountain collapsed.
Since the mountain pass was blocked,
All the traffic between the two places was obstructed in both directions.

The uncanny nature of disasters is depicted in lines narrating the horrifying intrusion of wildlife into the human environment follows:

Moreover, a snake from the Eastern Mountain
Came afloat and fixed its camp on a tree.
Then one mighty crocodile floated and devoured
A buffalo calf that fell into the floodwaters.

The remaining lines proceed to relate to different places, some of which encountered in Unnimammad's *Flood*—Nilambur, Areekode, Edavana, and Calicut, to list a few. The poet goes beyond Kerala, naming big cities in the neighbouring states, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, equally affected the floods.

The multitude of houses that collapsed as the floodwaters rushed in,
Let's say, it was worst in quantity in Nilamboor,
Similar [events] reported from Vadapuram to Mampad,
So many houses had collapsed all at once in great quantity.
Besides houses, the Edavana Mosque suddenly
Fell gulped by the water and floated away.
The water gushed into Areekode, Vayakkad,
As well as Feroke, Kallayi, and Kozhikode.
As I said earlier, Malappuram and Thirurangadi,
Panambuzha, Anakkayam and Nooradi were all submerged in water.
Oh God! The force of the Bharata River water
Was impossible to withstand, causing massive destruction.
The massive destruction in North Malabar
Affected [as far south as] Alappuzha throughout the Kochi area.
Let me add that the seashore turned hostile,

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The ocean angrily dashed against it with more water.
Thiruvithankoor was flooded as if washed clean,
Everything in Kollam was submerged under water.
There is a lot to tell, it's too difficult!
Kerala, Madras, Mysore… so many states
Suffered destruction in India.

In this overwhelmingly extensive disaster landscape, ocean and rivers transgress nation-state borders, leading the poet to conclude with a note on the mishandling of relief funds. While it is not entirely clear whether the criticism is directed against the Central Government or the Kerala government (but see Sreemol 2018), such complaints are often voiced after disasters hit, making this performative act of narrating disaster a political statement as well.

The mighty deficiency, however, should be told.
The relief fund for recovery
Was put aside and the government is giving out money;
The inspection is conducted by the powerful, but the money
Is too little.
All the remaining damages are neglected.
The destruction that befell our country by the gushing flood water…
Oh, God! Please deliver us quickly from this destruction, protect us all!

As already noted in passing, the *Flood Ballad* refrains from expressing religiosity, even if closely associated with the Muslim community by virtue of its generic affiliation to Arabi-Malayalam literature with Arabic loanwords and the typical *ishal* structure.[15] God is mentioned almost in passing, at the end of the poem, leaving the flooded world chaotic and inexplicable, turned upside down and uncanny. The *Flood Ballad* was indeed crafted in the crucible of Arabi-Malayalam poetry, but it adapted to the secular state of Kerala—merely a few years after its formation in 1956—when the massive flood disaster of 1961 struck.

Conclusion

The Arabi-Malayalam flood ballads attest tacit knowledge embedded in LINKS to inform bottom-up disaster management strategies. While disaster management tool kits can hardly be extracted from such literary traditions, as Lauer (2012) convincingly argues, their contribution to community resilience, ground-level response, and risk perception is undeniable. As demonstrated above, flood ballads transmit knowledge on participatory decision-making processes, organisational leadership skills, and communal collaborations in response to and recovery from disasters. In contrast to the modern novel and the hegemonic literary imagination criticised by Amitav Ghosh in the *Great Derangement* (2016), Arabi-Malayalam disaster narratives engage with the uncanny and unthinkable while exploring the agency of affected communities during disasters.

Arguably, disaster ballads in Arabi-Malayalam aesthetically formulate spontaneous post-disaster narratives that survivors and rescuers tell and retell publicly or privately. Some parallels can be drawn with narratives told by disaster survivors and rescuers in interviews. Thus, in an interview recorded in Chengal, Kalady (Central Kerala) three months after the 2018 flood disaster, Jisha (a 45-years old caretaker in a kindergarten) narrated a story of rescue

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[15] For the second *ishal* of *Flood Ballad* as performed by Theertha Suresh, see Old Is Gold Mappila Songs (2020): https://youtu.be/2_vnm-z4QAY, accessed 26.06.2023.

resonating Mundambara's account of spontaneously organised rescue, noting her own involvement while witnessing the event unfolding.

> There was this pregnant woman in our town, in our ward. Her house is that big house by the road. There were only her, her husband, and their little child in the house. They didn't think their house would be flooded, so they stayed home. Just the three of them. They didn't go anywhere else. But on the 16 [of August] too much water entered. As so much water got in, her husband got nervous. She was supposed to have her [caesarean] operation on August 20; she was close to give birth. He became extremely worried and decided to take her to the hospital by any means. So he went somewhere and brought a boat, and helped her on the boat. So this woman and her little child… oh, and that child had fever… and so she was on the boat at the front, and that child at the back, and many people—ten or twenty men—holding the boat and pushing it towards Kambani Padi along the road.[16] The water forcefully gushed through the road, so they slowly pushed the boat forward. But the current was really strong, and all of a sudden the boat capsized. One boy quickly got hold of the child and the woman, he could hardly stand, so strong was the current. It was frightening, he could have lost hold of them, and they would have been swept away by the current, that strong was the current. So he moved them towards the side of the [flooded] road, where there is this Chippy [mobile] shop, until he carefully manged to bring them close by. As I was watching all this, I got upset, so I quickly came rushing [downstairs] from the upper [floor] where we took shelter. I just held her, and she leaned on me, miserably, and I consoled her, 'no problem, don't worry', she was shivering, she trembled and shook, 'no worries, have no fear, whatever it takes they will get you to the hospital', I told her like that. Then from that little shop they brought an armchair and took her on that chair to the hospital in Kanjoor.[17]

Such survival and rescue stories must have been captured by Arabi-Malayalam poets and processed into versified disaster ballads. The *Typhoon Ballad* of 1909 and *Flood* of 1924 are especially rich with such descriptions compared with the *Flood Ballad* of 1961, possibly because by that time, the availability of mass media outlets from print media to radio broadcasts enabled disseminating survival and rescue stories, rendering traditional functions of disaster ballads such as disseminating information redundant.

In their study of disaster narratives recorded over a century of environmental disasters in the US, Phyllis Scott Carlin and Linda M. Park-Fuller (2012: 27) propose that "[...] disaster narratives criticize and open possibilities for responsible prevention, equal access to safety, warnings, escape routes, evacuation plans, rescue, property reclamation, and interpersonal support." Their proposal resonates with passages discussed above, like the criticism of unequal distribution of relief resources recorded in *Flood Ballad*. To recall, the poet's intention to shape disaster preparedness is explicit: "I am telling this long story for people to know in the future." But Carlin and Park-Fuller's study of ethno-dramas and playback theatre goes beyond grassroots-level disaster management mechanisms to analyse the *performative* aspects of disaster narratives. They suggest that performing disaster narratives "can radically re-contextualize the stories, amplify and texture the voices of the survivors, encourage audiences to reflection, and open the narratives to emergent viewpoints and speakers, fostering dialogue, debate, and social action" (ibid.: 22). In many respects, Arabi-Malayalam

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[16] Below the building where Jisha took shelter
[17] For Jisha's account see Gamliel (2019) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imuq2EHZGT8 00:01:07—00:04:26, accessed 26.06.2023.

flood ballads do precisely what Carlin and Park-Fuller attribute to the theatrical performances of disaster narratives told by affected people. Despite the close association of the linguistic register and script of Arabi-Malayalam compositions with Kerala's Muslim communities, their performative aspects—tunes, oral recitation—make them accessible to non-Muslims within the broader community. The references to Hindu and Christian individuals and groups as stakeholders within the disaster landscape highlight the inclusive, deliberately collaborative disaster management approach formulated by these compositions.

To conclude, disaster-oriented literature composed within and by community members is a powerful tool in fostering efficient, inclusive, and humane response to disasters with the potential to cultivate community resilience. Considering the environmental risks and hazards that climate change is currently exacerbating, we may benefit from studying such artistic formulations of disaster response mechanisms developed on the grassroots level of affected communities.

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Book Review

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Afsar Mohammad's *Evening with a Sufi* is a collection of poems culled from the poet's various volumes of Telugu poetry, translated in English by him and Shamala Gallagher. When a poet is active in selecting a set of his own poems and translating them, the distance between the original and the translated versions gets more blurred than usual. Gallagher qualifies Afsar Mohammad's poetry as "particularly Muslim, particularly post-partition Indian, and particularly Telugu (p. 73)." Gallagher is reaffirmed by David Shulman, eminent historian of Telugu literature, in his note on the poems as he says, *Evening with a Sufi* is "profoundly rooted in a specific landscape (p. 81)."Mohammad and Gallagher, the poet and the translator respectively take up the challenge of translating the three particulars embedded in Mohammad's poetry—Muslimness, post-Partition experience of the subcontinent, and Telugu selfhood—that offer readers with regionally imbued intonations of the Telangana region without either compromising on the located-ness of poems, or their capacity to speak beyond linguistic-cultural borders. The call of the *muezzin* for prayer, the grieving over the massacre of Prophet Muhammad's family in the battle of Karbala, the teardrops of a Sufi that fly like sparrows, the Ramadan fast—all specifically Muslim motifs—emerge from the rocky landscape of Telangana to become transmitted as universal experiences of violence, pain, loss and homelessness. The poet speaks of the pain of the Other, and this character unfolds or expands itself to speak of the pain of humanity itself. The embedded mystical aura of Afsar Mohammad's words conjure up an image of suffering and pain that is existential, and viscerally articulated to reflect his own ruminations about being that marginal Other. At other times his words express his own compassionate journey towards becoming that marginal Other. The personal and the personalised gets transformed into a poetry of the universal, inextricably merged with the political and global. Afsar Mohammad's Telugu poetry carries tremendous intersubjective emotions and connections that allow it to remain situated inside a region, while transcending linguistic and cultural boundaries at the same time. When translated into English, it becomes world poetry.

There is universal appeal in Afsar Mohammad's intimacy with his protagonists who dot the landscape of his poetry—a *fakir*, a Sufi, a *shehnai* player, the fasting community during Ramadan, a father who brings the community together with his call for prayer, and a mother who is sometimes Fatima, the Prophet's daughter. All these protagonists become translated through poetry in ways that are made relevant across multiple temporalities and generations. These poems embody the transference of the wound, of hunger and anxiety, and the suffering of the Other—subjectivities inhabited by the poet, and communicated with readers, to enable readers to step out of their limited selves and to carry these wounds, this hunger and anxiety of the Other(s) forward. That is why Afsar Mohammad's Telugu poetry transcends the cultural-linguistic barriers of the region. This intersubjective journey—between the poet and his Others, between the poet and his readers—presupposes an orator. An orator is a presence deeply entrenched within Telugu ritual-performative-folklore and its scribal worlds; he is the voice that continues to haunt the narrator of Telugu literary modernity. The orator makes his way here, into poems, as a messenger, as an interlocutor, a storyteller, and a tormented soul, with poems exuding the empathetic power of the intersubjective 'I'. The 'I' that reflects and becomes the

positionality of the Other, invokes lost myths and memories that offer security to those in troubled times, as it simultaneously expresses devotion for the Prophet Muhammad. Afsar Mohammad's voice in his poetry speaks of the experiential world of that intersubjective 'I', transmuting itself into a transcendental realm through identification with the battle of Karbala and the grief of Prophet Muhammad's daughter Fatima on losing her sons Hasan and Husayn. In the first poem *Name Calling* (pp.15-16), the voice of the poet speaks either from a marginal position, or from a critical self-reflexive appropriation of the Other's position, making it impossible for the reader to take any other position themself, apart from that of the empathetic listener. The relation between the poetic self and marginal selves, in this act of conversation goes beyond any self-Other binary.

Usman, the protagonist of the first poem is an outcaste. He becomes the signifier of all the marginalities that the poet encounters and experiences himself by identifying with Usman, sharing his wounds, his pain, and his peripheral position. The marginal and the outcaste as the signifier repeats itself in the next poem: *A Piece of Bread, a Country, and a Shehnai* (pp. 17-20). The poem articulates hunger and the absence of bread as a political matter. What sounds like the most familiar phrase of the Indian Constitution: "we the people of this country," (p. 17) recur often, where "we the people" are held responsible for not arranging for any food for the Others. Thus, the poems are also marked by a critical orientation, and are unforgiving about the play of institutional power, but without compromising on lyricality and non-referentiality. Despite their starkly political nature, these poems never leave the mystical realm introduced through Islamic devotionalism that haunts the narrative in the form of mythical reminders. Political sensibilities defy any essentialism and go beyond gendered truth when becoming "a shattered genderless dream that multiplies (p.19)." The poem resonates with the pain of Fatima. The subjective confinement of the speaker is momentarily lost, only to be immediately multiplied and transferred to readers. Muslimness, otherwise so apparent in tales, symbols, and allusions, are expressed here in poignant terms when describing how the Prophet Muhammad "squeezed his body into a qibla (p. 18)" to allow himself to be one with his daughter Fatima's grieving. This expands subsequently to refer to other incidents, and to the anguish of current times. The *shehnai* player's dream of bread and his frail body brings back memories of Karbala, creating new possibilities of seeing traces of persecution embedded in the battle, expanding the symbolic capacity of the dream to indicate the battlefield of the nation (p. 19).

> *Your dream of bread*
> *is not far from her battlefield*
> *anymore.*
> *Your body at last on the rope-cot,*
> *the last pinning glance of the war,*
> *they are the same dream*
> *one restlessness, one violent shriek.*

Otherwise considered to be an ode to the legendary *shehnai* player Bismillah Khan, this poem readily becomes an allegory for the many *shehnai* players, who come from specific marginal milieus and castes, as their talent and artistic contributions go unrecognised. As they fill the air with absolutely enthralling high pitched musical notes that only a musical instrument such as theirs can produce, their *shehnai*s are unable to fetch them any bread. By subtly underlining such stories of marginalisation as the failure of the country: "We the people of this country, of that country, can make anything but a piece of bread for you (p. 17)", the poet transforms the personal into the political and vice-versa, to mount a strong allegorical criticism of postcolonial India. In the next poem, *No Birthplace* (pp. 21-22), the reader feels the anguish of homelessness. One is tempted to read expressions like "From somewhere, saffron hands are

cutting away the land under my feet (p. 21)" as poignant codes, an irresistible and intriguing image of postcolonial India. Images float and gather in the readers' minds as they continue reading the words: "from somewhere, the dust of crumbled domes flutter onto my body, building up a tomb (p. 21)." As the dome is crushed, the poet finds himself and a community in him, in necrophiliac Bombay, where dead bodies are strewn in the dirt, in the aftermath of riots. Amid the heap of mutilated bodies, migration does not sound akin to the exilic energy of abstract homelessness. Rather the choice of words that expresses "citizenship of a vacuum world / migrant in any time (p. 22)" qualifies for the anguish of belonging in the frame of nationalist politics where one does not need to shift countries to become a migrant; rather one can be dispossessed in the very country of one's birth. Such expressions compel the reader to search between the lines and words to hear a collective howl about holding on to their lands. The reader shudders with the power of acute pain that drips from the poetic voice that reclaims its birthplace on behalf of the community that was denied it (p. 22).

> *I don't ask for half a kingdom or the state of Anga*
> *I don't have a tongue to ask for my own torn nerves back.*
> *Does the corpse have some land to hide in?*
> *Any small plot is enough, a shade over the head…*
> *Don't spit in my mother's womb-water.*

Such direct, brutal images expose the barbarism of power, and establish a demand for justice. The sense of belonging, connection with one's homeland and the fraught question of citizenship are more nuanced than ever and personalised in the next poem *Third World* (pp. 23-25). The expression exhorts readers, not to stay in the realm of illusions, reminding them of the Citizenship Amendment Act that asked marginal communities to prove their citizenship by providing documents. The poet says in the prelude of the poem "Now we are left with a handful of signatures on the frail documents of fallen leaves (p. 23)." This expression recurs in the poem as the poet tells the story of the toiling women in his region, of how their ownership over their own land is arbitrarily snatched away (p. 24).

> *Padma, Padma,*
> *did you know all the berries*
> *we stole from your field*
> *never belonged to you*
> *nor your father nor mother*
> *nor our village nor our land,*
> *no one asked anyone anything.*
> *We are documents signed*
> *and sealed forever…*
> *they are happy with their signatures*
> *but they can't see*
> *our broken feet.*

Poem after poem, childhood memories are braided with an identification with the Other, and through the recognition of marginality. It grows so inclusive that the outcaste can be recognised: the pariah that Usman was in the first poem can now be recognized as the untouchable Dalit from the poem, *Outcast's Grief* (pp. 37-39):"

> *I am looking for the cities*
> *that were buried*
> *under the weight*
> *of the Vedas.*

I need to trace
the black bodies crushed under
your iron feet
So that the mornings will be brightened
by a black slogan.

And as the protagonist comes up from the fields lush with his toil and tears, from the fringes of the village where he was "cast away in the pitch dark (p. 38)," he tells the poet about how he is scared of the white flowers. He mockingly asks how long the poet will continue his slavery of white poems. Then all these colour codes go back to the beginning of the poem where the outcaste, the poetic persona, declares (p. 37):

But from now on
this story will be written
by the severed thumb of Ekalavya.

As the first section of the poem ends, the chronicle of violence and persecution transcends identification and location and claims to be the tale of any land anywhere in the world in *The Wall Next to Death* (pp. 40-41).

In the wheel of killing and self-killing
a movement is the crumbling of a hill
here and gone are equal.
Time moves in a million directions
but they're all the same.

So, what will the poet do? At the end of the book's first part, it becomes almost imperative for the poet to declare that the speech of the outcaste, the history of the land, the anguish of marginal communities can only be archived in poetry, by exiting elitist and 'white' poetry. The poet journeys through many languages, as he says in an interview published at the end of the poetry section in this book, is to finally return to Telugu as his language of creation. Now, as the voice of the oppressed, he wonders about how he endured the violence of dominant orders. He wonders about those systems of power that attempted to destroy his persona, his history, and his expression. Now real poetry will have to be about slave-worlds, in slave-words, and smeared with the blood of torture. Hence, the poet's return to his mother tongue is not an aesthetic choice alone. The poet merges with the rebel-activist to speak on behalf of the marginalised and persecuted collectives.

The poetic persona continues to walk on the trails outlined by the first section, marked by the name of the first poem in the second section *Walking* (p. 51). However, his political articulations of resistance start attaining a serene mystical aura in what are seeming ramblings: "I will take every straying path / don't ask me where I am going (p. 51)." The expressions are indirect, and more symbolic. As the poet identifies himself with teardrops, it opens up new possibilities for the emergence of a poetic-aesthetic language that is sensorially akin to mysticism. In the backdrop of the quiet depiction of an evening: "When the trees erase their shades / when the sky dries out its final sunshine (p. 55)" and the tired alarm fails to awaken him, there is a self-conscious emergence of the poet in Hyderabad city in the poem *A Rain Lost in Hyderabad* (pp. 55-56) that is almost like the self-consciousness of a Sufi awakening in a time when the city has altered his sense of self. From the unfixity and ambivalence of "a dreamless sleep, a sleepless dream (p. 56)" of Hyderabad, the poetic focus draws itself towards the *qibla* where everything that is physical—the belly, the feet, the hands—get obscured, fused into one transcendental point—the Kaaba Sharif. One almost encounters a neo-Sufi position in Afsar Mohammad's poetry, in the emersion of the self and self-effacement, which articulates

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contemporary anguish. The theme of violence does not dissipate entirely from the poems. The poet's momentary tranquillity gets shattered as the unforgettable memories of violence, loss and pain return. The *qibla* points to the river of blood where quartered arms lie rotting. This image of severed hands transports us to the battle of Karbala, where Husayn's half-brother Hazrat Abbas' hands were cut off by the enemy for bringing water to the thirsty children of Husayn's family. But the *qibla* points everywhere else as well, perhaps to Kashmir, and perhaps even to Palestine, as a testimony written in blood.

Evening with a Sufi is truly a piece of world poetry, carrying a testimony of personal anguish and violence from the margins with it, that weaves the individual together with community. The idea of the wound and the wounded is intersubjective in the poems, and the positions of the self and Other overlap in what is a language of compassion, an ethical call for justice for the Other. Strands of acute anger, a sense of dejection and an existential quest unravels throughout the length of the poems, proving that Afsar Mohammad is a stalwart of global poetry that is composed in Telugu.

Book Review

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Great interest has emerged in academe about the missionary dynamic in empire in the past decade. Felicity Jensz's *Missionaries and Modernity* is a timely addition that shifts the dial on how to better interpret their organisational agency at the metropole and how new missionary mentalities were negotiated as the British imperium, within which they operated, also evolved. Taking on this task is no mean feat. Established, now very dated work has offered some of the same perspective, but without the benefit of the enormous strides that have been made since in assessing the broader features of the British colonial play—with the subaltern turn of the 1990s and subsequent scholarship that has repositioned the European in empire.

To scope these changes in central missionary mentalities between 1830 and 1910 (an enormous period of missionary change), Jensz concentrates on key metropole forums: the 'Negro Education Grant' of 1835; the Select Committee on Aborigines (British Settlements) 1835-37; the Liverpool Missionary Conference of 1860 and the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910. To further deepen her analysis the author focusses mostly on education—a primary field of endeavour, of course, for most such missionaries. There is also analysis of those who travelled to England and Scotland with direct missionary experience in the field, such as Behari Lal Singh relating the post-1857-Revolt missionary domain of colonial India in Chapter 3, and those from Sri Lanka, presiding over the progressively secularised missionary schools in that colony, in Chapter 4.

The book then turns, in part, to Africa in Chapter 5. Here eugenic murmurings see African races relegated in the racial pecking order—compared to Europeans and even Indians—that also then shifted missionary intent. This was where Africans, (who were seen by missionary bodies, as well as Westminster, as mostly capable of only manual labour), were in fact marginalised through the spurious missionary construct of the 'dignity of labour', that then justified a compromised missionary agency that no longer included 'bookish learning'. More generally, the book concludes by taking African colonies as an example. Here the failure to create converts, the competition of Islam and that of secular modernism (which was also enshrined in emerging local nationalist movements), forced missionaries to reimagine themselves. As a result, and in the powerful post-Enlightenment educational domain of Scotland, Jensz sees these missionaries as orienting themselves, instead, as professional educational experts (knowing that they could claim an unrivalled experience in Africa, even compared to government) to protect their institutional investments in these colonies in the future.

A critical finding of this book is that British missionaries, fighting their weakening position as secularisation and 'modernisation' took hold at the metropole, turned their attentions away from promises of widespread conversions, to claims of being the best educators of non-Europeans in the colonies. This brand of education, no doubt, was an alluring promise to colonial powerbrokers in projecting a harvest of obedience from beneath through the moderating influence of Western-determined social and moral instruction in the classroom.

Yet, as Jensz argues, this change in missionary self-promotion still maintained that schooling without (Christian) religion was no education at all.

Felicity Jensz has dealt with this very demanding and broad topic in ways that have cleverly selected key institutional moments in the missionary experience at the metropole. Her use of extensive archival and secondary material builds a convincing analysis. In this way her work adequately accounts for the broader colonial and imperial narratives that both contextualise missionary frames, and which were shaped by these frames, between the early nineteenth through to the early twentieth centuries. And the conclusions of this well-written work are crisp and innovative. For these reasons this book is a must for any scholar wishing to study empire and the missionary dynamic that operated within it.

Book Review

Dilip M. Menon, Nishat Zaidi, Simi Malhotra, and Saarah Jappie. (2022). *Ocean as Method: Thinking with the Maritime*. London and New York: Routledge. Pp:126+xii. Price: $39.16. ISBN 9781032246772. Paperback

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Becoming Aware

The *Hind Swaraj* (Indian Home Rule) is a civilizational text (Gandhi 1963). A critique of Western modernity and colonialism, it has been bestowed iconic status in the struggle against the British empire in the 20th century. The book continues to inspire postcolonial scholars. Mahatma Gandhi wrote the book when on board of the *Kildonan Castle* on his return journey from England to South Africa in 1909. The whole manuscript was written on the ship's stationery, and he wrote as "if under inspiration" (Parel 1997: xiv). In his words, "I have written because I could not restrain myself (Gandhi 1963: 6)." When exhausted with writing with his right hand, he switched to his left hand and continued. 40 out of the two 275 pages of the book were written with his left hand. Oblivious to the legibility of his writing (in any case, he never had beautiful handwriting), his thoughts jostled against the limitations of his human body, when pouring out onto the ship's stationary. The ocean beneath gave shape to his words and this oceanic milieu, in the case of the *Hind Swaraj*, became the site for the production of civilizational critique. The realisation of this role, of an oceanic landscape has never become more evident, as when I began reading *Ocean as Method*, the book currently under review.

While reading Nishat Zaidi's fine-grained essay on the late 18th and 19th-century travel accounts of Indian Muslims, I began pondering the exact location of the ship and its watery surface below that gave birth to this seminal text of the *Hind Swaraj* in the 20th century. Following Zaidi, I became aware of "the role of the sea as a historical site (p. 56) Zaidi writes, "these voyagers provide a planetary perspective where narratives are often controlled by the forces of nature and not humans or technologies (p. 68)." Oceanic spaces blessed their surfers with a 'double-vision' that helped travellers to "critiqued London society from their native perspective" on the one hand, and "used European parameters in their radical criticism of their own people and society" on the other (p. 71). Words written on the oceanic waters have left a deep impact. I recall another example from a page of a voyage journal kept by Sir William Jones when aboard the frigate *Crocodile* on his way to India in 1783 (Kejariwal 1988: 29). Here, he noted 16 areas that he intended to study in India that covered vast domains like the laws of Hindus and Mohammedans; arithmetic and geometry and the mixed sciences of the Asiatic people; and information about the trade, manufactures, agriculture, and the commerce of India to name only a few (Kejariwal 1988: 29). Historian, O.P. Kejariwal remarks that "no ordinary mortal would even think of achieving all this in a single lifetime (Kejariwal 1988: 29)."

The oceanic turn in general, and the book *Ocean as Method* in particular, almost whispers to us, the role of oceanic waters and the sea breeze, in the making of this archive. *Hind Swaraj*, the travel writings of Indian Muslims, and a page from the journal of the orientalist Sir William Jones are thus mere examples when *Thinking with the Maritime*. As the book opens itself simultaneously in various directions, a voice yells out: *Heave the lead!* Thomas Roebuck's *laskar*s (sailors) coming from Surat, Ghogha, Sind and Kutch reply: *Naki did ho* (Small 1882:

73). Those coming from Bengal, Bombay (now Mumbai) and Kulaba (Colaba in Mumbai) say: *Jahaz salamat proom hazir*. Arabs and *laskar*s seen from the perspective of a 'religious turn' sing out: *Sallu 'ala-n-Nabi* (God's blessing be on Prophet). However, the scenario may not always be so serene and for the command of 'heave and rally', the entry in the dictionary returns with the term: *habes mera bap (or bhai) khali nangar*. Sometimes, the situation warrants aggressive language: *habes sala*! *bahin chod habes*! *habes haramzuda* (heave and rally) (Small1882: 73)! What is needed, is an ear to catch all these sounds coming from the oceanic archive. The book under review is an attempt to tune the ear away from a land-centric study of social sciences and tune it towards the complexities and specificities of an ocean-centric range of subjectivities and spatiality. However, the book does not stop by simply rearticulating the importance of placing the sea at the centre. Instead, it pushes readers to think with the maritime and enter into a zone of theory where the ocean acquires agency, a separate subjectivity, and is not just a passive location. Dilip Menon underlines the contemporaneity of this shift by putting it into perspective and highlighting its relevance when he contextualises this intellectual quest for understanding the full implication of globalization.

Walking on Water

Ocean as Method is an outcome of a collaborative research project between two universities (Jamia Millia Islamia University in New Delhi, and the Centre for Indian Studies in Africa, University of Witwatersrand at Johannesburg) that are themselves separated by national borders but connected by the Indian Ocean. At the core of this collaboration, is a tacit understanding that an oceanic perspective is not merely an alternate way of approaching human history. It rather constitutes an urgency in the wake of global warming and climate change. It is a move away from a historiography that is centred on land, states, and empires, and a move to distance itself from an internal logic of unfettered violence, reproduced by historiography. In this endeavour, there is the privileging of a few stated or understated threads that continue throughout the length of the book, binding it together almost as a sort of connecting thread. These constitute a critique of national boundaries, a celebration of cosmopolitanism that is considered to replace the hegemonic analytical frame of the modern and modernity. There is a privileging of the relationalities of the global south, an epistemic framework that gains its strength from harping on the importance of fluidity, or the virtue of remaining in flow. What emerges from this is a world of the oceanic-social where neither the idea of society nor the idea of the sea are at a distance from each other. Instead, both are deeply interconnected at all levels of history, thinking, and materiality. However, as Dilip Menon cautions readers, this is certainly not about thinking that the ocean formulates a continuum of land, or extends outwards from land in a seamless fashion. It is to reckon with their internal contiguities as the sea. To a reader, then, this is about an approach, a perspective, and is not merely a project of recovery of the ocean in history. The book borrows its phrase of *ocean as method* from Renisa Mawani's *Across Oceans of Law* (2018). It depends heavily on the works of Isabel Hofmeyr (See Gupta, Hofmeyr, and Pearson 2010; Hofmeyr 2012, 2019) and on Sanjay Subrahmanyam's *Connected Histories* (1997) approach.

The book is a curious mix of four chapters, each having a different form and texture to it, and yet each connecting well with other in terms of sporting common orientation, and congruity between core concerns (outlined earlier as positing critique against the epistemic hegemony of nation states, emphasising cosmopolitanism, privileging the ocean and oceanic modes of knowing, and acknowledging the agency of the ocean in shaping history writing). Dilip Menon's essay, *Oceanic Histories: From the Terrestrial to the Maritime* (pp. 1-23) insightfully provides a synoptic coverage of the field. He creatively weaves practitioners (here, I mean those working outside the strict disciplinary domains of history like artists and litterateurs) with academic historians and theoreticians who have conceptualised the ocean, provoking us to

shift our perspective to the ocean. Covering a wide canvas of historiographical detail, from installation art to the literary corpus of Amitabh Ghosh, from academic debates on cosmopolitanism to tracing the relations between history and literature, Dilip Menon's essay sets the stage for subsequent chapters, preparing readers for a genealogy of the broad contours of discourse. The essay squarely confronts existing anxieties about how to make sense of the dialectics of boundary-making at the level of nation-states, and the globalisation that it aims to transgress, by negotiating and challenging the restrictions imposed by the former. In such a framing, if he were to proceed with the statement, "the ocean press on our consciousness and lives these days (p. 1)," he wraps up the essay with the call: "we need to start walking on water if we are to truly understand the time and space of globalization (p. 21)." As a reader, I can understand the contemporary need to squarely confront globalisation and nation-states, but I also find this frame to have been over-emphasised. The intellectual resources mobilised in this essay, and the insights emanating from a discussion of various threads allow is to surmise that the dialectic between the global and the national is somewhat worn-out by now, even if it remains an important contemporary issue. As a reader, I may dismissively quip, why do oceans care about this dialectic when they have so many fresh threads to offer? Do we really need to walk on water to address this anxiety that epistemically emanates from land? When the protagonists in Amitabh Ghosh's *Gun Island* walk across the waters from the Sundarbans to Venice, they definitely negotiate national boundaries in an age of globalisation, but are they worried about this dialectic? At the same time, we also need to ask, can a social scientist, a historian, or for that matter, an analyst of the contemporary world afford to ignore the structures that are put in place by the nation-state? One might argue that it is easier for us to dismiss the complex meta-structures of our time, and therefore for a historian, it becomes all the more relevant and challenging to squarely confront and analyse these hegemonic structures and processes.

If Dilip's essay orients us to the oceanic and the various threads of this discourse, four conversations in the next chapter constitute a guide to newly initiated readers on what to read, and of how others before them have navigated this journey of oceans so far. Intended to provide a snapshot of the current state of research in the field, these conversations are an asset to students and researchers planning to enter the domain. As a skilled conversationist, Saarah Jappie has kept her questions simple and open-ended (pp. 24-53). This allows her interviewees, Chandra Frank, Lindsey Stephenson, Charne Lavery, and Caio Simoes De Araujo to respond in equally lucid, extremely informative, and reflective ways about their own intellectual journeys. In a sense, then, these conversations themselves acquire the texture of an archival document on ocean studies from the perspective of practitioners. They reiterate a core and foundational aspect of oceanic studies: its reliance on experiential dynamics. Although, elements and the question of experiential dynamics runs throughout the book, these aspects become most explicit and palpable within Jappie's conversation with Charne Lavery. We find ourselves face to face with oceanic research as "a kind of embodied practice" when Lavery calls for "an attention to the perceptual differences generated by being in or near an oceanic space (p. 37)." It is this difference, which perhaps assigns unique depth to the travel accounts of Indian Muslims that is discussed by Nishat Zaidi in the following chapter.

While travel writings have been studied for quite some time by scholars, specific cases selected by Zaidi take us beyond earlier epistemic categories like pilgrims, Sufis, merchants, and traders, and instead refocus our attention on those Indian Muslims who undertook oceanic voyages in the late 18th century and onward. Unlike imperial / colonial travel writings which privilege differences between the coloniser and the colonised, white and the non-white, European and the rest, Zaidi argues that the accounts selected by her "reveal their mode of negotiating the difference in oceanic spaces (p. 55)." She further claims that "the otherness enacted in these Persian and Urdu travel writings is invested with subjectivity and signification

(ibid.)." This travel writing, according to Zaidi's analysis, provided its authors with an occasion to critically look back at their own culture and tradition, and critique its subjectivity. But again, the question is, is this not true of the writings of many other Indian intellectuals from this period, from different regions of India, across Maharashtra and Bengal? The 'double vision' that Zaidi emphasises resonates strongly in other vernacular writings of the land as well. One may say that the texts, selected and discussed by Zaidi, do share certain contextual similarities with other vernacular writings, and yet, in terms of detail, and their embeddedness in onboard experiences, also distinguishes them from the rest. In their distinctiveness, therefore, they open up new possibilities, and bring to light new textures of life in what can be considered a new thematic archive.

Oceanic space, as discussed in the book, is not devoid of expressing ethical and social concerns either. Therefore, we have a certain privileging of communities and groups that are at the margins on the land. If Zaidi's essay is about India's Muslims, Simi Malhotra focuses on Indians in South Africa before the period of Indenture. Taking into consideration the history of migration from the Indian subcontinent to South Africa for the last five to six centuries, she has gleaned or pieced together a synoptic account of this migration in the historiography of the last fifty years. This constitutes a pre-history of Mahatma Gandhi's arrival to South Africa. Perhaps, she could have extended this exercise to delve further into the issues of subjectivities, the embedded agency of the ocean among Indian communities that arrived in South Africa between the 16th and 19th centuries. The crucial question, then, would be, whether we have such an archive in place that explores these questions. The discourse on indentured labour in India that extends to sugar plantations in Mauritius, Surinam, and Fiji have asked similar questions in quite a creative manner by bringing about conversations between history, literature, and memory.

If the oceanic turn is not merely about mapping the history of communities on the land (whether at the source or at the destination as conventional migration scholars have framed), then what is the nature of this particular archive in South Africa? Does it document the experiences of Indian communities that arrived here in the centuries earlier to Indenture, and how deep does it allow us to delve into their questions of agency, subjectivity, and sensibility caused by the waters of the ocean? Mobilising ideas of three key thinkers from the 20th century, namely Mahatma Gandhi, Romain Rolland, and Sigmund Freud, Simi Malhotra takes an analytical route to this question when engaging with phrases like the 'Oceanic Circle', 'Oceanic feeling', and the very term 'Oceanic' itself (pp. 89-122). Theory itself acquires a prefix from the waters to give shape to the new coinage in this volume: oceanic theory.

Corporeal Ocean

Scholarship on the ocean is not a recent phenomenon in either the social sciences or the humanities—from historians like Ferdinand Braudel (1949 / 1972) to scholars working on Indenture and migration in the Indian Ocean. It has been an important subject for economic historians as well as to literary theorists, and thanks to this, we have a rich corpus of scholarship on the subject today. However, in recent decades, oceans have acquired an enhanced, sharp focus. Due to such interventions, the sea is no longer a passive location, a mere geographic expanse on the analytical map but a historical agent shaping not just geography, climate, and economics, but also the personality of societies and the characteristics of the people in it. This current volume bears witness to a similar analytical turn and offers us an understanding of how certain key issues, and writings about these open-up new possibilities. Oceans are no longer mere carriers, ferrying voiceless slaves and *laskar*s across their expanse, speaking in gibberish tongues. The sea is no longer merely painted with ships transporting and circulating commodities and giving birth to empires. The utensils on

board in artist Subodh Gupta's massive boats are no longer empty (see Nair 2022). In addition to the hopes and aspirations of a better future, these utensils are now filled with new ideas, thoughts, theories, and expressive experiences. There is a smell of the sea and salt water in these utensils contained in Subodh Gupta's briefcases. And then, there are the rumours of *Mumiani*, *Mom-i-yai*, and *momiyai* too: "someone who drains people of their blood until they die, in order to sell it (Pels 1992: 166)." Intriguingly, in one interpretation, it (*Mumiani* or Bitumen) is made by preserving a human body in a big jar. In another interpretation, it seeps out from a certain rock like resin. Bitumen or *Silajit* in Persian, is a famous aphrodisiac. As if floating on the water's surface, the word is shared between Swahili, Persian, Arabic, and the Indian vernaculars, forming a vast landscape—a metaphor of the oceanic social, and littoral expanse, which is deeply corporeal as well. Ironically, in this zone of culture and memory, it is both an extract from a dead body as also a testosterone-inducing medicine yoked to the service of fertility and desire. The sea is a trickster. An Indian myth on the earth's origin tells us that the sea, when churned, oozed out both poison and the nectar. The oceanic turn like its predecessors (the linguistic turn, pictorial turn, affective turn, among others) has all the potential to yield both good and bad. What matters is how we mobilise various and embedded oceanic experiences, and how skilfully we walk on its waters. This is true for the insights provided in this book, that ask us to deploy the ocean as a method.

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Book Review

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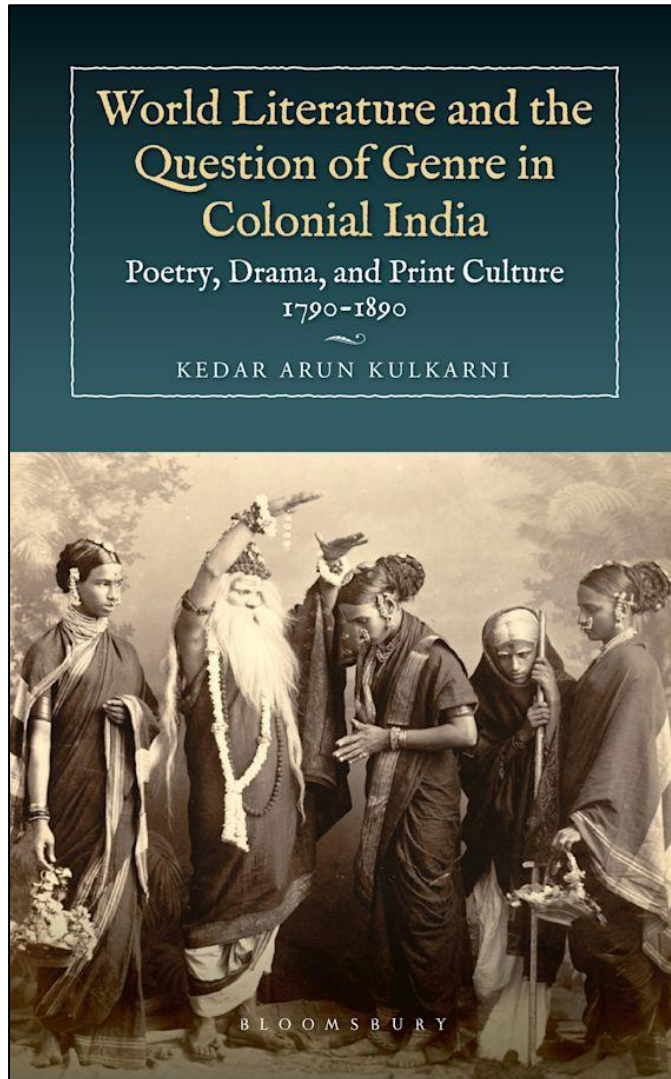Email: deepradandekar@gmail.com

Image 9.1: Jacket Cover (source: Bloomsbury / public domain)

When I first decided to review *World Literature and the Question of Genre in Colonial India* (henceforth *World Literature*), I had not expected a theoretical textbook, a masterpiece on how world literature in the colonial period transformed, and was transformed, through its contact with the vernacular in Western India. The author Kedar Kulkarni argues that this bidirectional influence was vital for the emergence of modern Marathi literature, giving rise to the generation of a literary ecology specific to the Marathi region. While the book primarily focuses on Marathi, that yields particularly well to analysis, *World Literature* sets an example for all those interested in similar enterprises that explore the vernacular literary histories of other linguistic regions. *World Literature* consists of 5 chapters, apart from the *Introduction: The Archives against Theory: Language, Literature and Genre* (pp. 1-42) and *Conclusion: Theory after the Archives* (pp. 234-242). These 5 chapters are organized into two sections: *Part I: Literature Remade*, and *Part II: Colonial Literary Culture*. While *Part I* contains the first two chapters: *Romanticism in India and Gifts for the Coloniser* (pp. 43-80) and *From Literary Commons to Literary Canons* (pp. 81-122), the last 3 chapters in *Part II* are titled *Foundational Melodrama for India: Shakuntala and Surrogation* (pp. 123-157), *Incorporating 'Love': From Sanskrit Kavya to Marathi Drama* (pp. 158-208), and *Heterogeneous Worlds: The Farce against Drama* (pp. 209-233).

World Literature is not an entirely linear narrative with *Part I* describing the way in which elite vernacular literary circles of Pune and Mumbai influenced world literature, followed by the overlapping interest in *Part II*, on indigenous aspects of Marathi vernacular literature that

merged residual precolonial traditions with what the book calls 'worldliness' or the *laukik*. This merge or 'incorporation' is, then, what produced modern Marathi literature as a heterogenous, vernacular ecology calibrated against English, Sanskrit, and other indigenous poetic traditions. Commenting on the importance of poetry as central to Marathi literary ecology, the author writes (p. 5):

> …the 19th century was one where poetry *was* literature, bar none, and Marathi and Indian theories of poetry had an impact on global literary culture that was second to none, despite the preponderance of poetry as a genre of performance. These theories relied not necessarily on pure orality, but one that saw orality as an ideal—heroic and virtuosic performance and the voice was preferred over moribund textuality…The primary dyad that galvanised literary activity in the decades preceding colonial incursions, therefore, was not between author and reader, but between performers and spectators. What of literature's graphic literacy then? And what is to be gained by obstinately policing literature as reading and writing? What the Marathi situation offers, instead, is a case whereby the singular is universalizable, so to speak, reframing world literature through implicit critiques of literacy—and shifting the focus to performance.

Thus, what the author means by vernacular literary ecology here, that I feel could have been an ideal title for the book ("From Oral *Vangmay* to Printed *Sahitya*" [as indicated on p. 33]), encompasses a broader understanding of literature that includes performance—poetry and drama. This broader encompassment is conceptually vital, since it is the inclusion of poetry and drama within the definitional frames of literature, that also makes Marathi literature legible as world literature. This conceptualization diverts the discussion about literature away from superficial limitations, of what Kulkarni calls graphic literacy—the read and written text, while a focus on literariness situates literature within political discussions about capitalist excess. Brahmins continued to dominate Marathi literature, enabled by the success and popularity of print technology. Printing not only creating new formats like anthologies, but it produced a domain where Brahmin intellectuals found a new role as authors and owners of texts.

The spoken and written interacted in colonial Western India, facilitated by the 'worldliness' (*laukika*) of indigenous bardic poetry, where not all performers were monolingual-Marathi. Describing such an interaction, the author cites examples of theatrical ephemera or playbills from the 19th century, stating that they "participated in an economy of enchanted industrial communications, in which travel(,) and the power of print amplified the meanings and associations of stories (p.7)." These ephemera could be read in multiple ways and constituted forms of knowledge that broke barriers between public and private. They created 'eurochronology' or the inclusion of Marathi within discourses about the development of European literature. Describing the process of recalibration between Marathi-Sanskrit, indigenous poetic traditions, and English as the 'second vernacularisation', the author states (p.17):

> Marathi literature, from one that functioned within a region of multiple power centres, roughly united through a common panchoric literature and language ecology, experienced a second vernacularisation as political structures became colonial, in relation to English and also Sanskrit.

This synchronicity and merge took place due to various reasons, primarily colonialism, wherein Marathi encountered English, and alongside, a reconceptualization of Sanskrit poetics and indigenous traditions, mediated by elites and impacted by British and German romanticism. The author does not reject that Marathi literature was influenced by English; instead, he shows

how Marathi literature, emphasising worldliness, was equally influenced by Sanskrit and indigenous aesthetics. To this end, the author explicitly asks (p. 29): "How did a political transfer from the late premodern to the 19th century alter the literary ecology of Marathi—and for whom? How did a relatively distinct, panchoric ecology, experience a second vernacularisation via the colonial encounter?" Attempting to answer these questions, the chapter 1 of the book describes how Marathi literature, based on its older imbrication with Sanskrit and epic-poetic traditions influenced colonial discourse about literature and language. The chapter further discusses the relatedness between 'literature' and 'literariness' that came to be defined through and against romanticism: the worldliness and transcendence of *shahir* or bardic poetry, ecologically linked with European orientalist discourse. Attempting to encapsulate this confluence, the author states (p. 45):

> My purpose and goal of this literary history, then, is two-fold: to find vocabularies of worldliness and globalism within the discipline of comparative literary studies that rely on alternative and intersecting genealogies than the (German-idealistic) versions available, and to define them in a more precise way that enables the real imaginative contours of the colonised's gift (to the coloniser) to shine.

Chapter 2 explores how the rising popularity of print transformed the performer-audience relationship, especially with the rise of new, largely ahistorical, Brahminical genres that entailed the production of printed anthologies (p. 85): "Editing, in this context, is significant, because it selectively adjudicates a preference for certain poet-performers ('authors') over others, some versions over others, stabilising which epic episodes, and the language in which they are narrated, in addition to the form." The rising importance of the anthology editor, (re)produced Brahminism in the shaping of 'canonicity', as editors worked together with colonial authorities to produce 'readerly' texts—something that impacted performances as equally. Enabled by the predominance of print, Brahmin editors could demonstrate their authorial ownership of mechanically reproduced printed materials, even though a literary 'ownership' of an epic was impossible. Print produced massive transformation in Marathi literature, becoming intertwined with capitalism. Using the Marxist theory of excess, chapter 2 describes how this transformation wrought by print increasingly produced the idea of a 'cultural commons', consisting of printed epic traditions that simultaneously merged with performance.

Chapter 3 provides an excellent analysis of how this transformation impacted performance— theatre and drama. This impact allowed theatre to exceed the stage and enter the social domain, and the author demonstrates this through an exploration of Kalidasa's play *Shakuntala* that became famous in the 1880s, in the specific avatar of the epic popularised by Balvant Pandurang Kirloskar (1843-1885). The author analyses the reasons for this popularity that transformed drama into a social and very public force, by describing *Shakuntala* as a melodramatic surrogate for what where dying relationships of the colonial time (p. 31):

> By viewing *Shakuntala* through the prisms of melodrama and surrogation, I am able to examine processes of aristocratic retrenchment in the 19th century as an emerging, predominantly brahman, middle-class sought patronage both from colonial and aristocratic personages. Thus the play and similar productions became vehicles for triangulating a sort of unstable cohesion between three groups, just as the performances…were also socially cohesive and about the world.

The performance of *Shakuntala*'s Kirloskar-ian version were deeply 'felt'. It worked like a salvific, presenting spectators with a solution to the various social dysfunctions introduced by colonialism. Largely understood as part of orientalist discourse imbibed by the colonial Indian academy, embellished by changes such as the inclusion of female performers, *Shakuntala* was

read as a melodramatic analogy to the socio-historical disintegration of colonial times: "The play's vision and its performances fill gaps within a social order, thereby operating as substitutes to actual lost social relations (p. 125)." Printing, production, and the popularity of influential, authored, and owned elite narratives led to the production and formation of definitive versions of epic poetry and drama. Chapter 4 describes exactly one such instance of the same Kirloskar's *A Musical about Subhadra* (1882). *Subhadra* produced authoritative power for Kirloskar, as he intertwined 'low' and 'high' poetic elements from bardic and the epic poetry in his production. This incorporation produced a complex, non-linear process that neither privileged colonial rupture, nor represented precolonial continuity. Instead, *Subhadra* represents the formation of a new literary ecology. Kirloskar-ian *Subhadra* was iconic, demonstrating the heterogenous world of Marathi literature that included the influence of English Opera. The public, including many luminaries of the day, who came to be increasingly involved with the production of literature, (re)produced theatre as a social force (p. 199):

> These overlaps between the internal and external frames of reference demarcate the fundamentally public nature of these productions. They are not contained even as they contain prior poetic traditions that are thoroughly adapted and reworked. Nor are they private affairs, received as novels;…(they) created the vernacular world through performance, mobility, popular access and elite mediation…creating these worlds was about co-opting the poetic world and bringing it into focus through literary text…collapsing the public 'sphere' into public 'space' and thus almost literally creating worlds—within and without—the performance.

In this transformative, heterogenous world, Marathi literary ecology also served other utilitarian purposes that included the political, as described in chapter 5 (which I find the most interesting of all chapters). The author outlines how the political and urban transformations of late 19th century Bombay Presidency found expression in the emergence of a new, largely urban genre: the farce, that did away with the earlier focus on epics and mythology. With the emergence of farce, Brahminical authorial importance declined, making new space for critique and subversion within the Marathi literary ecology. Farces were a diverse and textured genre that attempted to valorise the everyday—street life for example—as forms of subversion. Farces were usually without authors, and covered different themes like conjugal relations. Chapter 5 focuses on the three overlapping themes: women's evening temple rituals, travel by steam boat, and instances of parodying other performative genres. These themes, the author states (p.228):

> …provide an intimate view of daily life and the sites where unfulfillable desires may be experienced, how that experience may be aestheticized, among many other possibilities. These ideas were then circulated among cities, as part of the repertoires of many different theatre troupes. Most of all, then, the farce enabled these street scenes and practices to become theatrical through a practice of spectatorship.

The *Conclusion* is introspective, exploring in depth underlying reasons and choices for using the theoretical paradigm of a literary ecology that integrates a historical definition of literature, with an equally essential and strong evolutionary penumbra of performance. This epistemic building of literary linkages is especially important for a renewed understanding of literature, especially given the over-preponderance of the novel in vernacular literature, and the stress on Indian literature in English and other European languages within postcolonial scholarship. The author calls upon historians of literature to reconceptualize the definition of literature itself, to allow for a closer and more complete and representative definition of literature that is based on an inclusion of the vernaculars (p. 236): "Indeed, if English is to be the cosmopolitan language

of our era, which by hook or crook it is, then it too must change to accommodate definitions that enable more accurate world views."

World Literature is a book that everybody interested in the history of modern vernacular literature should read—especially those interested in performance, the impact of colonialism on vernaculars, and the histories of second vernacularisation in India. The author has undertaken a challenging task in writing this book, as he tries to reach diverse and multiple audiences at the same time: non-native scholars of Indian and Marathi literature, historians of colonial India, scholars of world literature, and native Marathi scholars of and in Maharashtra to name a few, who are invested in treatises about their mother tongue. The author, himself, seamlessly straddles all these four categories, and multiple others. But then, Kedar Kulkarni is also an exceptionally talented and gifted scholar. Expecting exceptionalities is perhaps also where the market weakness of this book lies. Satisfying too many audiences at one time is a daunting task—they are like the 'public' of theatre world itself—inextricably welding society with text. *World Literature* requires an academic translation in Marathi for a fuller and more complete appreciation and reception of a brilliant, perceptive, and sensitively written book.

Book Review

Shailaja Paik. (2022). *The Vulgarity of Caste: Dalits, Sexuality, and Humanity in Modern India*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Pp. xvii+400. Price $32.00. ISBN 9781503634084. Paperback.

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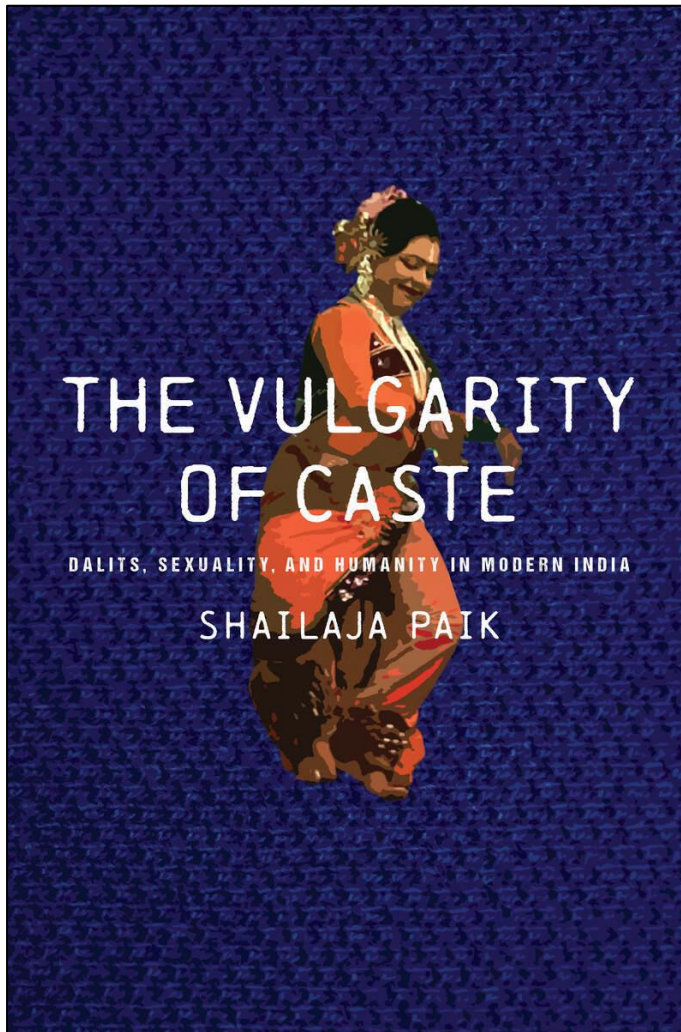South Asia Studies, University of Pennsylvania
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Image 10.1: Jacket Cover
(source: https://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=34163 / public domain)

Shailaja Paik's recent book *Vulgarity of Caste (2022)* explores the intersection between caste, gender, and sexuality in the context of Tamasha (a traditional form of dance performance carried out by women in Maharashtra). Shedding light on the historical and contemporary experiences of Tamasha performers and the challenges they face, the book highlights the exploitation of Dalit women's bodies and labour, meant for the pleasure of men, and for the construction of their masculinities.

The book is divided into three parts, each corresponding to socio-political as well as formal shifts that occur in the world of Tamasha. Chapter 1 explores the history of Tamasha and its connection to the sex-gender-caste system of early 20th century Maharashtra. In doing this, Paik examines how caste hierarchies marginalized and exploited Untouchable women, forcing them into servitude and using their bodies for entertainment. She shows how this system of caste slavery and sexual exploitation was further entrenched through the Victorian-brahmanical bourgeois alliance of the late 19th century that labelled Tamasha and its performers as *ashlil* (vulgar), subjecting them to regulation, reform, and discipline. Chapter 2 explores the lives of particular Tamasha performers, Pavalabai Hivargaokarin and Patthe Bapurao, to examine how their professional relationships challenged the caste system. Though Bapurao's status as a brahman contrasts with that of Pavalabai's status as an Untouchable, Paik shows how their collaboration transgresses caste boundaries and threaten the established hierarchy. Chapter 3 locates the evolution of Tamasha and its constituent communities in the wake of Ambedkar's radical reinventing of Dalit selfhood. Paik carefully places the question of Tamasha on the theoretical pathway laid out by Ambedkar, explaining how the labour of Tamasha women remains

incongruent with the emergent Dalit collective. Chapter 4 records the emergence of the Ambedkari Jalsa that appropriated the Tamasha form to appeal to reformed Dalit sensibilities, wherein the form became sanitized through an alteration of its sexual appeal and excess. Paik records how female actors were eliminated in these appropriations, repurposed for articulating a new Dalit consciousness. In Chapter 5, Paik notes the demands that were placed on the Tamasha form to fulfil a role that affirmed regional, and the sub-national Marathi identity in the post sixties period. In this period, such affirming exercises were felt as necessary, especially in the wake of arguing for a separate Maharashtra state. The building of cultural codes in this context signified the presence of a broader Marathi identity that was contrasted and placed in opposition to the hegemony of the North Indian identity and Hindi.

To demonstrate this effectively, Paik summons the large archive of the *tamashapradhan chitrapat* or 'tamasha-cinema', a popular genre that evolved in the field of Marathi language cinema discussion. This genre centred on the narratives of Tamasha practitioners. Chapter 6 demonstrates how a significant number of Dalit women necessarily remained within the sex-gender-caste complex, despite the efforts undertaken to reform Tamasha of its eros, through statist and Ambedkarite interventions. The book concludes by examining the contemporary transformations in Tamasha, particularly the emergence of all-male troupes, and the exploration of queer performativity. It also reflects on the individual successes of Dalit artists in challenging the stigma associated with Tamasha women and reclaiming their humanity. Overall, the book aims to unravel the historical, institutional, material, and ideological politics surrounding Tamasha

The book rests on two analytical axes. The first is the sex-gender-caste complex and the second is the tripartite moral framework of *ashlil-manuski-assli* (vulgarity-humanity-authenticity)—an independent complex, in which Tamasha women find themselves. Not only is the sex-gender-caste complex a sexual and gendered arrangement of the caste system, operating to oppress Dalit Tamasha women', but it also acts as a locus from where Tamasha women seek to reinvent themselves as artists with agency. Paik postulates this reading in parallel to the problem posed by a surplus of women arranged within caste hierarchy, and how Tamasha women consistently produce anxiety about sexual transgressions among caste-bearing people. Paik borrows from Butler's theory of performativity for Tamasha, where the performance of 'stylized repetitions' normalizes the sex-gender-caste complex and simultaneously produces new Dalit and Marathi subjectivities (p.12). Paik invokes the tripartite frame of *ashlil-manuski-assli* to further explain how these vernacular categories are used by constituent actors themselves. Arguing that it was the colonial state and later, the independent state of Maharashtra that fixed Dalits within realms of the vulgar, the outward movement from this fixing resulted in trajectories of *manuski* or humanity, a praxis espoused by Ambedkar. While *assli* or authentic signifies the tension between Marathi elites and the Tamasha people, who are engaged in the process of appropriating Tamasha to reinvent regional Marathi identity, the terms *ashlil* and *assli* become mutually counterposed. *Manuski*, on the other hand, a term amply theorized by Ambedkar, imagines it as a force that propels Dalit worldmaking.

Vulgarity of Caste reworks our understanding of caste, asserting that caste cannot be studied by divorcing it from questions of gender, region, labour, and the regulation of sexuality. Paik's research rests heavily on the vernacular print archive as well as on photography and cinema. She demonstrates a careful and empathetic way of carrying out ethnography, which does not seem like an overreach into the private lives of her subject. In fact, Paik is quite candid, letting the readers in on her own through thought bubbles, as she interacts with Tamasha artists, remaining acutely aware at the same time, of her own positionality in the world she attempts to write. While the author underscores the gamut of disciplines that the book is in conversation with, I think scholars of performance in India would greatly benefit from this work. In the

scholarship regarding Indian performance cultures, there is serious dearth of scholarship that analyses the subject cultures of performance in as much totality as Paik has managed. There has been tacit acceptance of categories, like 'folk', 'modern', 'political' in the scholarship of Indian performance without necessarily placing these categories under scrutiny of caste. Though caste has operated, and is at the very core of performance economy, there has not been much scholarly attention to theorizing the experiences of marginalized caste identities entwined with performing arts as caste occupation—that is, with exception to Davesh Soneji's *Unfinished Gestures (2011)* and Brahm Prakash's *Cultural Labour (2019)*. *Vulgarity of Caste* precisely addresses this gap and provides scholars with a methodological framework for future inquiries of such kind.

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Book Review

Andrew Ollett. (2017). *Language of the Snakes: Prakrit, Sanskrit, and the Language Order of Premodern India*. Oakland: University of California Press. Pp: xi+324. Price: $39.95. ISBN 9780520296220. Paperback.

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Andrew Ollett's monograph, *Language of the Snakes: Prakrit, Sanskrit, and the Language Order of Premodern India* (henceforth *Language of the Snakes*) is a biography of the Prakrit language, arguing that Prakrit held a central place in the development of high literature in India. A revision of his dissertation from Columbia University, the book conceptualizes a 'language order' in premodern India where Prakrit and Sanskrit are imagined in a 'schema of co-figuration' that shaped the way language and literature were used in the first millennium CE. The book situates itself within Sheldon Pollock's theory of the Sanskrit cosmopolis and focuses on Prakrit in particular. Ollett develops his argument throughout the book's chapters, with the first chapter defining the terminology of the book—Prakrit, Middle Indic, and language ideology, among other topics. This chapter also contains a helpful précis of the history of the Western reception of Prakrit. The second chapter charts the historical trajectory that led to an explosion of Sanskrit outside the narrow realm of Vedic ritual (i.e., within inscriptions and literature). Here, Ollett emphasizes the origin of the unique features of classical Sanskrit as a "language of power" as expressed in Prakrit (Middle Indic) inscriptions of the Satavahanas (p. 45). Chapter 3 treats the development of Prakrit literature itself in the Satavahana court, arguing that this literature pioneered ideals of courtliness and sophistication that would later come to define South Asian cosmopolitan culture. Chapter 4 focuses on the characteristics of Prakrit, including its 'sweet' sounds, its musicality, semantic indeterminacy, loose versification, and the 'unbound' nature of its verses that lends themselves to wide quotation. The fifth chapter considers how Prakrit was defined, contrasted, and configured vis-à-vis Sanskrit and other languages. This chapter forms the core of Ollett's argument about the language order in premodern India, which he argues is essential to the understanding of classical India framed by Pollock's theory of the Sanskrit cosmopolis. Chapter 6 covers how Prakrit was systematized and came to be known through its grammars, and how the models provided by Prakrit grammar gave regional vernaculars the concepts, and categories to theorize themselves as distinct languages. Finally, chapter 7 describes how Prakrit was 'forgotten', rendered obsolete and superseded by the development of modern language practices and the vernaculars.

Ollett's work is a novel contribution to the study of Prakrit and to our understanding of premodern Indian language practice more generally. It offers a refreshing reappraisal of the relationship between Prakrit and Sanskrit, Sanskritization, the origin of *kavya*, and the various niches that specific literary languages held in premodern India. It also corrects the record about the precise relationship between Prakrit and the Indian vernaculars, pushing back against the presentist tendency of early 20th century linguists and Indologists like Grierson to fold Prakrit and especially *Apabhramsha* (the precursor to modern vernaculars) into anachronistic labels like 'Old Hindi'. The book is also broad in scope, covering various epistemic fields that include epigraphy, history, and high literature. It contains a wealth of original translations from Prakrit and Sanskrit, citing a wide array of texts, many of which are unpublished and available only in manuscript form. Ollett's work is an understated yet solid contribution to the field of linguistics, particularly to language ideology, examining an important

but understudied language from a civilization with perhaps unmatched in its linguistic diversity, and an indigenous tradition of linguistic analysis that goes back thousands of years. However, the present author found that the language order as a paradigm was treated a little lightly in the book. Ollett explicitly draws on the field of language Ideology, and rightly points out that current methods may emphasize reductive Western-centric categories like 'prestige' and 'distinction'—pitfalls, that he navigates by adopting an empirical approach. Ollett does this by examining how Prakrit and Sanskrit were ordered and conceptualized against and alongside each other in premodern texts. In this way Ollett argues he can be 'theory-neutral' while borrowing simultaneously from Language Ideology. The present authors wonders how someone armed with French theory would attempt to deconstruct this.

Language of the Snakes is a welcome and original scholarly work on Prakrit, South Asian languages, and linguistics more generally. This book will be of particular interest to philologists, Prakrit specialists, scholars of Indian languages, and linguists. It is suitable for graduate students and senior research scholars alike.

Book Review

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The *Archaeology of the Nātha Sampradāya in Western India: 12th to 15th Century* (henceforth *Archaeology*) is the most recent title in the Routledge series 'Archaeology and Religion in South Asia', published in association with the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. In it, Vijay Sarde maps sites, images, and texts to clarify our understanding of early Natha history in West India. While the book's title classifies it as a work of archaeology, this timely monograph is impressively interdisciplinary, employing the model of 'cultural landscape' to make sense of what is a vast archive of archaeological, architectural, art historical, epigraphical, and textual sources. Whereas earlier estimates have dated the emergence of the Natha *Sampradaya* to the early modern period, Sarde marshals letters and stones to argue for a much earlier date—as early as the 12th century CE, largely coinciding with the rise of the Yadava dynasty in the Deccan. The book is organized into 6 chapters, with the introduction and conclusion constituting the first and last.

In the first chapter, i.e., the introduction, the author justifies his 'cultural landscape' methodology and situates the book project within broader archaeological, art historical, and literary discussions in Natha studies. In chapter 2, Sarde surveys early Marathi works like the *Lilacaritra*, the *Vivekadarpana*, the *Jnanesvari*, the *Tattvasara*, to chart the development of the Natha tradition from the 12th century onward. The second half of the chapter looks at the Natha *Sampradaya*'s forerunners, including an important excursus on its connections to Buddhism. Chapter 3, the book's most ambitious and significant chapter, turns from literary to what Sarde calls archaeological evidence. Examining a multitude of sites (like natural and rock-cut caves, temples, stepwells, forts, and gates), images (sculptures, reliefs, murals), and inscriptions, Sarde tracks major developments in western India's cultural landscape—from the spread of Buddhist, Jaina, and Hindu sites in the 5th to 9th centuries, to the proliferation of Shaiva (Pashupata, Kalamukha, Kaula, and Kapalika) institutions in the 9th to 12th centuries, to the rise of the Natha *Sampradaya* and Natha-affiliated sites in the 12th to 15th centuries CE. Thankfully, this chapter contains several photos, figures, and tables that help to make sense of the data. One table cites disputed dates for every site. Another notes the actual archaeological, epigraphical, or iconographical evidence found at each site. Finally, a map of all the Natha sites in Maharashtra and Gujarat offers a useful spatial perspective. The wealth of sites and sources covered in this chapter will prove to be fruitful points of departure for future research.

Chapter 4 focuses on Natha iconography. Often drawing from the rich hagiographical corpus to aid in identification, the author documents the sculptural repertoires, devoted to several major Siddhas like Adinatha, Caurangi, Virupaksha, Kanha, Jalandhara, Nagarjuna, Vinapa, Ghantapa, Khadgapa, Kankalipa, and others. Yet unsurprisingly, Matsyendra and Goraksha receive the most thorough treatment. Sarde then catalogues many of the iconographic elements shared by these Siddha images, like the *Singi* (horn), *Kundala* (earrings), *Vajnopavita* (sacred thread), *Danda* (staff), *Khappara* (begging bowl), and *Jata* (dreadlocks). However, the author also treads on thinner ice here, as he largely assumes that these images of Siddhas are intended to be depictions of Nathas without adequately determining what even is a Natha image in the first place. As current discourses in the study of Natha literature suggest, much

of the material *about* Nathas is produced neither *by* nor *for* Nathas, so what does it mean to call something a Natha? Is it safe to assume that every image of a Siddha is intended to be an image of Natha when so many other traditions in this time and place also revered Siddhas— such as the Buddhists, Jains, Mahanubhavas, Varkaris, and Virashaivas? These ambiguities ought to be considered in future scholarship. Nonetheless, the chapter concludes with an important discussion on Nathas and sexuality. Erotic imagery found at sites like Brahmani, Yelamb, Mankeshvar, Bhejgaon, and Pimpri-Dumala India present an intriguing counterpoint to the prevalent idea of Nathas as celibate reformers that is favoured in some academic circles.

In chapter 5, Sarde shifts his emphasis from the history of the Natha *yogi*s to the history of *Hathayoga*. The author correctly points out that the earliest extent *Hathayoga* texts were all composed by Buddhists, but he refutes the popular hypothesis that *Hathayoga* may have developed from foreign influences like Chinese *Neidan* (inner alchemy). Instead, Sarde posits a primarily Shaiva genesis for *Hathayoga*, suggesting that such *yogi*c techniques supposedly existed amongst Shaiva ascetic long ago but only came to be codified in written form from the 11th century onwards due an increase in patronage and institutionalization. But if it was the patronage of Shaiva institutions that supposedly allowed for the textual codification of *Hathayoga*, then why are all the earliest sources Buddhist? Chapter 5 also presents one of the book's secondary arguments: namely, that a number of serpent stele, or stone slabs depicting upstanding and / or intertwined *Naga* serpents found at Shaiva sites across the region, are actually symbolic depictions of *Kundalini yoga*—which envisions a coiled serpent arising from the practitioner's navel region. However, I am unconvinced by this argument. The resemblance between the serpents in these stele and the serpent of *Kundalini* might evidence nothing more than the popularity of Naga iconography, encountered throughout South Asia. Admittedly, it may very well be that the serpent stele depict *Kundalini yogi*c processes, but the argument remains weak until we have more evidence. In the second half of fifth chapter, the author highlights several images of *yogi*s or other ascetics who are ostensibly engaged in *Hathayogic* practices. He refers to many of these images using names of *Asanas* (postures) adopted from modern postural *yoga*, but cautions that he does so descriptively, not anachronistically. However, he frequently employs other standardized *yogi*c vocabulary—*Pranayama*, *Bandha*, *Kumbhaka*, and *Sahasraracakra*—to interpret images that might not actually be depicting those specific practices at all. Overall, these issues render the penultimate chapter the least compelling. Thankfully, the concluding sixth chapter returns to surer footing, beginning with a brief but useful survey of Natha history beyond West India. Finally, the author concludes by identifying opportunities for future scholarship.

While not without flaw, *Archaeology* is still undeniably successful in many ways. Sarde synthesizes an impressive number of sites and sources to refute more presentist narratives that date the reification of an incorporated Natha identity to the early modern period. He also rightly highlights the Deccan as a nexus for the early development of the Natha *Sampradāya* and of *Hathayoga*. While many of the book's veritable treasure trove of data, sites, and sources are largely archaeological in nature, *Archaeology* is also an important study of vernacular literature, shedding light on important early texts like the *Lilacaritra*—just in time for Anne Feldhaus's English translation of the same, to reach bookstores by early 2024. Scholars of South Asian religion, art, literature, and cultural geography will appreciate this book, which especially concerns those interested in ascetic traditions and yoga. Additionally, the thorough literature review in the first chapter and the shorter literature reviews at the beginning of each of the remaining chapters are of great use to graduate students and junior scholars still honing their grasp of Natha studies, as is the extensive bibliography. An instant classic despite its minor shortcomings, *Archaeology* will undoubtedly become a major reference for many future projects.

Book Review

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Why would an Italian Jesuit at a remote mission outpost in South India invest considerable time and resources, mastering the complex literary idiom of 'classical' Tamil? How would the composition not only of poetry, but of a traditional grammar in the same idiom aid the project of converting locals to Christianity? With what intention were these texts taught in a school established for that precise purpose, and to whom? In short, how was Catholicism written into the local literary landscape? These are the questions Margherita Trento explores in her book *Writing Tamil Catholicism: Literature, Persuasion and Devotion in the Eighteenth Century*. Trento's work joins a growing corpus of studies on the history of the Jesuit mission in Madurai and Catholicism in the Tamil country, and especially on the main protagonist of her book, Costanzo Giuseppe Beschi (1680–1747). But her book is much more than a theological discussion of Beschi's poetry and its role in the mission setting. By discussing the beginnings of Catholic literature in Tamil, Trento moves beyond the discussion of Jesuit *accommodation* to address the question of "how did Tamil people, both local converts and their Hindu friends and neighbours, read and understand Christianity and the mission" (p. 10)?

The book contributes fundamentally to the history of Tamil literature, where literature constitutes a social practice in a particular historical setting. Moreover, Trento places Beschi's engagements with Tamil poetry squarely within the social context of the Madurai mission as well as in the early-modern Jesuit Republic of Letters. In addressing the *microstoria* of the development of what Trento calls "Tamil Catholicism", and "what exactly is Tamil about" it (p. 11), her book also fundamentally weaves the local history of the Madurai mission and Tamil Catholic literature into the history of global processes and exchanges.

Besides the introduction and conclusion, the book is divided into six chapters, grouped into three parts of two chapters each. The introduction discusses basic questions related to the "Genealogies of Tamil Catholicism" and the methodology of adopting a micro-history approach, but most importantly, it introduces the history of Catholic textual production in Tamil. This is important because it allows Trento to clarify the notion of 'literature' as used in the book. Catholic texts had been produced in Tamil since the late 16th century, aptly referred to by Trento as "writing before accommodation" and the texts connected to "social accommodation" (pp. 21-27). What is special about the corpus of texts associated with Beschi is that the latter explicitly inserted his writing into a discourse on what constituted 'literature' (Tamil *ilakkiyam*) in contrast to non-'literary' forms of writing. This "literary turn" (p. 27) in the Jesuit mission coincides with the emergence, parallel to Beschi's project, of Catholic literature written "beyond accommodation" (p. 31) by converts themselves. It is only in the context of this complex genealogy of Catholic writing in Tamil that it becomes possible to appreciate and interrogate the specificity of Beschi's project. The introduction closes with some notes on the constitution of the archive and an outline of the argument.

As mentioned, Trento proceeds with her analysis of the Catholic "literary turn" in three parts. The first part, "Spiritual Institutions", introduces readers to the Madurai Mission and its most important actors and institutions. There were two developments in the Madurai Mission that were central to the development of Beschi's project in the 1720s and 1730s. One was the increased reliance of the Mission on local catechists since at least the second half of the 17th century, a situation that simultaneously created a nucleus of a native Catholic elite, but also at the same time also the need to tie that elite to the interests of the Mission and the Roman Church by providing them with specifically Catholic ways of selfhood. One answer to this dilemma (of relying on catechists and having to offer them means to spiritual and social improvement) constituted the second development: the organization by the Mission of regular retreats for catechists based on the Spiritual Exercises by Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order. While such retreats for lay people had become common in Europe by the end of the 17th century, the emergence of such retreats for Tamil catechists from 1718 onwards was new, and a discussion of this forms the main subject of the first chapter, "Spiritual Exercises for Tamil Saints". Trento outlines the role and position of catechists in the mission as an increasingly important group. They were keen to sharpen their social (and caste) standing but had little opportunity to augment their spiritual status as there was no path to their ordination as priests as yet. The chapter highlights the role of one of the lesser-known local Jesuits, Carlo Michele Bertoldi (1662–1740), in organizing the first retreats, in which Beschi played a substantial role as well.

The second chapter continues this discussion by analysing three "Tamil Manuals for Catholic Selves": the *Ñanamuyarci* or "Spiritual Exercises", likely written by Bertoldi, as well as two of Beschi's compositions: the *Vetiyarolukkam* ("Instruction for the Catechists") and the *Vetavilakkam* ("Explanation of the Revelation"). Both the *Ñanamuyarci* and the *Vetiyarolukkam*, as Trento shows, supplied catechists with ways of fashioning Catholic selves in a Tamil context, with especially Beschi drawing on Tamil ethical literature, most importantly the *Tirukkural*, in addition to the devotional Catholic literature of early-modern Europe. Especially Beschi's text furthermore attempts to tie catechists, who mostly came from elite landowning non-Brahmin castes, closer to missionaries. In this, the earlier missionary self-fashioning as Brahmin was abandoned in favour of remodelling the relationship between missionaries and catechists as that of non-Brahmin Shaiva preceptors and their lay disciples. At the same time, this introduced anxieties among missionaries about controlling catechists, who often operated without the direct supervision of missionaries. This is most obvious in the third text, the *Vetavilakkam*, written against the Jesuits' Lutheran rivals. In this text, Beschi offers his catechists with an aspiration towards achieving sainthood by offering the martyrdom of João de Brito (1647–1693) as a model. Beschi himself had participated in an inquiry towards Brito's canonization in 1726, just two years before composing the *Vetavilakkam*, a text that was aimed at preventing catechists from apostatizing with the help of models of spiritual progress.

The second part of the book, entitled "Rhetorical Education", focusses more specifically on Beschi and his specific role in catechist education. The third chapter thus discusses Beschi's "Catholic Poetics and Politics of Space". The chapter opens with a discussion of Beschi's early life and education in Italy, especially the Jesuit College in Bologna, where he received a thorough education in rhetoric and grammar, and also engaged in devotional practices. Some of these themes foreshadow his later Tamil literary compositions. Beschi's self-fashioning as a Tamil poet or *pulavar* is contextualized by Trento, by presenting details of his involvement in local politics after his arrival in South India, most importantly his close relationship with the Mughal warlord Chanda Sahib (d. 1752). Given the political roles played by poets within the 'little kingdoms' of the 18th-century Tamil country, Beschi assumed a recognizable garb through his engagement with poetry. It is in this light that Trento turns to an episode contained in the last canto of Beschi's most important composition, the *Tempavani*, discussed in detail

in chapter 5. In this text, Beschi celebrates the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I (1640-1705) for consecrating Austria to St. Joseph, the hero of the poem. Thereby, he offered his Tamil audiences with the model of an ideal king devoted to St. Joseph. Beschi's engagement with Tamil poetry also took the shape, from 1731 onwards, in a school at the village of Elakkuricci, where he trained catechists in classical Tamil rhetoric and poetics. This school, in Trento's interpretation, functioned as a Christian version of the Shaiva monastery (*matam*), a central institution of Shaiva learning in the Kaveri Delta region.

It is in the context of this school that Trento contextualizes what is perhaps Beschi's most tantalizing composition, the *Tonnulvilakkam* ("The Illumination of the Classics"), a treatise on Tamil grammar and poetics that followed traditional Tamil linguistic and literary theory. This "Tamil Grammar of Persuasion" forms the subject of much of the fourth chapter. Why would an Italian Jesuit missionary compose a grammar of Tamil that was not according to the by-now well-studied model of missionary grammars aimed at training European missionaries, but as a traditional treatise on proper language and poetics that followed the plan of Tamil grammatical literature? Trento answers this question by positing the grammar, written around 1729-30, as precisely aimed at catechists studying at the Elakkuricci school, enabling them to compose Catholic literature in accordance with the rules of Tamil linguistic and literary theory as also Catholic decorum. In this context, Trento focuses precisely on the way in which Beschi departs from classical Tamil theory, either by introducing foundational ideas of early-modern European literary theory, especially the notion of *amplificatio*, or by curtailing and critiquing foundational elements of Tamil literary theory, especially the conventions of erotic poetry (Tamil *akam*, 'the interior'). Thereby, Beschi hoped to inspire the creation of Catholic literature in Tamil in a way that could compete in quality with existing non-Christian literature. This sets the context for Trento's discussion of yet another anti-Lutheran tract by him called *Lutterinattiyalpu* ("On the Nature of the Lutheran Flock"), in which Beschi ridicules the language of the recently published Lutheran translation of the Bible into Tamil by offering his own interpretation of chapter 9 of the *Apocalypse of John*.

It is in part 3, "Catholic Poetry in a Tamil World", that the book finally turns to Beschi's *magnum opus*, the 'epic' poem *Tempavani*, a title that can be interpreted either as "unfading bouquet" (*tempa ani*) or "cluster of sweet songs" (*tem pa ani*). In the fifth chapter, entitled "Writing for Eighteenth-Century Catechists", Trento first introduces this poem on the life of St. Joseph in generic terms as an example of both the Tamil "long poem" (*perunkappiyam*, cf. the Sanskrit *mahakavya*) and the European renaissance "Christian epic". She then analyses the poem's preface (*payiram*) in the light of Beschi's engagement with classical Tamil models such as Kampan's version of the Ramayana. Her discussion focusses particularly on the way the *Tempavani* relates the world of Beschi's mission and that of his catechist audience, to the realities of the life led by the holy family. This is illustrated by Trento through the example of the Santa Casa, the house that was allegedly inhabited by Joseph, Mary, and Jesus. This house was believed to have been miraculously transferred from Palestine to Loreto—where Beschi apparently visited as a young man—but it also became important in a variety of other missionary contexts, as the 'timeless' existence of the angels allowed it to exist at various places all at once. Beschi seems to have conceptualized the church at Elakkuricci, dedicated to the Virgin, as yet another instance of the Santa Casa. The example of the holy family's house also allowed for connecting Biblical Palestine and the 17th-century Tamil country, which is evoked in the poem through the descriptions of land- and cityscapes, typical of Tamil poetry. In order to demonstrate the relevance, especially of the mission context for the poem, Trento furthermore discusses the flight of the holy family to Egypt and the eventual conversion of that country. This allowed Beschi to decry local Indian religious traditions, especially Saivism, as a delusion created by Satan, as well as discuss the conversion narratives (and in one instance,

the resistance to conversion) of the Egyptian population in terms that would have been evocative for Beschi's audience.

That audience assumes centre-stage in the final chapter of the book, "Reading as an Eighteenth-Century Catechist". Here, Trento demonstrates how it was the importance of Beschi's work for the self-understanding of the catechist families he had helped to create, which ensured the transmission and recreation of his work, despite of the catastrophe of the papal suppression of Jesuits after 1773. Starting with an examination of existing manuscripts as well as the production of the *editio princeps* of the *Tempavani* in 1851, Trento traces the evidence for the continued use of the *Tempavani* and its exegesis in the context of catechist preaching. Manuscripts of the poem also assumed importance as heirlooms in the families of catechists, even in case of their conversion to Lutheranism. She also points to the (admittedly faint) evidence of the reception of Catholic texts in Shaiva contexts, and engages with the colonial 'rediscovery' of Beschi and his work. The catechists that formed the original audience of the poem remained central to all these stories. In the course of the 18th and 19th centuries, they used it and other works by Beschi to inhabit their own world that was as distinctly Catholic as it was Tamil.

Writing Tamil Catholicism is an amazingly rich investigation of Beschi's legacy and the social context of the mission and the catechists that animated that legacy. Trento skilfully weaves together history, religion, anthropology, and philology, to draw on the findings of each of these disciplines while developing a distinctive argument. In contrast to a lot of research on Beschi and the Madurai Mission, Trento's work is refreshingly unconcerned with the question of the infamous Malabar Rites controversy and the rediscovery of Beschi and his fellow missionaries as early proponents of Catholic 'inculturation'. While she remains fully grounded in the rich literature surrounding the controversy, it is not her primary focus. Instead, *Writing Tamil Catholicism* offers a rich history of the Madurai Mission during the first decades of the 18th century that gives equal weight to the missionaries as it does to local converts, especially to the figure of the catechist.

Trento uses a diverse array of sources, including archival documents and manuscripts from 18 archive institutions located in four countries, as well as printed primary and secondary sources. In the process, she not only negotiates various registers of Tamil, but sources-in a wide array of languages, including French, German, Italian, Latin, Spanish, and Portuguese. Equally impressive is the skill with which Trento draws these diverse sources of disparate (and at times antagonistic) backgrounds together to narrate the history of the *literarization*, to use Sheldon Pollock's term (2006: 5), of Catholic writing in Tamil. Much as Beschi himself assumed many garbs in the course of his life—devout student, ascetic missionary, humanist scholar, Tamil *pulavar*, post-Mughal courtier, educator—*Writing Tamil Catholicism* ranges over a wide terrain of sources surrounding Beschi's project of creating Catholic literature in Tamil and its afterlife among local Catholics, as well as some Shaivas and Protestants.

For me, two aspects of the book are particularly noteworthy, though certainly readers with predilections different than myself will find other things to praise. One aspect is that, while Beschi is certainly the 'hero' of Trento's story, she manages to present Beschi as part of a sociality that includes other Jesuits as well as the catechists. This is not to mention the cast of other side-characters as well, such as Mughal warlords, Pietist detractors, or 'religious chameleons', who were able to pass themselves off as Hindu, Christian, or Muslim, as the need arose. Trento's work is filled with valuable information on the world Beschi inhabited and the people he interacted with, among them lesser-known missionaries like Bertoldi. In many cases, Trento points to further lines of possible research and to the presence of existing, but as yet unexplored archival sources. For someone like me, who is primarily concerned with the history

of Tamil in the context of the Bay of Bengal, *Writing Tamil Catholicism* is particularly important in highlighting the way Beschi's training in Europe influenced his Tamil literary project. This becomes especially salient in chapter 4, where Trento discusses the way in which Beschi inserts concepts of early-modern Latin rhetoric into Tamil poetics, but also in the large number of early-modern sources for the many ideas voiced in his works and those of fellow Jesuits. *Tempavani*'s prime inspiration was a Spanish text, *Mystica ciudad de Dios* ("Mystical City of God") by the Franciscan Nun María de Jesus de Ágreda (1602–1665), but it was by no means the only European source for Beschi's writing. Trento's detailed engagement with Beschi's Jesuit background reveals what Tamil scholars all too easily forget, namely, that Beschi remained a foreigner in a strange land, however well he may have mastered the local idiom of intellectual distinction.

The other aspect that strikes me as particularly valuable about *Writing Tamil Catholicism* is the way Trento demonstrates the relevance of the study of Tamil literature for the history of 18th-century south-eastern India. In many ways, her book is a social history of Tamil literature in the 1720s and 1730s—at least, a particular segment of that literature. Most importantly, the book demonstrates that the composition of Tamil literature was not an unimportant elite pastime, but a vital social practice that played an important role in the self-fashioning of individuals and their social recognition by others. Beschi fundamentally understood this fact, and Trento is able to recover both Beschi's engagement with the social role of Tamil literature as well as the role his texts have assumed in the life of his audience since then.

Scholars of Tamil stand to learn a lot from Trento's approach, not only for the woefully neglected 18th century, but also for other periods of Tamil literary history. In contrast to other studies on Beschi, Trento does not offer a hagiography in which Beschi is similarly a devout Catholic and an ardent devotee of Tamil. She notes, for example, Beschi's predilection for the 12th century poet Kampan, author of the most important retelling of the *Ramayana* in Tamil, but she does not simplistically translate this into assuming that Beschi 'liked' Kampan. Rather, she points out that Beschi clearly competed with the Vaishnava Kampan (p. 223), systematically trying to outdo him—something also evident in the case of Beschi's Shaiva and Muslim contemporaries. The precolonial Tamil 'Republic of Letters' was clearly also a house divided, where common canons did not necessarily translate into harmonious respect for each other. In this context, it is important that Trento does highlight Beschi's somewhat shocking depiction of Siva as a grotesque 'false deity' invented by Satan, that is encountered in the *Tempavani* (pp. 245-249), a literary engagement that went hand in hand with religious controversy.

As I read *Writing Tamil Catholicism*, I also began to wonder in how far Beschi's vision of Tamil literature was, in some ways, deeply idiosyncratic. What I mean is, that Beschi's texts are not simply literary in themselves; they also create a certain vision of what Tamil literature was in the 18th century. And in this context, we would do well to refrain from seeing in Beschi's discourses a perfect mirror of Tamil literature. Trento points out how in his grammar *Tonnulvilakkam*, Beschi plainly rejected what were fundamental ideas of Tamil poetics in favour of his own vision, inspired by renaissance humanism. His engagement with Kampan offers, I believe, another instance. In celebrating the literary virtuosity achieved by an Italian Jesuit in literary Tamil, it is easy to overlook that his poem has a strangely anachronistic feel in the 18th-century literary landscape, partly because Beschi decided to follow Kampan more closely than was common in other 18th-century contexts. A prime example of this can be found is Beschi's preface (*payiram*) to *Tempavani*, which is clearly based on Kampan's preface to the *Ramayana*, but differs substantially from the way a contemporary Shaiva or Muslim poet would have structured a preface to a poem in the *kappiyam*-genre. The terse 'praise of God' (Tamil *katavul valttu*) at the beginning of *Tempavani* is certainly similar to Kampan's, but it is

no comparison to the complex praises offered in Shaiva and Muslim *puranas*, which often run into dozens of verses, and follow a complex hierarchical and temporal arrangement ranging from the supreme godhead to recent local saints and scholars. It would certainly have been possible to create a similar structure with Catholic entities, but Beschi seems to have decided against this. Partly, he may have perceived the Shaiva and Muslim parallels as peculiar to the *puranam*-subtype of the *kappiyam*, a type of poem he criticized in his Latin grammar of Tamil. But partly, it also shows a peculiar variety of classicism at play in Beschi, which differs from the manner Shaivas, Vaishnavas, or Muslims engaged with the Tamil literary heritage.

This should warn us against the temptation to succumb to a perspective about Beschi being a maverick master of Tamil, and of his choices as always appropriate from the perspective of Tamil audiences. As mentioned, Trento's book largely eschews this view, but it does nevertheless surface in a section where I find myself disagreeing with some of her interpretations: her discussion of the *Lutterinattiyalpu* at the end of the fourth chapter. Throughout her analysis, Trento depicts the Lutheran Bible translation as "completely alien textual objects" that, 'naturally' it seems, "could not find a home in South India" (p. 205). I would contend that this evaluation has more to do with European notions of language-use, than with the actual situation in 18th-century Tamil textual culture(s). Firstly, though we may describe the Bible as "a potpourri of histories, theological/philosophical commentaries, and intercultural references" (p. 205), would that mark the text as substantially different from, say, a Sanskrit *purana*? More importantly, there is no reason to assume that the choice to translate this text into unadorned prose would have been considered alien.

Quite on the contrary, we precisely possess such prose translations from Sanskrit in the Shaiva, and Arabic in the Muslim tradition that take the form of Tamil 'commentaries' on the Sanskrit or Arabic original. To top the parallel, these prose commentaries exhibit similar 'defects' of language like in the case of the Lutheran Bible—the use of colloquial forms, especially verbs, or following the source-language's syntax rather than the Tamil one. After all, the rules of grammar in Tamil primarily applied to poetry and not to prose, and it was, as Trento herself notes in the same chapter, largely Beschi's European predilections for prose that made him include prose in his *Tonnulvilakkam*. I am not arguing that the Lutheran language was of the same quality compared to translations from Sanskrit or Arabic by native speakers of Tamil, but only, in how far its low quality would have appeared alien to local audiences. There is certainly no reason to assume that Beschi's decision to render *Apocalypse* 9 into 'refined' Tamil verse would have been considered more "appropriate" (p. 209). In fact, translating by way of explaining a foreign-language text in Tamil prose was a recognized (but practically unstudied) textual genre, including, at least in the translations from Arabic that I am more familiar with, translations / commentaries of 'scripture' (Tamil *vetam*).

In fact, offering a poetic translation of a scriptural text (without inclusion of the original language) would have been considered dangerous in some quarters, as it spelt the danger that audiences might take the Tamil translation as the 'original' (*mulam*) scripture, rather than recognizing it as a derivative text. Indeed, Beschi's choice is, in fact, highly unusual, since, as Trento herself notes, the counter-reformation Catholic church prohibited the translation of the Bible. As far as I know, this is Beschi's only instance of breaking that prohibition, and that too in a manner that could have led to uncomfortable questions about the nature of the Christian *vetam*. For example, it could have raised the question from Shaivas about why it was not in Tamil or at least Sanskrit, not to mention the danger that Beschi's translation would have been mistaken for the original. Beschi's somewhat 'heretic' choice is therefore understandable only in the precise context of his own peculiar combination of European and Tamil theories of language and his specific anxieties about the Lutherans. For however 'alien' the Tranquebar Bible may have been, it succeeded, as we know, in enticing away a number of Catholic

catechists throughout the next two centuries as converts to Lutheranism, with no indication of an opposite process taking place. Indeed, as Trento herself notes (pp. 296-298), this often happened with converts maintaining an attachment to Beschi's poetry, but obviously not enough to stay in the Catholic fold. As such, the Bible translation was obviously neither too alien nor too atrocious in comparison to the contradictions that it exposed about the Jesuit project. For as much as Beschi may have tried to present himself in the garb and terminology of non-Brahmin Shaivism, the fact that direct access to scripture and to priesthood was closed to Catholic catechists in the Madurai Mission may well have reminded catechists precisely of the Brahmin monopolization of the Sanskrit 'scripture' (*vetam*). In this context, Beschi's choice to reaffirm the monopolization of "the recitation and study of the Vedas" (p. 197) to the three upper castes, excluding his Sudra catechists, in the *Tonnulvilakkam*, explicitly translates Brahmin caste privilege into European missionary control over Catholic doctrine.

In this manner, I also would contend Trento's assertion (pp. 211-212) that Beschi was a forerunner of processes described for the 19th century by Bernard Bate (2021). While the connection between literary language and persuasion might already have been drawn by him, there was more that differentiated Beschi from Protestant preachers than the latter's "moralizing attitude towards textuality" (p. 211), as Trento herself notes elsewhere in a somewhat different context (p. 31 n. 76 and p. 161 n. 84). It was not simply moralizing, but it was the demand that texts be universally accessible, that differentiated the Protestant impact. And it was precisely that universalizing attitude that Beschi was opposed to in his denunciation of the Lutherans.

This discussion should in no way be understood as a criticism of Trento's scholarship and argument. Rather, it only serves to show how thought-provoking and important this study of an unusual man and his unusual choices in the early 18th century is, for generating a large range of wider questions regarding the intersection of textual cultures, religion, and history. Indeed, Trento challenges Tamil scholarship repeatedly to finally take the study of early-modern Tamil textual cultures seriously in raising important questions that, as yet, do not have an answer. One of these questions may well serve to close this review.

Trento repeatedly draws attention to the specific Catholic vocabulary used by Beschi, which employed Tamil words such as *vetam* for 'scripture' (p. 101) or *vanor* for the 'angels' (p. 241 n. 76), and asks how these vocabularies relate not only to Beschi's predominantly Shaiva interlocutors, but to other religions as well. Indeed, the comparison with Muslim usage that Trento suggests is particularly instructive, as Beschi's Muslim contemporaries were largely using the same vocabulary with the same references (though perhaps a bit more coherently). It is obvious that Muslims and Catholics could draw on a Tamil vocabulary that should not be misunderstood as peculiarly 'Hindu', but that already before the introduction of Islam or Catholicism had been able to talk across religious and cultural traditions. In this manner, Trento's book reminds us of the existence of 'universal' vocabularies outside, and in only partial overlap, with those of the contemporary English academe. Books like *Writing Tamil Catholicism* may help us to recover such alternative universalisms and help decolonize academia by making them accessible to renewed use.

Writing Tamil Catholicism is an amazingly wide-ranging and erudite study of Beschi and the creation of Catholic literature in Tamil in the context of the 18th-century Jesuit mission in India. Combining the study of history, literature, and religion in an exemplary manner, *Writing Tamil Catholicism* should be read not only by historians and literary scholars of early-modern South India, but also by anyone interested in making the study of texts and literature fruitful for larger historical questions. Students of Indian and Global History, Religious Studies, and Literature will find the book equally enriching and thought provoking. Finally, *Writing Tamil Catholicism*

represents by far the most thorough study of Costanzo Beschi and his literary project so far. I am certain that *Writing Tamil Catholicism* will become and remain a classic for many years to come.

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