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# DALIT WOMEN IN INDIA

## SILENT VICTIMS OF CASTE AND GENDER BASED DISCRIMINATION

*Ubhoybharati Acharya (Mukherjee)*

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**Abstract :** *Over the last few decades development in India has served to enhance the opportunities of many upper class urban women. These women now have greater access to education and employment and are as a result able to participate in the economy on a more equal basis with men. The situation is however not same for the women belonging to the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe populations, as they are still designated as one of the most deprived and disadvantaged group by the Indian Constitution. The plight of these women, referred to as “weaker sections of people” or as “dalits” is the focus of this paper. Despite constitutional safeguards and special legislation for protection of these disadvantaged group of women, rampant violations of their basic human rights and incidents of atrocities, physical assault and sexual harassment against them continue on a massive scale—a fact that do not fit with India’s image as the world’s largest democracy. These groups of dalit women, fighting for their mere survival, are doubly disadvantaged, that is, they are*

*subject to two major forms of exploitation and discrimination: 1. caste oppression at the hands of the upper caste, and 2. gender-based exploitation at the hands of all men. Drawing from statistical sources and census data the paper presents a descriptive socio-economic profile of dalit women in Indian society. The study also suggests that these women have very limited access to educational and employment opportunities and continue to be engaged in low-paid jobs and silently become victims of the worst form of degradation such as manual scavenging, as top-ranking jobs and services are still controlled by upper caste men and women. The study however ends on a positive note that the socio-economic development in course of the last few decades has tended to improve the disadvantaged status of dalit women to certain extent. A new kind of consciousness has developed among the dalit women. They have come out of their traditional shell and are busy fighting for their liberation in different parts of India.*

**Keywords :** dalit women, caste, gender

### **Introduction :**

The complex stratification systems in Indian society have given rise to a multiplicity of social categories like class, caste, gender and religion. Among these categories caste has

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always played a major influential role, both as a unifying as well as a divisive force (the divisive role being more prominent), in the socio-political life of India. At the same time it is also often argued that there is a close linkage between caste and gender and in a developing country like India, caste relation is often regarded as one of the major forces responsible for gender exploitation, that is, for subordination of a particular group of women who are often referred to as the 'weaker sections of people' or as 'dalits'. Mainstream Indian feminism and other gender studies, unfortunately, have for long tended to ignore this issue of caste. Feminism has primarily concentrated its focus on the issues, interests and problems of women belonging mostly to the upper section of the society, thereby, leaving the experiences of Indian masses outside its purview. The present paper is an attempt to provide a detailed socio-economic profile of these women belonging to the most deprived segments of the population and thereby to analyse how they become innocent victims of caste and gender-based discrimination in the Indian society.

### **Dalit Rights Movements in India :**

#### **Some Historical Facts :**

The term 'dalit' is used to refer to that group of people who occupy the lowest rung of the social system and who have remained deprived of all kinds of rights for centuries. Historically, the movement for the assertion of the dalits rights is not new in India. In pre-independent India, B.R Ambedkar was one

of the earliest champions who devoted his entire life for the cause of the uplift of the dalits or the 'untouchables'. Mahatma Gandhi was also known to be sympathetic towards the dalits and their issues and sincerely believed that the fight for political independence was meaningless without a fight for the freedom of the 'Harijans' (as he affectionately called the dalits). Dalit women all over India actively participated in various field of activity in the Ambedkarite movement. The 1930s in particular witnessed the organization of meetings and conferences by dalit women as part of Ambedkarite movement where they passed resolutions against such social evils as "child marriage, enforced widowhood and dowry" criticizing them as brahminical (Rege, 216).

The Constitution that was framed for independent India also abolished untouchability and the practice of discrimination in any form from public spaces. Article 15(1) of the constitution, for instance, prohibits all discriminations by the state between citizens merely on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Again Article 17 of the constitution states that untouchability shall be abolished and its practice in any form shall be a punishable offence. The Constitution even recognized and provided for special provision for the dalits, the tribals and other backward castes in the form of reservation. Besides, post-independent India also saw the growth of a number of movements organized by the dalits



against the state and their upper caste counterparts, particularly since the 1960s and 1970s, to claim their rights. The Dalit Panther Movement organized in the state of Maharashtra under the impact of US Black Movement, for instance, marked a major watershed in this regard. However it was rather surprising that the Dalit Panthers failed to provide a central place to the dalit women as it continued to project the latter in the roles of “mother” and “victimized sexual being” (ibid., 216).

Realizing the inability of the mainstream social movement, including the women’s movement, to properly speak for them and analyze their oppression and experiences, the dalit women, in particular, formed the ‘National Federation of Dalit Women’ with the objective of meeting the various challenges in the face of significant developments in the socio-economic and political spaces (Ruth, 144). The gradual emergence of various other regional dalit women’s groups and organizations ultimately forced the women’s movement to address the caste question and include the interests and concerns of the dalit women within its agenda.

#### **Social Status of Dalit Women :**

Despite all these developments and existence of constitutional safeguards and special legislation for the protection of these disadvantaged groups of women, rampant violations of their basic human rights and incidents of atrocities, violence, verbal abuse,

physical assault and sexual harassments continue on a massive scale even today—a fact that do not fit with India’s image as the world’s largest democracy. Over the last few decades development in India has served to enhance the opportunities of many upper class urban women. These women now have greater access to education and employment and are as a result able to participate in the economy on a more equal basis with men. However so far as these rural poor women belonging to the backward castes are concerned, there has not been much improvement in their socio-economic status. They continue to face two major forms of discrimination:

- caste oppression at the hands of upper caste and
- patriarchal or gender based oppression at the hands of all men, including men of their own caste

In other words, on the one hand they have their own share of universal sufferings as women and on the other hand they continue to become victims of a variety of exploitations due to their caste, that is, for being untouchable. In addition to these dual forms of discrimination, class oppression arising out of abject poverty makes their lives even more miserable (Chakravarti, 143).

Dalit women are more or less concentrated in almost all states of India, particularly in the rural pockets of Uttar Pradesh, West

Bengal, Bihar, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Delhi. As per 2011 Census Report, population of dalit women in India is 9.79 crore which is 48.59% of the total dalit population in India. In 2001, the male-female ratio for scheduled caste population stood at 935 females per 1000 males which have increased to 945 females per 1000 males in 2011. Although literacy rate among dalit women has improved over the years, the percentage is still insignificant as compared to overall literacy in the country. While in 2001, the literacy rate among dalit women stood at 41.9%, it increased to 56.05% in 2011. As per 2011 Census Report the gap between male-female literacy in scheduled caste population stood at 18.97% in 2011. The drop-out rate among girls belonging to this community is also rather high, as parents do not show much interest in imparting education to girl children. It is primarily for this reason that education is still beyond the reach of majority dalit girls and women.

In the social sphere, the dalit women continue to lead a life marked by constant fear and discrimination. They are denied access to even some of the basic amenities of life like drinking water, health care facilities or education. They are generally expected to marry within their communities and inter-caste marriages in most of the cases generally result in punitive acts. They are never allowed to mingle with the mainstream society and are compelled to lead their lives in complete

seclusion away from mainstream community life. Conflicts between dalits and upper caste men often end with rape or sexual assault of dalit women. In fact rape is used as an instrument by which upper caste men try to oppress the dalit women. They are often raped by upper caste leaders to suppress movements demanding payment of minimum wages, settling share cropping disputes or reclaiming lost land (Human Rights Watch, 3). They generally consider the dalit women as their commodities and always remain in search of opportunities where they can harass them. They are often raped as a way of demoralizing them in their struggle for an improved existence. The gang rape of Bhanwari Devi, a village 'saathin' working with a Non-governmental Organization in Rajasthan can be cited as an example in this context. Bhanwari was gang raped as she dared to go against the patriarchal norms of her community and tried to stop child marriage. She was unable to get justice as the court argued that it was impossible for upper caste men to gang rape her who could not even think of touching someone belonging to as low a community as Bhanwari. Such incidents of violence, rape, molestation and other atrocities on dalit women are increasing everyday as they are falling helpless prey to landlord oppression and police excesses.

Placed within the context of such caste and gender oppression the dalit women thus continue to lead a life marked by constant

threat and fear. They are supposed to remain totally dependent on their men folk, and they even become victims of violence within their home and family. Their husbands, in-laws and other family members who are supposed to be their protectors ultimately end up as perpetrators of violence against them. Such incidents of domestic violence are rampant in many states of India, particularly in the two states of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. They always remain vulnerable to such acts of violence that include beating, slapping, kicking, murdering, naked parading, sexual assault, rape and gang rape among others. A vast majority of the *devdasis* is drawn from this particular community of women and these *devdasis* become innocent victims of sexual exploitation in the name of divine marriage with the village deity. Once married to God they are supposed to remain in the temples and work to satisfy the sexual lust of upper caste men of their villages. Such practice of dedicating young girls as *devdasis* to God is particularly widespread in the southern belt that is famous as the *devdasi* belt. For instance, this system is observed in large parts of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka where they are known by different names. In Nizamabad and Hyderabad districts of Andhra Pradesh these women are generally called *jogins* while in Nellore and Chittoor districts they are known as *Mathamma* (National Commission for Women Report, 17).

### **Economic status of dalit women :**

The dalit women are discriminated in the economic sphere also. As the literacy rate among dalit women (56.05%) is still behind the general literacy rate of 64.6%, education is something beyond the reach of a great majority of dalit girls even today. As a result they are unable to get respectable jobs. They are primarily engaged in agricultural activities as about 70% of them work as bonded agricultural labourers with very low wages. They do not have any kind of job security as they work till the pleasure of the landowners who employ them. They are denied maternity benefits or any other forms of security or protection (Ruth, 14). Despite the significant contribution that they make towards the rural economy they lead their lives in extreme poverty and deprivation. Apart from agricultural activities they are compelled to perform other low-paid jobs such as manual scavenging, disposal of dead animals and leather work. Manual scavenging in particular is one of the prominent forms of discrimination and atrocities that the dalits have been subjected to since ages and this is often considered to be central to violation of their basic human rights. Surveys have revealed 95%-98% of those engaged in this practice of manual scavenging includes the dalit women belonging to the lowest rung of the society. Refusal to perform such tasks leads to physical and social boycott. An estimated 1.3 million dalits in India make their

living through such inhuman and outlawed practice of manual scavenging.

### **Impact of globalization on dalit women**

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The process of globalization has not been able to bring about much improvement in the lives of the dalit women. Traditionally the dalit women are engaged as agricultural labourers. But the developments that science and technology have introduced in the agricultural sphere (in the form of Green Revolution) have not favoured the weaker sections (both dalit men and women). With the introduction of new farming techniques such as mechanization for harvesting, women have lost their traditional work in the agricultural front. Moreover as food crops have been replaced by cash crops and capital-intensive technology has taken the place of labour-intensive technology the need for agricultural labourer has been reduced. Horticulture has been introduced for export purpose. This has deprived the dalit women of their land and common resources in the village. The 'White Revolution' in India in the form of introduction of dairies to improve the production and distribution of pasteurized milk in urban areas has also adversely affected these rural group of low caste women for whom grazing of cows and buffaloes and marketing their milk was the only source of income and livelihood. The state owned dairies introduced as part of this 'White Revolution' in Gujrat and some other states,

primarily run by men, employ very few women which has created further difficulties for the rural dalit women (National Commission for Women Report, 84).

In addition to all these abject poverty has driven many of them into sex trade (prostitution) to earn for their families. There is also large scale migration by male members from rural to urban sectors in search of better livelihood. As a result women are left behind to bear responsibility for the family. Such situations (women living alone away from their husbands) push the women into further situations of impoverishment making them even more vulnerable to all forms of discrimination and violence (Pradeep). In a word, globalization and unprecedented consumerism accompanying the process of globalization has created a huge gap between rich and poor. It has made the rich richer and poor poorer and seems to have destroyed the very existential base of the rural masses. The result is that although globalization has clearly benefitted a particular section of women by way of creating employment opportunities for them in different spheres like media, advertising, fashion, education and management, they have failed to bring similar changes in the lives of the rural poor women.

### **Conclusion :**

The discussion however can be ended on a positive note that the situation that exists today is not entirely discouraging. A new kind of consciousness has developed among the

dalit women. They have become much more aware of their rights than they were earlier. As a result they have now come out of their traditional shell and are busy fighting for their liberation in different parts of India. Some of their present demands include :

- implementation of reservation policy in the sphere of employment in both the public and private sectors for dalit women.
- ensuring dalit women equal access to all forms of health care, maternity benefits and social security services.
- making arrangements for providing free formal technical and professional education for dalit girls.
- ensuring protection of fundamental rights of dalit women in all spheres of life (Ruth, 145).

In order to further improve the conditions of this group of poor dalit women the following measures can be recommended:

- caste-based violence and untouchability to be declared as national crimes and violence against dalit women as specific dalit gender crimes
- ensuring access to basic amenities for them like electricity, water and proper toilet facilities
- establishing comprehensive and holistic programmes for rehabilitation of women manual scavengers, former

‘jogins’, and all other victims of violence by making arrangements for vocational training

- emphasizing more on vocational and skill-based education for dalit girls so as to equip them for job market (Pradeep).

In addition to all these however it is first of all necessary to make proper arrangements to bring the dalits within the purview of the mainstream social life. Inter-caste marriage which is strictly discarded by the conservative social set up of India can be a very powerful means for accomplishment of this task. The reason is that marriage and reproduction are still considered to be the two factors that are responsible for keeping caste system alive. Parents still prefer endogamous marriages and try to choose same caste partners for their children. The idea behind such endogamous marriages is to hold blood within a bonded group and thereby to keep one group distinct from the other. However the situation can definitely improve if inter-caste marriages are encouraged and dalit women are allowed to marry outside their own caste as this will give them access to the mainstream. However unfortunately we still continue to hear sad tales of burning and murdering of young dalit men and women if they dare to elope with or marry someone from outside their own caste. So long such practices exist, caste will continue to disturb the unity of the world’s largest democracy, as it will create unnecessary divisions among the citizens. This will aggravate the problems further for

the dalit women, as under such a situation, they will never be able to move out of their caste based traditional life-style and will continue to lead a life marked by poverty and deprivation.

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# FEDERALISM IN INDIA : SITUATING THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

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## **Abstract :**

*The structure and process of the Indian Union, which is in many respect, a federal design of an unusual kind. It combines the classic features of federal government, with some unique characteristics born out of the Indian Context. It's solicitude to balance local and regional interests on the one hand and national interests on the other has drawn the attention of specialists of federal theory. In designing this institution and adapting it to Indian conditions. India's leaders have shown great flexibility and pragmatism. The result has been a federal system that has evolved greatly beyond the original structure, and despite some conspicuous ease of dissidence as in some part of this country, has acquired a reasonably high level of acceptance from the population. While there is some dispute over the definition of federal systems of government and which of the world's countries should be considered as federations, the essential feature of this type of government is the combination of a general government*

*with regional ones ruling directly over shared territory and citizens. Sovereignty is shared with each level of government having a degree of independence within defined areas usually enshrined in a written constitution.*

*But in India widely acknowledged failure of the centralized state has led to a distinct swing of the pendulum towards decentralized system considered more responsible to the people of the state and offering more avenues for people's participation in Government machinery. Federalism and decentralization are interlinked concepts. Federalism refers to a multi-level system of government in which different layers of government exist, each with a defined jurisdiction with same measure of autonomy. Depending on the extent of decentralization and the degree of autonomy importance of local governments varies.*

*In India the significance of local governments, not only as a system of local self government and administration but as a totality of political process is being slowly realized. After independence and with the inauguration of the constitution embodying the principles democracy and the welfare state, local governments are expected to assume an increasing role in the political and administrative setup of our country. Moreover;*

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*it has also been widely realized that local governments have to be definitely recognized as an organ for promoting grassroots democracy by decentralization of power and providing not only civic services for the welfare of the local people but also for carrying out the task of rural-urban development and planning.*

*Local governments have been conceptualized differently by different countries. In India local government institutions have been envisaged as the third tier of government. As Article 243G of the Indian Constitution stipulates, Panchayats have to be endowed “with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institution of self government.” In many federal countries including U.S.A. and Canada, local governments are extensions of provincial governments and are not envisaged necessarily as a third tier of government. However, unlike most federations, the local governments, municipalities to be precise, are not a creation of the states, but part of the federation together with the states. The purpose of the study is to highlight briefly the place and significance of local governments in the federal structure of India.*

**Keywords :** federal design, federalism, national interests, regional interests, People’s participation, decentralization of power, welfare state.

India which was under British colonial regime for over a century became independent in 1947, and became a federal republic in 1950. The Government of India Act, 1935 passed by the British regime was the earliest attempt to make a “Federation of India”. It was made up of both British Indian provinces and the states ruled by native rulers called ‘princely states’ who functioned under the British, but with some autonomy in assigned areas. The Act made certain tax assignments and introduction a scheme of revenue sharing that in many respects laid the foundations of fiscal federalism in India. The Constitution of India borrowed heavily from the Government of India Act, 1935. Although originally as per the Constitution of India, it was a dual federation comprising only the Union and States, following 73rd and 74th constitutional Amendments, the constitution has accorded a separate status to the local Governments (LGs) making Indian federalism a multilevel system of governance.

In addition, there are sub-states, districts councils and special districts with different levels of autonomy protecting them from outside interference.

### **Salient Feature of the Indian Federation**

Numerous special features of the Indian constitution give it its highly centralized form. Of those, the two most important are the nature of the division of powers between the central government and the States with a bias in favour of the centre, and the financial provisions affecting the distribution of revenues. In India unlike in the United States



of America, the federal states do not have their own separate constitution. The State of Jammu and Kashmir is an exception, because the Instrument of Accession – on the basis of which Kashmir joined the Indian Union – ordained that the central government would not interfere with the internal affairs of the state. Article 370, therefore, provides for a separate Constitution for Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>1</sup> Some scholars of government, Indian and foreign, describe India as a quasi-federal state, and some even regard it as a more unitary than federal. Thus, G.N. Joshi contends that “the” union is strictly a federal polity but a quasi-federal polity with some vital and important elements of Unitariness .... It is designed to work as a federal government in normal times but a unitary government in times of “emergency.” ..<sup>2</sup> It must be remembered, says J.P. Suda, “That though India is a federation, her constitution departs from the ideal of a true federation in several vital and significant ways. She is not a genuine federation, but a quasi-federation having several features of a unitary state. ,”<sup>3</sup> Charles Alexandrowicz argues that India is a true federation although, like all other federations, it has distinctive characteristics – and that it is misleading to refer to India as a quasi-federation. W.H. Morris Jones held the view that Indian federation was a kind of ‘cooperative federation’ where bargaining took place between the centre and the states, but ultimately a solution came out and both agreed to cooperate.<sup>4</sup> Benjamin N. Schoenfeld opines that there was a tendency of centralism in the Indian Federation, but that was not

because of its socialistic and centrally devised plan development.<sup>5</sup>

In India when federalism is viewed in the broad sense, there is hardly any possibility for controversy on the federal character of the constitution. But we believe that the Indian Union, though it is a federation is a federation of a special type.

The constitution of India, in the tradition of written agreements between the central government and the states, defines the division of powers between both sides in its 7th schedule. The fact remains, however, that in contrast to the case of the United States, the Indian federation is not the outcome of pre-existing units that came together in a federal union out of common interest. Instead, the union is the result of the provinces of British India at Independence, and their subsequent reorganization in 1957. The process, federalization continues, with the addition of new federal units, in response to specific demands.

The Union list gives the centre exclusive authority to act in matters of national importance; this list includes 97 items of defence, foreign affairs, currency, banking and income tax, etc., the most important of the powers. The State list, which allocates exclusive rights of legislation to the States, includes 66 items that cover issues of local and regional importance such as public order and police, welfare, health, education, local government, industry, agriculture and land revenue. The Concurrent list, a special feature of Indian federation, contains 47 items over

which the centre and the states share legislative competence. In case of conflict, the central law prevails. Civil and criminal law, and social and economic planning are the important items in this list as these subjects are crucial to issues of identity and economic development. The residual power lies with the union.

Unlike the classic model of federalism, in India the central government, acting through Parliament, can create new state, alter the boundaries or names of existing ones, and even abolish a State by ordinary legislative procedure. Not only does the central government have a wide range of powers under the union list, but these powers are also enhanced because the central government is vested with a variety of powers that enable it, under certain circumstances, to extend its authority to the domain of the States. These special powers take three forms: (i) the Emergency Powers under Articles 352, 356 and 360; (ii) the use of Union Executive Powers under Articles 256, 257 and 360; and (iii) Special Legislative Powers granted under Article 249.

The Emergency Powers provided by the Indian Constitution can enable the Union Executive to transform the federation into a unitary state when the President makes a declaration to the effect. Under these emergency provisions, the central executive and legislature can simply substitute the corresponding organs of the regional governments. Even under non-emergency conditions, the central government may

assume executive powers over regional governments in the 'national' interest. These powers, used by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister, are closely monitored by the Parliament, the media and the Judiciary. In this context, the Rajya Sabha acts as the custodian of the States' interests.

The centre's right to influence the federal division of power is reinforced by the constitution's financial provisions. The Central government has vast powers over the collection and distribution of revenue, which make the states heavily dependent on the central government for financial support. Financial assistance flows from the Central government to the States in several ways. Most of the lucrative taxes like income tax, corporate tax, and import and export duties are collected by the central government. These funds are shared by the centre with the States under a formula devised by the Finance Commission, which is appointed by the president, but guaranteed independence from interference by the centre as well as the States in its everyday functions. The centre alone has the power over currency, banking and international borrowings. The States also have their own sources of income, but these taxes, like land revenue or irrigation taxes, for example, have not been particularly lucrative. Agricultural income is notoriously difficult to ascertain and, for political reasons, taxation is difficult to enforce.

As a result of the financial provisions envisaged in the Constitution, and their evolution over the years since Independence,

the states have been routinely short of funds. These shortfalls have been met through central assistance in the form of loans, grants-in-aid, and overdraft facilities – provisions that have compromised the autonomy of the states. This was further reinforced by the centralizing tendencies of the national Five-Year Plans and the powers exercised by the Congress Party on State Governments, ruling both at the centre and in the states for virtually two decades without interruption following Independence. With the end of the hegemony of the Congress Party, however, a new mutation took place in the federal arrangement, moving it towards a co-operative federation, away from the centre-dominated, quasi-federation that it was to begin with.

#### **Uniqueness of India's Federation :**

Despite the centralizing tendencies, the Indian Political system has developed a distinct pattern of co-operation between the centre and the States over the past decades. This was helped by the rise of language movements in the 1950s and the assertion of ethnic identity in the last two decades. Freed from the guardianship of central dominance because of the decline of the 'one-dominant party system' of the Congress Party, and liberalization of the economy since 1991, Indian federalism has become more robust in recent years. Regional political parties and their leaders have now become key components of both the ruling and opposition coalitions at the centre. Though a dexterous use of their room to man oeuvre, regional

parties have now acquired great prominence and leverage in national politics. This has changed the nature of Indian federalism.

India's federal structure has gained in breadth and depth considerably during the 60 years since Independence. The uneasy assortment of provinces directly ruled by the colonial government and native princely states whose rulers chose to join India has become a robust federal union with 28 states and 7 union territories. The provinces, particularly since their reorganization on the basis of the mother tongue, have become cohesive cultural and political unites, effectively cooperating through a broad spectrum of federal bodies. These institutional changes are underpinned by growing popular trust in federal institutions. These achievements suggest two major puzzles.<sup>6</sup>

One, while there is no denying the growing depth and complexity of India's federal institutions, what remains unclear is why India's federalism – given that it is a 'modern' institution of exogenous provenance ensconced within a traditional society – should work at all. If the problems of governance in transitional societies arise from the gap between modern institution and traditional society, then federalism – itself a modern institution based on a written constitution, States' rights, and judicial mediation in case of conflict of interests' – should have been undermined by political practice, rather like it has been in neighbouring Pakistan. Despite having come to the brink of collapse time again, India's

federal structure has pulled back to continue as before.<sup>7</sup> Then where does this resilience come from.

The second puzzle derives from the record of unseemly political behaviour particularly evident at the regional level. After all, if Indian federation is the shining success that many claim it to be, then why do state governments – an integral part of the federal institutional design – produce chief ministers<sup>8</sup> whose communal, corrupt and venal regimes have sometimes excessively misused the power and autonomy granted to federal units. Considering that the States are in integral part of the federal structure and process, then why does the sum of parts, many of them damaged political goods by any reckoning, add up to the functioning whole? Federal ‘breaks’ operate to localize the damage and stop it from spiralling upwards and spreading horizontally, without at the same time compromising the principle of the autonomy of states.

A detailed analysis of the functioning of India’s federal institution is not the aim of the present paper. Under a federal structure in India as the upper house (Rajya Sabha), which represents ‘states’ interests at the Union level as well as more specialized ones like the Finance Commission, an independent body appointed by the President to maintain a fair and efficient division of revenues between the Centre and the States, and the Planning Commission and Election Commission, whose responsibilities indirectly affect the vitality of federal process. One indication of the extent to which the economics of the

States are affected by federal institutions is the provision for sharing the national income. From 1998 to 2002, all the States together raised only 49.2% of their current spending from their own taxes.<sup>9</sup> The rest was raised through a variety of mechanisms such as tax devolution, grants (both planned and non-planned), and special loans from the Reserve Bank of India. These transfers were made on the basis of complex criteria that took into account distributive justice (the extent of poverty or special circumstances such as natural disasters, terrorism and population size) while rewarding evidence of efforts at self-help. In the event, high income States covered 66.8% of their current spending with their own resources, middle income States covered 55%, and low income States covered 38.8%.<sup>10</sup> The findings from survey research show that enough profits from macro-financial transactions have trickled down to the level of the mass public to bring the federal process a measure of legitimacy (Mitra, 2011). A series of National Election Studies measured the interest of the Indian electorate in the political system at the central, regional and local levels, as well as loyalty to the respective political arenas (Mitra, 2001).

It is recognized that in the past descriptive forces had been very strong in India. The necessity for guarding against centrifugal tendencies is recognized in the new polity, and the distribution of power between the Union and the States is designed to avoid these dangers and evils. The President is empowered to take measures to avoid the difficulties from this direction as well as those

difficulties which have been felt by the United States, Canada and Australia. The federal constitution of India is the latest addition to the federal constitution of the world. Its framers have borrowed largely from other federal constitutions and have drawn upon the experience and close study of their working, and they have attempted to embody in the constitutional provisions which are necessary and essential in a federal polity, but have modified them to meet the peculiar needs and conditions of India. Like other constitution it is an instrument for the Government of the country. It is sufficiently elastic for adaptation to India's changing and growing needs. Finally, the horizontal and vertical expansion of federal process through the creation of new federal units that strategically co-opt regional and local dissidents and produce new stakeholders through the women's quota in the local government (mainly in Panchayats) has brought greater legitimacy to the Indian state and cohesion to the Indian nation. However it shows that India's unfolding federation in both robust and resilient.

### **The place and significance of Local governments in the federal structure of India**

The closing decades of last millennium witnessed paradigm shifts in many spheres including governance. Processes of globalization, transformed political and economic relations, beliefs and ideologies lifestyles and culture. A fundamental restructuring of production, finance and communication across national boundaries

was accompanied by the expansion of global institutions for regulating trade, human rights and cross-border issues such as climate change. In this condition the challenges of rapid economic change require the active participation of all citizens, which makes the deepening of democracy a key issue in the current economic-political context. As well as local government institutions began to receive greater acceptance in the national political discourse in India. In our country decentralized local government was seen increasingly as the best instrument of responsive, responsible and accountable governance.

Indian Federation has a built-in unitary bias. A Constitution established in the backdrop of the partition of the country and facing internal threats of disintegration, this was probably inevitable. In terms of fiscal assignments, it borrowed heavily from the government of India Act, 1935. The Constitution of India its seventh schedule assigns the powers of the centre and the states. The schedule specifies the exclusive powers of the federal government in the Union List; exclusive powers of the states in the State list and those under joint jurisdiction are placed in the Concurrent list. Originally, local government functions formed part of the State list. Under the pre-reform regime the local government functions were mostly confined to civic duties. Following reforms of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, an Eleventh Schedule listing out the illustrative functions of the PRIs (Panchayati Raj

Institution) and a Twelfth Schedule specifying the functions of Urban Local Government were added to mop out the functional domain of the third tier.

The main objective of these amendments was to create “institutions of self government” at the local level. This is important because prior to the amendments the Panchayats were an appendage of the rural department and municipalities that of the department of urban affairs. Based on these two amendments part IX and IXA were added to the constitutions. As local governments come under the State list, every state had to pass a conformity legislation incorporating the basic changes mandated in the Constitution by the amendments such as the establishment of the Gram Sabha or assembly of citizen voters at the village level, one third reservation to women, representation to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in proportion to their population, appointment of a State Finance Commission (SFC) every five years to rationalize State sub-state fiscal relations and so on. Although it was left to the state legislatures to determine the actual expenditure responsibilities all of them stayed within the subject lists of the Eleventh and Twelfth Schedules. However, it became abundantly clear over the years that a mere listing of functions will not ensure role clarity and that division into activities and sub-activities assigning the specific functions of each government of the three tiers and urban local governments on the one hand and that of the states on the other is what was required.

Many States have done this activity-mapping of local governments. Kerala is one State that has demonstrated considerable role clarity in the activity mapping it has consideration.

The aim at the present paper is to evaluate the local government system in India of four parameters of expenditure assignment, revenue assignments, transfer system and borrowing powers. And yet, the local government system in our country has tremendous potential for the expansion of participatory democracy, local development and decentralized governance.

### **Expenditure Assignments**

Besides national defence, foreign relations and the like, the functions of the central government can be classified as those required to maintain macro-economic stability (e.g., issuing currency and coinage, foreign exchange, foreign loans, banking, insurance etc.), international trade and relations and those having inter-state implications (e.g., railways, posts, telephones, highways and so). The power of the central government has been considerably strengthened over the years by continuously adding items in the Concurrent List through constitutional amendments and vesting it with overriding powers in regard to these subjects. The important items added to the Concurrent list are very large and include economic and social planning (which is virtually a hold-all), trade unions, social security, employment and unemployment, education and so on. In India most local government functions are concurrent with the state and centre. Because the residuary powers

are with the centre the controlling levers are practically vested in it.

The major subjects that fall in the state domain are public order, police, public health, agriculture, irrigation, fisheries, industries and minor mineral. In regard to the subjects in the Concurrent list like education, transport, social security and so on, the states would be compelled to assume a significant role because of their proximity to the people. Besides the overall task of ‘planning for economic development and social justice’ and implementing them (Articles 243G and W) which every LG is mandated to do, schedule XI of the constitution mentions 29 subjects (individual states are free to expand the list) for the PRIs and 18 subjects for the urban local governments. Several subjects like agriculture, irrigation, animal husbandry, small-scale industries which are of a productive nature, and welfare activities like housing, cultural activities, family welfare, social welfare, welfare of weaker sections and so on cover a wide range of activities which are invariably concurrent with the State and Union governments. Unless there is pronounced role clarity with autonomous space to act, the wide array of list does not necessarily mean that an autonomous third tier has arrived in India.

### **Tax Assignments**

Unlike the dominant area of concurrent jurisdiction, Indian constitution largely follows the principle of ‘separation’ as far as tax assignments are concerned. Tax handles are

exclusively assigned either to the centre or the states. Most of the taxes that have broad or national base and are productive such as income tax, corporate tax, customs, excise, taxes on wealth and so on are with the centre. Taxes on agricultural income and wealth, land revenue, taxes on motor vehicles, taxes on transfer of property (Stamp duties), taxes on transportation of food and services, sales tax on goods etc., belong to the states. Though no separate tax handles are exclusively assigned to the local governments in the Constitution, bases on professions, trades, property tax, entertainment tax, octroi etc., have been assigned by states to the LGs. The tax handles of LGs are those that have been traditionally assigned to them by the state and in several cases some of the assigned taxes are collected by the states and shared with the LGs. If we survey the conformity legislations, (which only copied the old lists in traditional Panchayat and municipality Acts) of the various state governments, we can trace out as many as 28 items of taxes and their number in individual states ranges from 4 in Haryana to 12 in Gujrat in the case of LGs (Oommen, 2004) Strange as it may seem the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments do not make any separate tax assignments to the LGs.

### **Inter-governmental Transfers**

There is no federation where resources and responsibilities properly match. This leads to considerable vertical imbalance which necessitates inter-governmental transfers to reduce these imbalances. The problem however is very much confounded in India

because it has a built-in imbalance in resources and functional assignments. Moreover, given the tremendous inter-regional disparities in fiscal capabilities of sub-national governments, rectifying horizontal imbalance assumes significance. The Indian Constitution addresses this problem through the institution of Union Finance Commission to make inter-governmental transfers to rectify the vertical and horizontal imbalances. The Finance commissions appointed every five years is a quasi-judicial authority and can determine its own procedures of business. Our country had the benefit of thirteen finance commissions since the appointments of the first commission in 1951. Although initially the divisible pool consisted only of income tax and Union excises from the Tenth Finance Commission onwards, all union taxes are made divisible. Before the 73rd and 74th constitutional Amendments the transfers were only between the union and states. But the amendments provide for the establishment of a State Finance Commission (SFC) at the state level to rationalize the state sub-state level fiscal relations. It is virtually a counterpart of the Union Finance Commission at the state sub-state level. The SFCs' task is to rationalize the financial flow to the rural and urban local governments by quinquennial reviews and help them through revenue sharing and grants-in-aid. Most states have had three SFCs and quite a few like Bihar and Kerala had their fourth generation SFCs. By the two amendments even the Union Finance Commission is authorized to supplement the

resources of PRIs and ULGs through appropriate measures. Thus, the Indian Constitution provides for considerable fiscal empowerment of the LGs.

Democracy is what democracy does to the people. One important area in which both the federations lay emphasis is on people's participation. The Constitution of India has created the institution of Gram Sabha / Ward committee, assembly of voters which has the power to decide on the size, scope and priorities of their local development plan, ratify budget proposal, receive audited statements and so on. It may be noted that statutory provisions for direct democracy does not mean that they are actually translated into a living reality (Oommen, 2010). Despite the large number of LGs (as high as 250,000), and the bigger geographical coverage, the economic size and power of Indian LGs is not so powerful. In 2007-08, the share of LGs in the total public sector expenditure of India (comprising the centre, states and LGs) is 6.7%, which is only marginally higher than what it was in 2002-03. But the share of LGs in the total own source revenue is still smaller and showed a decline from 3.6% in 2002-03 to 2.8% in 2007-08 (Oommen, 2010). Although as a share of GDP, the local government expenditure increased from 2.13% in 2002-03 to 2.42% in 2007-08, which is very low.

It is abundantly clear from all these numbers and discussions that the political power and economic size and significance of the Local Government in India is not so



strong. This does not in any way underestimate the tremendous potential that lies ahead for India a particularly for the expansion of participatory democracy, local development and decentralized governance, India has built a lot of necessary conditions. But the progress of building the needed sufficient condition is missing. But India's bold steps towards local governance following the 73rd Constitutional Amendment is a major achievement. More than three million elected people are involved in managing local affairs in their areas. Over one million elected women members now participate in direct democracy. Moreover, traditionally marginalized and oppressed groups such as the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes constituting over 22.5% of the country's population have the opportunity to intervene in the management of their local governments. Absolutely this is a 'Silent revolution' in Indian federal system.

### **Conclusion**

However, despite these remarkable achievements there continue to be several challenges that are being confronted. It is true that over 50% of the population deprived for countries has been given an assured place in local governance system through constitutional provision for their representation. But formal representation is no guarantee of effective participation in decision making. Common people's ability to realize their own will in a community action against the resistance of others is the real test of power (weber, 1948). In that sense, the

deprived sections in the society have a long way to go to share power in a way that transforms their own lives and their relations with dominant group of society and bureaucracy. But through their increasing exposure to local government institutions the oppressed are gradually learning the rules of the game. With experience and education, they are acquiring confidence, identity and are asserting themselves to gain democratic rights as well as the benefits of a developing federal governmental structure. There are encouraging signs that the future is bright for the local governance in India. In spite of the world economic recession India has maintained a reasonable rate of economic growth. The Indian economy is likely to maintain a growth rate of 8% and above. It enables the country to undertake poverty reduction programmes through local governance which is an essential part of bringing social justice of benefit large sections of population. According to India's Planning Commission, the proportion of people below poverty line (BPL) has come down from 37.2% in 2004-05 to 32% in 2009-10. Another hopeful sign is the increase in general literacy level as seen in the census from 64.8% in 2001 to 74.04% in 2011. What is even more encouraging is the rise in female literacy from 53.7% in 2001 to 65.46% in 2011 which will have decisive impact on woman's status and active participation in local governance.

With these positive basic parameters one can reasonably assume that the local governments in India are likely to play an

active positive and vibrant role in the coming future which will lead to the deepening of Indian democracy along with a robust federalism and economic development and social justice which we have been aiming at from our independence.

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# NEGLECT : A NEMESIS OF THE ELDERLY

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## Abstract

- *Nandini (80) and Anjali (70) were two sisters residing at Sinthee, north Kolkata. The maid kept on ringing their doorbell for a few days but received no response from the other end. By the time the SOS was sent, Anjali was dead, and Nandini was in critical care. Age and ailment had made the two sisters so weak that they could not do anything on their own. When Anjali died, Nandini could not even drag herself to answer the door or call for help ...*
- *62-year-old Srikanta Khara was found dead in his house in Satyen Roy Road, Behala, south Kolkata. He was a hypertension patient but had an otherwise active life. His son, who lives in Bagnan, called the Police to check on him after failing to contact him for a day or two ...*

*Several cases are often reported of old people being left alone by the caregivers (such as spouse, sons, daughters, relatives, friends, neighbours, voluntary workers, paid workers). The elderly are thus vulnerable to*

*illness, loneliness and crime. Loneliness is causing great danger to the health of the elderly people and creating a menace.*

*Old age is the natural culmination of human ageing process and happens to be an inevitable, ubiquitous and universal phenomenon of human life. The country is beset with a monumental challenge of providing care to the elderly whose numbers are increasing gradually.*

*Unfortunately, this increase is accompanied by a parallel rise in the number of instances of elderly abuse in the country. The elderly are subject to various forms of abuse, ranging from passive neglect to active torment, which includes verbal, psychological/emotional, sexual, financial and physical abuse and neglect.*

*This paper discusses how neglect has emerged as one of the key forms of elderly abuse and how the elderly are leading a life of loneliness that causes loss of social identity. Neglect of a person simply means depriving a person from food, heat, clothing, comfort or essential medication and needed services to force certain kinds of actions, financial and otherwise. The deprivation may be intentional (active neglect), or unintentional (passive*

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*neglect). The difference between the two lies in the intent of the caregiver.*

*In case of active neglect, the caregiver intentionally fails to meet his/her obligations towards the older person as he/she is settled elsewhere for better opportunities. Passive neglect happens when the caregiver unintentionally gets overloaded with lack of information concerning appropriate caregiving strategies. But in both the cases, the caregiver fails to meet the physical, social, and/or emotional needs of the older person, who is left alone to survive.*

*The objective of the paper is to identify the factors responsible for such neglect and find out the ways to curb loneliness. For this, several real cases have been taken up, accompanied by analysis of the theoretical aspects of the issue concerned.*

**Keywords:** elderly, old age, elderly abuse, neglect, loneliness, caregiver

### **Introduction :**

Gerontology, relatively a new discipline, has become a subject of great importance all over the world which can be attributed to greater ageing of population and increased longevity. The word 'gerontology' is derived from the Greek word 'geron' meaning 'an old person'. So it is the study of ageing and the elderly. Gerontologists work within many disciplines like medicine, psychology and sociology to investigate not only how people change as they grow old but also to find out

ways how societies around the world define old age.

Ageing is a biological process through which every human being passes. It consists of gradual ongoing changes in the body - begins at birth and ends with death. It depends on the genes as well as on the environment and the lifestyles that one follows. Thus, old age is the natural culmination of human ageing process and happens to be an inevitable, ubiquitous and universal phenomenon of human life. World Health Organization (WHO) defines elderly as people above the age of 60 years. How an individual experiences life's transition depends on the cultural system of the society which defines the various stages of life. People always look forward for more opportunities and responsibilities as they grow old.

In India, the elderly population stood at 56 million in 1991, which rose to more than 76 million (76, 622, 321 million out of which 37, 768, 327 are male, which is 7.1 % of the total population and 38, 853, 994 are female, which is 7.8% of the total population) in 2001 which constituted 7.5 % of the total population of the country. In India the Census shows an increase in the percentage of population of the elderly from 6.8 in 1991 to 8.6 in 2011. Hence the country is beset with a monumental challenge of providing care to the older persons whose numbers are increasing at a fast pace.

There is a steep rise in the population of elderly due to the advances in the medical sciences, improved health standards and better living conditions of them. The Indian aged population is currently the second largest in the world. Human beings are now living much longer and thus able to see the harsh reality of life. India ranks 73 out of 91 countries in terms of quality of life of the elderly as per the Global Age Watch Index.

Unfortunately, this increase is accompanied by a parallel rise in the number of instances of elderly abuse in the country. The elderly are subject to various forms of abuse, ranging from passive neglect to active torment, which includes verbal, psychological/emotional, sexual, financial and physical abuse and neglect.

The abuse and neglect of the elderly has become an important concern for advocacy for the researchers and the policy makers since mid-1970s. Positive conceptions of 'healthy ageing' are rightly displacing negative ageist perceptions of older members of our society. Most elderly citizens, at some point of time, require some form of assistance from other members of society. When the body or mind begins to fail, a legitimate need for intervention and care arises. This is a quite natural feature of the elderly all over the world.

The pervasive issue of neglect is an issue of public health and societal problem that manifests itself in both developing and

developed countries. Abuse and neglect are culturally defined phenomena that reflect distinction between values, standards and unacceptable interpersonal behaviours. Older people view abuse under 3 broad categories – neglect (isolation, abandonment and social exclusion), violation (of human, legal and medical rights) and deprivation (of choices, decisions, status, finances and respect).

As people grow older they face physical, psychological, financial and health related problems. So they try to get hold of others and depend on them very much. The psychological aspect of ageing needs to be given due consideration as it plays a vital role. The role and status of aged change as they grow old. The sense of loneliness increases especially if one loses one's spouse.

It is believed by many that women can outnumber men in case of greater longevity. There is also a widespread understanding that the neglect, deprivation and marginalisation of older women are the normal consequences of ageing. According to Help Age India, 40.2% of the elderly feel disrespected.

In India, traditionally the aged enjoyed a place of honour and respect in family and community but the scene changed in modern times as they are being replaced by the youths in powerful positions. Thus the elderly look at themselves as non-productive and dependent. It is a social expectation in India that the adult sons will take care of their aged parents and the daughters take charge of the

parents in case they do not have sons. In case the sons stay separately from each other, the aged parents have to be under the care of one of the sons. The old age homes cannot be an alternative for the elderly against the family environment. The care that an elderly receive from the caregiver, be it the sons or the daughters, cannot be compared with the professionals of the old age homes. The absence of such care causes adjustment problems among the elderly leading to solitude and depression. The warmth and security that they used to receive in home are lacking here.

Social isolation means having few contacts with the family and community members. Social solitude happens due to lack of attachment with the group that he shares with his common interest and activities. This happens when the elderly is shifted to a care institution or an old age home or a nursing home.

Elderly neglect falls under the category of 'elderly abuse'. According to WHO elder abuse can be defined as "a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person". It can also be the result of intentional or unintentional neglect. Every year, thousands of cases are reported of elderly men and women not looked after by their children. It busts the myth that people in the culture-conscious city live in close knit

families and are very respectful to their parents.

### **Objectives**

The objective of the paper is to clarify the concept of 'neglect' as distinct from 'abuse'; to identify the factors responsible for neglect; to find out the outcomes of neglect; to provide the solution to curb the problem and to analyse and interpret several real cases along with its theoretical aspects.

### **Methodology**

Research in a common parlance refers to a search for knowledge. One can also define research as a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic. In fact, research is an art of scientific investigation. D. Slesinger and M. Stephenson in the Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences define research as "the manipulation of things, concepts or symbols for the purpose of generalizing to extend, correct or verify knowledge, whether that knowledge aids in construction of theory or in the practice of an art."

On the other hand, research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. It may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically. In it we study the various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying his research problem along with the logic behind them. It is necessary for the researcher to know not only the research methods/techniques but also the methodology.

Here the study is based on secondary sources. For this study several real cases of Kolkata have been taken up to highlight the issue of neglect and the dark side of it.

### **Theoretical aspects**

For analysing the theoretical aspects with regard to the issue concerned, only the activity theory has been taken up. Activity theory proposes that a high level of activity enhances personal satisfaction in old age. As social identity is built through activity, disengagement is bound to reduce satisfaction and meaning in the lives of the older people. This theory indicates that old people need to find new roles to replace those they leave behind. The elderly people who perform high activity derive the most satisfaction from their lives. This theory is a part of symbolic interaction paradigm. But this theory shifts the focus from the needs of the society to the needs of the elderly themselves.

Havighurst's activity theory of ageing propounds that engaging in some kind of activity or work facilitates old people to adjust to later years of life and also helps in avoiding solitude. This theory is essentially a theory of successful ageing. It is based on the premise that the social and psychological health of a person is escalated through continued activity in a variety of roles. He believes that there is a correlation between activity on the one hand, mental and social adjustment among people on the other.

### **Analysis and interpretation of few cases**

It often happens that the older persons who live alone out of negligence suffer various physical, psychological and emotional problems, as there is nobody to look after them in need. It is often found that in majority cases even they die alone without being noticed by anyone. It is only when the bodies start rotting or when a relative is not getting response for three to four days, that the neighbours come to know about the plight. It has become a common scene everywhere in the society.

The Baishnabghata Patuli Township is one such area where mainly the old people reside, either lonely or with their partner. This is because either they do not have children or their children live outside. There are several cases that elderly residing in various localities or apartment block in and around the corners of the city do not know about their neighbouring flat or houses. This adds to the problem.

As the elders are living alone, the rate of crime has also increased alarmingly. Every now and then several criminal activities are happening around the corners of the city. The feeling of helplessness among the old age group lead to panic attacks, given their age and situation. It is often the case that if any incident happens to any elderly, others also identify with them as they belong to the same age group. Insecurity of living alone is

aggravated among the old because of their failing faculties.

As the older people live alone, they always confine themselves from their neighbours. The moment one neighbour asks about the well-being of the other, they suffer from a moral dilemma of how much responsibility they might have to take now. In the month of March an elderly citizen and her daughter were found dead in Garia. In another case the neighbours of a high-rise building in the Lake area woke up to foul smell from a flat only to realise that an elderly man had died several days ago.

Cases of 80 year old Swarnalata Chanda, 92 year-old Parul Mukherjee, 62-year-old Srikanta Khara, 80 year old Nandini and 70 year old Anjali, 60 year old Meera Moitra, 70 year old Ram Lakshman Shaw and 55 year old Mina Shaw are few cases that showcase the evidence of neglect in the society.

80 year old Swarnalata Chanda stays at '*Navanir*' old age home on NSC Bose Road. She has been living there for six to seven years. Now she has no hope for release from this home. She considers herself to be 'admitted' here as if it were a hospital or prison. Earlier she used to stay with her son, daughter-in-law and two granddaughters in a flat at Belur that was bought by her husband. Her husband passed away in 1984. But as the flat is very small and the kids are growing up, she had to

come to the old age home to make rooms for her family. Though her husband had purchased the flat she does not mind living in an old-age home now. As she is an Indian mother she knows the concept of 'sacrifice' for the wellbeing of the children. She adjusted herself with the home in order to get the best for her son and she has no complain regarding it.

The case of 92 year old Parul Mukherjee is of no exception. She moved to the home after years of insult and agony. Her husband and son died years ago, and she brought up her nephews only to be told by them that she would not get anything of the family property. Hence she landed up here. There were times when her relatives prayed that she would die and would possibly be relieved, but faith kept her alive.

62 year old Srikanta Khara was found dead in his house in Behala's Satyen Roy Road. He was a hypertension patient but had an otherwise active life. His son, who lives in Bagnan, called police to check on him after failing to contact him for a day or two.

Another case was that of two sisters - Nandini, 80 years of age and Anjali, 70 years of age. They lived in Sinthee. It is the maid who informed the neighbours after getting no response from them for a few days. By the time the SOS was sent, Anjali was dead. Nandini was in critical care. Age and ailment had made the two sisters so weak that they



could not do anything on their own. When Anjali died, Nandini could not even drag herself to answer the door or call for help.

60 year old Meera Moitra was found dead in her 1,000 sq. ft. flat in Banskroni's Naskarpara. She was a widow and had no children. Her body was found dead after the neighbours complained the police of a stench. She had been living alone on the first floor of the three storied building 'Biplab Niketan' since the death of her husband.

Several other elderly people who are forced to live alone as their children are settled elsewhere meet with the same fate in the city. Most of the elderly people die naturally, but few of them end their life out of loneliness. Here is a story of such a couple who ended their life out of loneliness and depression. 70 year old Ram Lakshman Shaw and 55 year old Mina Shaw committed suicide by hanging from the ceiling of a room at their residence on Chetla Road. They took this extreme step out of depression as they were suffering from prolonged illness. They left behind two sons, who live separately in the same area, and one daughter, who got married and lives with her in-laws. So the couple had nobody to look after and support their sustenance in their old age. It was one of the sons who came to their house and found locked from inside. It was with the help of the police and the neighbours that the bodies were recovered.

Thus, there are several factors that lead to both intentional and unintentional neglect of the elderly which are cited below:

- Changing family pattern like breakdown of the traditional joint family is the major reason behind the scene. It forces the elders to stay alone. Moreover, massive employment of women also led to the same problem. Also the families have become so small in nature that they are unable to provide the emotional support that is needed by the elders of the family.
- An individualistic style of living is to be blamed for this change in societal patterns. The children, in order to live separately, either move away from their parent's house or they send their parents in old age homes.
- High rate of rural-urban migration, decline in the rate of youth resources also led to the neglect of the elderly. The migration of Kolkata's youth to other cities in search of jobs is leaving a killer loneliness of the elderly behind. In other words, Bengal's brain drain has seen a chunk of urban youth moving out of the city leaving their parents alone.
- Sometimes it happens that the elders themselves choose to live alone. For example, a man who lives outside the country or state or city often asks his parents to relocate along with him. But it is the unwillingness of the parents that compel the children to leave their parents

alone. It is also a fact that the parents might not be happy giving up their space in Kolkata which they have nurtured for decades.

- A gap between the old and the young is also created due to inability of understanding between them on various issues. Sometimes degeneration of social norms and values lead the elderly to abuse, isolation and social abandonment. The young generation is more modern in its approach than the old generation. This creates a conflict between the two on the issue of values that they have and the values that are.

The results/outcome of neglect are as follows:

- The elders often confine themselves to overmedication/over-sedation out of frustration as they are neglected by their caregivers.
- The voice of the elders is subdued by the abuser/caregiver. They are not allowed to speak without the presence of the caregiver.
- Often malnourishment (like sunken eyes, loss of weight etc.) is evident among the elderly due to self-neglect. This happens as they are least bothered to meet the doctors or involve themselves in regular check-ups.
- Social isolation and loneliness affect the quality of life and wellbeing of the

elderly. Thus chronic health problems (both physical and psychological) are visible among them.

- Often the elders suffer from loneliness and hopelessness due to isolation from the society, particularly from the family members. They feel this phase to be the end of their life.
- The cumulative impact of neglect on older people can be profoundly depressing and stressful: tears, frustration, expressions of a desire to die and feelings of being stripped of self-worth and dignity.

### **Conclusion**

Now-a-days professionals are coming up to assist the elderly in their loneliness/isolation. They are imparting positive energy to the older persons by providing care and the emotional needs that the elderly desire. There is an urgent need worldwide to expand educational opportunities in the field of geriatrics and gerontology for all health professionals who work with older people. The informal caregivers should receive basic training to protect and care the elderly.

Indrani Chakravarty, Director of Calcutta Metropolitan Institute of Gerontology is of the view that it is not medicines that the elderly need to break out of their loneliness. It is only through proper counselling that an elderly can be helped to prevent most of the extreme cases

of loneliness. According to her, it is the duty of everyone in the society to know how to react collectively as a whole in order to curb the problem and help the senior citizens to survive happily.

According to the doctors, “keeping in touch” with the elderly is the most important aspect of supporting the elderly. As loneliness leave them more vulnerable to illness, it is twice as bad for health as obesity.

The Police is of the opinion that if the community involves more in solving the problem it would be much better. The Kolkata Police in the year 2009 started an initiative called ‘Pronam’ with the NGO named “The Bengal” to reach out to the city’s elders who live alone and face several problems. Here the elders can lodge their complaints against their children if they cause any harm. Through time this initiative is receiving a good response from the elders. Yet, there are many elders who find it still difficult to reach to police stations or schools where several camps of Pronam are held. So it is the duty of the local beat officers to coordinate between them and the police stations. An assistant sub-inspector and a team of constables and home guards at each police station keep in touch with the members of Pronam in their respective areas. Even the Police stations have been asked to distribute a stay-safe factsheet for the elderly so that they are cautious in their dealings. Besides offering the usual tips like not discussing financial matters in front of

servants and avoiding opening of lockers in their view, they also encourage them to keep some neighbours on speed dial.

The interventions to tackle social isolation or loneliness among the elderly include: befriending, mentoring, Community Navigators, social group scheme. These interventions are available outside India but in India mentoring and social group scheme may be introduced to reduce the problem. It is, however, the family - the hub of care and support- that can end loneliness for the elderly population.

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# CONTRIBUTIONS OF PROF. N. K. BOSE TOWARDS NATION-BUILDING AND INTEGRATION : A SHORT SOCIOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

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## **Abstract :**

*Prof N.K Bose had written quite prolifically on various aspects of nation and ways to create a sustained state. He looked at the issue of disintegration from various angles and tried ameliorating the problem in relevant ways. Given his background in colonial history, Bose tried tackling the problems besetting the country in his own way. His deep knowledge of the socio-political history coupled with his inquisitive mind for extensive research led him to investigate intently about the nation and its contours. Bose looked at the problem of national integration from various quarters each with its distinctive elements. His work seemed resplendent with these various essences of nation-building and the ways to refurbish the nation with a fresh spurt of ideas and thoughts that seemed extremely relevant from significant perspectives.*

**Keywords :** nation building, secessionist forces, elite, mass, territorial, national integration

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## **Bose's concern with the interstices between the territorial and the national integration**

Bose while discussing the various relevant ambits of national integration had underscored the area of territorial integration in detail. He was rather concerned with the problem of territorial unity and discussed the threats posed by it for the nation. A nation is earmarked by its territory which chisels out its geo-political distinction from other nations. Territory of a state therefore remains an important consideration while plotting the avenues of its integration. But before coming straight to the area of territorial integration let us try and understand what we exactly mean by integration. Meiron Weiner while discussing the politics of integration, discussed very well what he exactly meant by the term. He said, "Integration may refer to the process of bringing together culturally and socially discrete groups into a single territorial unit and the establishment of a national identity. When used in this sense, "integration" generally presumes the existence of an ethnically plural society in which each group is characterized by its own language or other self-conscious cultural qualities, but the problem may also exist in

a political system which is made up of once distinct independent political units with which people identified. National integration thus refers specifically to the problem of creating a sense of territorial nationality which overshadows or eliminates subordinate parochial loyalties” (Weiner, 1965).

Weiner therefore makes it clear that even when he is explaining integration, he necessarily talks of territorial integration and its retention. His definition makes it very clear that in developing countries that are resplendent with ethnic minorities, territorial unification remains an essential condition for harmony and concord. Weiner’s explanation thus remains particularly significant for developing societies like India which has umpteen ethnic pluralities and to bridle all such multiplicities tenuously makes the question of territory even more pertinent. This is especially important because after India won independence, many areas which were only indirectly under the British rule became vulnerable ones. It was more so in case of boundaries between countries which did not attain much importance during the British rule. The boundaries and its inhabitants thus remained hidden under the blanket of darkness. The tribes or the marginal communities inhabiting such transitional areas were often confounded by the emergent sense of territorial integration acquired by the newly emerging nations.

Weiner therefore continued to say that there is an essential difference between territorial integration and national integration though one subsumes the other. He said on the one hand, national integration deals with the individuals who despite belonging to separate social groups or historically distinct political units may still have relative feelings towards the nation. On the other hand, territorial integration refers to the pivotal control that the nation objectively imposes on its territorial ambit upon which it seeks to extend its over-all authority. Weiner therefore made it very clear that national integration cannot be espoused without adequately addressing the area of territorial integration. Thus it seems pertinent that if the two are proximately related to one another, it is self-evident that if one is at peril, it definitely imperils the other. N.K Bose while deliberating on the areas of national integration also realized this.

He therefore was threatened when he found that the territorial integration was at stake. Bose expressed his agony in a rather conspicuous way when he said, “National unity and the territorial integrity of the country are being challenged. Secessionist forces have intensified their activities in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Assam, Nagaland and Manipur. Armed insurgency in these states has now acquired a dangerous dimension. Communal riots (mainly between Hindus and Muslims) have occurred in different

parts of the country leading to loss of lives of hundreds of people belonging to both the communities. Such riots are still raging in several areas causing deep concern to all right-minded people. Caste conflicts have led to a serious situation in states like Bihar, U.P and Tamil Nadu. Tension is high in many tribal areas. Some foreign powers, particularly Pakistan, are openly supporting divisive forces in the country with arms and money. They are also training terrorists. There is definitely a move from outside to Balkanize India. In this context questions have been raised about the viability of India as a nation. Are we to remain united or disintegrate into fragments?" (Bose, 1991). Bose it thus seemed was looking at territorial integration from all possible angles. He was primarily concerned of the secessionist forces prowling over the country at large. Militant nationalism bred by a kind of jingoism it seemed has enveloped our nation and had been growing by leaps and bounds.

Bose was perturbed by the growing pace of secession going on not only in the national but also in the international sphere. He was appalled at the exorbitant rise in fragmentation of the nations into regional atoms and he was exasperated to find an ever increasing rate in the separatist urges of the national leaders. He was shuddered to imagine what this would lead us to but at the same time he found this tendency contagious such that it could not be controlled or stopped. He

understood that it was an international issue because the secessionist forces were not confined within the four walls of the immediate nation but had almost encroached upon the entire globe. The urge for territorial separation was therefore a global phenomenon that was spreading like a wild fire in the nooks and crannies of the human civilization. Bose gave an account of this gory scene vividly when he said, "In the Soviet Union, not only the three Baltic Republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, but many other Republics like Georgia and Ukraine at the present moment want to get out of the Soviet Union. In Yugoslavia, the Republics of Slovenia and Croatia have passed resolutions in their respective republican legislatures for their secession from the Yugoslav federation. The people in the autonomous province of Kosovo want to be separated from the Republic of Serbia in Yugoslavia. On this question they have been involved in long years of violent movement. In the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, which is the new name for Czechoslovakia, many people in the Republic of Slovakia want to secede from the federal republic. In the French-speaking province of Quebec in Canada, the demand for secession has been raised again, though this demand is yet to gather momentum. In the United Kingdom many among the Scottish and the Welsh peoples want the separation of their lands from the United Kingdom. In Spain the Basque nationals are for separation. In nearby

Pakistan there are moves for secession in the provinces of Sind and Baluchistan. In Sri Lanka also a large number among the Tamils want their separate homeland Eelam. On the other hand, however, the process of unification of divided countries is also going on simultaneously” (Bose,1991). Thus it seemed pretty evident that Bose for long remained agonized about the state of disintegration going on around the globe and therefore saw Indian situation not as an exception but rather as a continuation of the larger international mayhem. Though Bose saw the problem as a rather global phenomenon, my argument is that as far as the Indian situation is concerned, Bose was proposing an oriental approach. He distinguished the Indian context from the international one by choosing an indigenous approach and advocated strongly for it.

### **Indigenous basis of the territorial integration**

Bose strongly felt that basis for territorial unity in India had always been its ethnic diversity. Despite bolstered claims of colonial intervention, Bose resolutely abrogated such notions as proposed reasons of national unity. He strongly negated the much acclaimed theories of colonial mediation which said that British rule over the vast Indian sub-continent acted as an invincible shield against fragmentation. It was believed that India in itself was a nation of vulnerable geo-political crust till the British forces took over the

country with storm. It was only after the colonial forces had interceded did the nation develop strong roots of territorial integration. Bose was not ready to conform to such claims when he strongly appealed to the nation to soon replace them by a robust theory of national unity amongst diversity which he claimed was a congenital quality of the Indian nation itself and would not necessarily be exported from outside. Bose for time and again reiterated that territorial unity for Indian nation was not a foreign idea transplanted from some extraneous origin but was something that was already entailed within the nation for long.

Territorial integration, therefore I argue was seen by Bose as an intravenous character of Indian nation and extolled as an innate character sans its derivation from external forces willing to wreck havoc over the nation. My argument would seem more pertinent if I can quote Bose as followed, “The lingering protagonists of an old and somewhat outmoded theory still maintain that there was no national unity among the people of India before the advent of the British. According to them, only with British rule modern communication system emerged and with introduction of the English language in the provinces the different parts of India came together and a feeling of oneness developed among the people of the country. And, after the British left the country, the process of disintegration has started again. But this



formulation does not stand the scrutiny of knowledgeable and perceptive minds. The distinguished British historian, Vincent A. Smith, in *The Oxford History of India* has said, 'European writers as a rule have been more conscious of the diversity than of the unity of India. India beyond all doubt possesses a deep underlying fundamental unity, more profound than that produced either by geographical isolation or political suzerainty. That unity transcends the innumerable diversities of blood, color, language, dress, manners and sect' “ (Bose,1991). Thus the theory of unity in diversity, had been aptly used by Bose, for his understanding of the problems of nation building and as well as to dislodge the earlier rationale erected to justify the base of national integration. But Bose did not just stop at that, he went on to probe deeper into the problem till he found something interesting about the relation posed between the elite and the masses.

#### **Bose's approach of 'elite-mass' gap to the problem of national integration**

I think the way, Bose had approached the problem of national integration thus requires some more deliberation now. It seemed clear from Bose's account that he was talking of a lingering mismatch between the government and the governed while talking of the grave problem of national disintegration plaguing the country. He felt that the Indian masses felt inhibited by the overpowering presence of the

imperial forces and fought ways out of it desperately. Bose therefore argued how the national leaders of the yesteryears fought strongly against such forces which wanted to divide the country on the communal lines. He understood the problem of disintegration from the stand-point of the colonial policy of divide and rule that he believed had released strong secessionist forces in the country. He necessarily saw the problem as the one of disjunction between the elite and the masses where the former tries hard to en-cash on the communal differences whereas the masses pressed hard to preserve their local differences.

Bose said this was rampant in the colonial regime when the British rulers instigated the Hindus to fight against the Muslims on flimsy grounds thus creating panic and disorder across the political horizon. This Bose felt created differences in the aspirations of the elite and the masses. He demonstrated this by the recording the differences in the attitudes of the nation before and after the colonial advent. Bose argued in the pre-British nation, the communal differences hardly surfaced despite strong multiplicities across ethnic lines, whereas the post – British regime was dotted with profuse ethnic bleeding. Bose thus walked along the line of looking at the problem of national integration from the angle of discord between the elite and the masses. He showed how the British intervention had divorced the masses from the elite thus

creating long and pervasive lines of disintegration. This was unlike the past when the elites, Bose argued integrated the masses and accommodated them within their fold.

Thus despite strong lines of differences, the elites of the Indian nation had succeeded in bringing the masses cutting across various lines under one umbrella. Bose corroborated his claim by giving the instance of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose who did such an ingenious task in unifying the whole country in the Indian National Army in the South-East Asia. Bose thus said, “that unity transcends the innumerable diversities of blood, color, language, dress, manners and sect. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose performed a miracle by achieving a unique solidarity of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and even Anglo-Indians in the Indian National Army in South-East Asia in the early forties at a time when the Hindus and the Muslims were fighting with each other in India at the instigation of the British. Bose made an analysis of how the Hindus and Muslims worked together before the British came to India, in building up one common Indian nationality” (Bose,1991).

Thus my argument is this that N.K Bose was trying to create a theory of national integration along the nature of the connection that grew between the elite and the masses. He argued that in the past the relation was one of harmony and concord while it eroded soon after the advent of the British regime to give way to discord and disorder. Bose was

trying to show how the domain of national integration changed forms in the pre and post British regime in India. In the past he tried drawing integration along the horizontal line where the elites in the society tried creating a likeness across the multiple affiliations by trying to create a homogeneous society. He put the onus of creating this unity on the elites of the society and especially those that worked as the mentors of the Hindu religion. He had argued strongly of the catholicity of the Hindu religion that tried all means to tie the various communities within the society across their varying affiliations into a common mould.

Bose had thus vehemently advocated the benevolence of the Hindu religion and its corresponding society to even accommodate the tribes and the non-Hindus into the national mould. Though Bose for time and again had been criticized for his obsession with the Hindu society and extolling unnecessarily its policies towards tribal absorption. Many saw these policies of Hindu society as shrewd strategies of domesticating the tribes with strong patronizing agenda and latent exploitation. , yet Bose never relented in admiring the Hindu religious elites and the overall malleable crust of the Hindu society.

Andre Beteille said “Bose has been criticized for dwelling too much on the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the tribe and the wider society and not enough on its asymmetrical and exploitative character (58). The precariousness of the tribal economy

was not always its natural condition. It resulted sometimes from a tribe being pushed back by its more prosperous or better organized neighbors from a better to a worse location where it could survive only on the lowest economic plane. As a recent writer has tersely observed about a major area of tribal concentration in Bihar, 'it can be surmised that the people of Chota Nagpur remained primitive so that their neighbors could grow' (59). But, whether these tribes were pushed out or pulled in, their lives were never wholly unaffected by the larger currents of Hindu civilization. (Beteille,1986). But despite these counter-claims, Bose did not stop extolling the generous nature of the Hindu society, which had strongly embedded economic benefits for the downtrodden classes. The exclusive monopoly over a task that was given to the tribes in the Hindu society talks of the flexibility and generosity of the caste society which Bose upheld. Even Beteille said, "Our understanding of the transformation of tribe into caste or the fusion of tribal elements into the general society will remain incomplete without an appreciation of the role of the economic ethic of Hinduism. Evidence of oppression and exploitation cannot be used to discount its hold over the minds of people in the entire sub continent down to our own times. The economic ethic was part of a wider system of beliefs and values which we describe broadly as Hinduism and which overflowed the boundaries of Hindu society in the narrow sense. (Beteille,1986). Thus it

is pretty evident that Bose fell back on different elements of the Hindu society to corroborate its consideration for the other communities. It never just worked for itself but persistently made in-roads for the other communities standing on its threshold.

Thus my argument is this that Bose was tenaciously trying to create integration along the horizontal line where he wanted to boil down all sorts of multiplicities into a single unifying sect. He tried legitimatizing this along various lines, chief among them being the religious and the caste. This becomes clearer when Bose says, " the great teachers who wanted to convey to the country their faith had always toured the whole of India and one of the greatest of them, *Sankaracharya*, who flourished in the eighth century A.D. built four *Ashramas* (Monasteries) in four corners of India, which flourish to this day. Everywhere the same scriptures are read and followed and the epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana are equally popular wherever you may travel (Bose, 1991).

He contrasted this form of integration with the one that followed with the British conquest when integration policies were framed along the vertical lines of stark demarcation between the elite and the masses. The colonial forces had strong lines of coercion up their sleeves and the masses had learnt to distance themselves from the segmenting policies of the elite. Instead of tying the masses along a common cord, the foreign power had zoomed

on the innate differences of each of the communities and played them one against the other. The communities were at logger heads with one another thus creating a context easier for the British forces to fragment the nation into vulnerable pockets.

Thus following the lines of Weiner, I can argue that Bose was assuming a gap between the ruler and the ruled while framing his theory of integration. Bose's theory becomes easier to understand after we have read Weiner who said, "Implied in this usage is the familiar notion of a "gap" between the elite and the mass, characterized by marked differences in aspirations and values. The "gap" may be widest in society with a passive population and modernizing elite, but a relatively stable if frustrating relationship may exist. More often the masses are beginning to become organized and concerned with exercising influence, while the elite responds with attempts to coerce, persuade, or control the masses. It is under these conditions of conflict and often internal war that we customarily speak of "disintegration." Thus it becomes palpable that Bose must have had such dichotomous relation between the elite and the masses in mind while he was sketching post-British regime characteristic of disintegration resulting necessarily from the vertical form of integration.

**Political and territorial  
integration.....twin but disparate  
forms of national integration**

Thus I argue, that Bose characterized the pre-British India with a form of territorial integration which blends all sorts of differences into a common cult that absorbs multiple and tenacious divisions thus creating an idyllic society constituted of equilibrium and equipoise. Bose contrasted this with a political integration that was harvested in post-British regime that spoke of integration along the vertical line. Such integration made the communities pro-active about their ethnic differences and created a form of militant integration that created more of disintegration in disguise of profound integration. Instead of fighting against the forces that acted as their predators, the local groups would integrate with them to show strong loyalty towards these patrons and instead fight against their own countrymen along communal lines being instigated by the foreign forces. Their objective was not to design any equitable society but to recurrently participate in the political process for individual participation and political premium.

My argument follows Weiner's line of thinking who thus distinguished between these two forms of integration along the usage of the idea of 'Elite-mass integration' in James S. Coleman's and Carl G. Rosberg's edited work, Political Parties and National Integration in Africa (Berkeley: University of California, 1964). He thus said, "(1)political integration, which refers to the progressive

bridging of the elite-mass gap on the vertical plane in the course of developing an integrated political process and a participant political community, and (2) territorial integration, which refers to the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities on the horizontal plane in the process of creating a homogeneous territorial political community” (Rosberg & Coleman, 1964). Thus Bose’s notion of integration along the horizontal and vertical lines as characteristic of different phases of history becomes clear. He thus unveiled the different purposes behind the characteristic designing of integration corresponding to respective epochs of history.

I therefore argue that Bose was strongly vouching for a really strong national integration in the horizontal sense of the term even at the cost of local communal feelings getting overshadowed by the over-towering presence of the central authority. Centralization of power might at times create urges for localization but such indiscreet demands were easily cut asunder by strong economic patriotism, which remains yet another core area of Bose’s theory. Territorial integrity therefore was given more importance than political integration by Bose. It was not important whether narrow disparate pockets of ethnic pluralities could claim autonomy, which in most cases got suppressed under a central authority, but what remained most important was whether the central forces

annexed a definite territory and leveled all the ensuing differences under a common fold.

Thus the kind of national integration that Bose espoused was not approaching towards differentiation but towards homogenization and subordination on the claimed territorial jurisdiction. But unfortunately this amalgamation that Bose hankered after was never found in the times of British Raj which only created much mayhem in the country. Bose contrasted their regime with the Islamic reign which despite exhibiting their sharp difference from the Hindus still worked at a uniform blending of both cultures to create a rich tradition. Bose therefore said, “With the advent of the Mohammedans, a new synthesis was gradually worked out. Though they did not accept the religion of the Hindus, they made India their home and shared in the common social life of the people - their joys and their sorrows. Through mutual cooperation, a new art and a new culture was evolved which was different from the old but which nevertheless was distinctly Indian. In architecture, painting, music - new creations were made which represented the happy blending of the two streams of culture”(Bose, 1991).

### **Conclusion**

Thus I conclude my argument saying that Bose had always vouched for a distinct form of territorial integration and had shuddered at the incident of such integration being

challenged by secessionist forces. He lamented upon the partition of the country which for him must have been the most blatant form of territorial disintegration which though worked upon long ago still haunts our national history. Such partition though thought to have created harmony have actually created a smoke screen to persuade the nation to divide the country along communal lines, the results of which are before us to shudder in terror and disdain. There had been more communal tensions in post-independent India than in the past, especially the ones in Calcutta, Noakhali, Bihar and Punjab have shown how the two nation theory can create gory after-shocks of strained territorial integration. Therefore I argue that Bose for time and again have doubted the pre-dispositions of the national leaders spear-heading the partition of the country. He seemed sunken when he reminisces the political ambiances which might have wrongfully led the nation to fall prey to this booby-trap. He wistfully longed for a free country with people conscious of their territorial rights but not getting unreasonably belligerent about it. Bose felt that the way each community along various axes of their identity fought for their individual territory being oblivious of the greater territory of which they are parts, might pose serious issues of disintegration. The much celebrated idea of secularism that was once considered the vanguard of constitution has lost much of its relevance owing to the misappropriation of territorial integration. Bose therefore argued, "In the text books of

history prescribed for our schools and colleges, till recently there had been passages with communal overtones - showing the bias of the authors for or against particular communities. Even now, the Union Government is maintaining at the taxpayers' cost two central universities - the Benaras Hindu University and the Aligarh Muslim University. Is this practice secular? Can there be a Hindu, or Muslim, or Christian University run by the Government in a secular state? "(Bose,1991).

Therefore I argue that Bose undoubtedly proposed for a revamp of the over-all construct of territory, such that it does not create a vicious circle of such problems that it actually purported to evade. The partition that objected to end communal strife actually ended in multiplying such strife by many more times paradoxically. Bose's idea of territorial integration and his ways of applying it on the nation therefore remains especially relevant in the separatist regime riding past the contemporary times that seems redolent of parochial loyalty and eroding nationality. Bose's arguments and his deliberations of territorial integration have salience especially in this era of identity politics and communal onslaught.

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## EDUCATING GIRL CHILDREN : HINDRANCES AND EFFORTS TO OVERCOME

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### **Abstract :**

*Expansion of education among all is impossible and meaningless without the development of the women folk of the country. Education is the basic requisite for ameliorating the present status of the girl children in India. After independence, equal rights for both men and women have been ensured in our constitution. In article nos. 14, 15 and 16, abolition of gender disparity and women's right to receive education, good health and economic independence have been accepted. Girls face discrimination as far as receiving educational opportunities is concerned. They may receive less care; their schooling may often be sacrificed for their labour at home and beyond. Adults frequently expect less of girls and girls also learn to expect less of them. Various studies have revealed that illiterate women have generally high levels of maternal mortality, poor nutritional status, low earning potential and little or no autonomy within the household. Educating the girls has been a high priority*

*with the government of India. Our country has consolidated its earlier educational reforms with increased resources and stronger policy commitments for uplifting the standards of education of all children, particularly girls.*

**Keywords :** education, literacy, girl children, gender, millennium goals

Education is a basic requisite for ameliorating the present status of the girl children in India. The Indian government has expressed a strong commitment towards education for all. However, India still has one of the lowest female literacy rates in Asia. As of the 2012 census, the overall literacy rate in India was 83.04% on average, the literacy rate for Indian men was 85.14% while the rate for women was only 76.46%.

This low level of literacy not only has a negative impact on women's lives, but also on their families' lives and on their country's economic development. Numerous studies show that illiterate women have generally high levels of maternal mortality, poor nutritional status, low earning potential and little autonomy within the household. A woman's lack of education also has a negative impact on the health and well being of her children.

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Education for girls has been high on national agenda since independence. Equal rights for both men and women have been ensured in our constitution. In article numbers 14, 15 and 16, abolition of gender disparity and women's rights to receive education, good health and economic independence have been accepted. Some of the important committees and commissions to cater for women's education established in the post Independence India are:

- University Education Commission, 1948
- National Committee on Women's Education, 1958
- National Council for Women's Education, 1959 and reconstructed in 1964
- Hansa Mehta Committee, 1961
- Bhaktavatsalam Committee for Women's Education, 1963
- Kothari Commission, 1964-66
- Committee on status of women, 1971-74
- National Policy of Education, 1986
- Programme of Action on National Policy of Education, 1992
- National Commission for Women, 1992
- National Perspective Plan for Women's Education, 1998-2000
- National Commission for Women and National Population Policy, 2000.

The Millennium Goals also emphasised on achievement of universal education, gender equality and empowerment of women. The Convention on the rights of the child defines basic rights of children encompassing varied needs and issues. Among these, the rights and issues that are exclusively related to girls' development are mentioned below:

● **The right to survival** - according to the United Nations Convention on the rights of the children that India ratified in 1992, all children are born with fundamental rights. Among these, the most important right is the right to survival which includes right to life, health, nutrition, name and nationality. But the fact is, innumerable and unrecorded number of girl children is killed in the womb itself. Female foeticide is rampant so much that there is shortage of girls for all the boys to get married. According to 2001 Indian census, overall male-female ratio was 927 females per 1000 males. However, the 2011 Indian census shows that there are 914 females per 1000 males.

● **The right to expression** - right to freedom in Article 19 guarantees freedom of speech and expression which enables an individual to participate in public activities. But majority of the children, mainly the girls are exploited by their elders and are not allowed to express themselves.

● **The right to protection from abuse** - in the UN CRC Article 19.1, child protection has

been defined as ‘states parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child...’. But in reality, every year nearly 500,000 girls are forced into sex trade. There are approximately 2 million child commercial sex workers between the age of 5 and 15 years and about 3.3 million between 15 and 18 years.

● **The right to protection from exploitation**

- all children have the right to be protected from violence and exploitation. Yet, millions of children worldwide from all socio-economic backgrounds, across all ages, regions and cultures suffer violence and exploitation every day. A study revealed that children are sent to work by compulsion and not by choice, mostly by parents. Poor and bonded families often ‘sell’ their daughters to contractors who promise lucrative jobs and these girls end up being employed in brothels, hotels and domestic work.

● **The right to education** - the right to education is a universal entitlement to education, recognised in the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as a human right that includes the right to free, compulsory primary education for all, an obligation to develop secondary education

accessible to all, in particular by the progressive introduction of free secondary, as well as an obligation to develop equitable access to higher education, ideally by the progressive introduction of free higher education. The right to education also includes a responsibility to provide basic education for individuals who have not completed primary education. Nearly 80% of the girls drop-out from standards I to V. Out of the 100 girls that enrol in the first year of school, only 42 reach class V.

The world now stands at the halfway point towards making the rights a reality, but results have been uneven. Though primary school-enrolment has been increased in all regions, large number of primary school-aged children is still out of school and most of them are girls. To ensure the world realises its potential to make illiteracy history, significant progress must be made to ensure gender equality.

The gender gap demonstrates that more girls than boys are kept out of school. Quality is indeed an important issue in the challenge of eradicating the gender gap in basic education. In many cases, parents with limited resources believe that the quality of education matters a lot in their decisions of whether to put or keep their daughters in school at all. For example, if parents consider that whatever their daughters are learning in the school is not safe for them, they withdraw them from the school. The quality of education is therefore, an important determinant closely associated with the state of girls’ education.

Let us now consider some of the hurdles responsible for gender inequality in education:

In the various developing countries in general and in India in particular, the girl children are born in **indifference and inferiorities**. The girls do face discrimination from the very beginning. They may receive less care, their schooling may be sacrificed for their labour at home and beyond; girls are a large proportion of invisible child workers. Where the families are very poor and cannot afford education at all, boys are treated preferentially. Often, parents simply do not think it is important to send girls to school. Adults usually expect less of girls and the girls also learn to expect less of them.

The **financial conditions** of majority of people belonging to the rural areas are so underdeveloped that it is difficult for them to make necessary arrangements for even the bare necessities of life. Therefore, the question of sending their children, that too, girl children, to school does not at all arise for them. Girls in the rural areas disproportionately suffer from hunger, disease and impoverishment. In other words, poverty is stubbornly 'feminised' in the rural areas.

It is a fact that girls in India attend primary schools roughly in the same number as boys, but the gap widens as they grow older mainly because they are married off or forced to stay at home to help with the chores. The situation is a lot worse at the upper primary level where only 40% of girls attend school. It is shocking

because out of **the school drop-outs** in 2008, 62% were girls who make up two thirds of the illiterate population aged between 15 and 24 years of age. The girls are withdrawn earlier than boys to be assigned to do various domestic duties such as drawing water, collecting fuel, cooking meals and taking care of younger siblings.

The **learning environment** is a critical dimension of quality education. A quality learning environment gives children time to think and space to create. In other words, the classrooms must be physically and psychologically conducive and safe for the children. But many a times, lack of safety and security are very obvious before the female students. A number of invisible forms of harassment and violence like making the girls do school maintenance, girls being denied of physical exercise because of scarcity of playground, sexual harassment etc. are not uncommon.

**Lack of sanitation** is also a big problem. Only 72.16% of all schools in India have separate girls' toilet and the figure for primary schools stands at 65.41% (according to DISE 2011-12). It is evident that the absence of safe and separate girls' toilet contributes towards the poor attendance of the girls in the school.

**Gender bias in the curriculum** is a major and critical issue of quality education for girls. Curriculum should be relevant and meaningful to both boys and girls. But in reality, girls may find the content and

illustrations contained in the curriculum difficult. In the textbooks it is often found that girls are depicted as mere home makers, wives and mothers. Sometimes they are even shown as non-achievers, passive, timid, dependent, meek and mild whereas boys are shown as high achievers, courageous, bold and active participants. Therefore significant changes are necessary in the curriculum of women particularly at the stage of secondary and higher education.

The education of the girl child is also too often cut short by **early marriage**. Although child marriage is prohibited by law, it is still prevalent in the rural areas of India. Particularly, early marriage in places like Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Rajasthan has been responsible for depriving girls from attending schools. Studies reveal that most of the girls who have been married at premature age find it difficult, rather impossible to continue their studies after marriage due to economic constraint, non-cooperating attitude of their husbands and in-laws, early motherhood and rigorous domestic responsibilities.

Processes that support quality education for all include well-trained teachers, well-managed, child friendly and gender-fair classrooms, skill based and child centric methods, skilful facilitation of learning and use of suitable technologies. Girls' **learning aptitude** may be different from boys, yet, they do not find due care and respect to think,

create and learn. Within the same classroom, boys and girls have different and unequal learning experiences. Science and technology based subjects may be assigned to the boys while domestic, nonprofessional subjects may be assigned to the girls.

Two-thirds of the world's adult illiterates are women. The scenario has not changed in the last 20 years and it is a fact that this ratio will remain the same by 2015 (according to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics). This indicates that the world is going to miss out on a critical target on gender equality which has been highlighted by both the Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

In order to eradicate female illiteracy some necessary measures can be adopted:

#### **Girls' education : a smart investment-**

- Amount of investment in education is a major contributor towards the country's economy. Educating girls is the most powerful and effective way to address global poverty. Hence the government should pay special attention to give women's' education in their development programmes.
- A child with starved stomach cannot learn anything. Since most of the rural parents are not able to manage the bare necessities of life, the question of sending their children does not arise for them. Thus it is important that our government should show more responsibility to uplift the economic condition of the rural community.

- The community should be involved to value girls' education. The adults and parents should be made aware that educated girls also can make money like boys. At the same time, the guardians should be convinced that the aim of education is not only to obtain jobs, but education helps the girls to get a harmonious personality. Even if they have to take care of their domestic chores after their marriages, education would directly lead to improved family health, economic growth for the family, as well as lower rate of child mortality and malnutrition.

- The learning environment should be made joyful. Strict action should be taken to protect the girls from any sort of abuse with the help of rigorous and careful monitoring. The toilets should be kept hygienic, safe and secured for the girls. The service conditions of the women teachers should be made more liberal and lucrative so that more and more educated women are attracted towards teaching as a profession.

- Curriculum must be remodelled to include illustrations, stories and images of empowered women. In the course content of different subjects, girls must find place in equal proportion to the boys. Curriculum must emphasise life-skill training and knowledge relevant to the learners, in general, to the girls, in particular. Topics like women's rights, gender sensitivity, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS prevention, family life and women's participation in community affairs must be included in the curriculum.

- Literacy programmes may be customised for adult females to suit their exclusive context, vulnerabilities and needs. More appropriate strategies and institutional mechanisms are required to be developed to reach out to adult female illiterates, particularly disadvantaged women in poor, remote, ethnic, disaster-prone and war-affected regions.

- Part time education facilities (such as, night schools) should be made available for the girls who work as domestic helps, in the factories or in the fields. Sunday schools (found in England) also may be established so that the working women can take the opportunity to attend schools on their holidays. Special crèche may be arranged for looking after their children.

- Preventing early marriage and promoting girls' education is quite a tough task but if proper measures are adopted, a satisfactory solution to this stinging problem can be found. Parents should be convinced that girls are not burden, rather they can provide equal, rather more support to their families in comparison to the boys. Some compensatory assistance (as already has been introduced by both state and central governments) may be given to parents for sparing their daughters for education. The community with the help of the government and mass media should be involved to take strict steps to stop early marriages and to value girls' education.

According to Swami Vivekananda, 'There is no hope of rise for that family or country where there is no education of women, where they live in sadness.' In order to develop the nation, men and women should be treated equally. Emerging Indian society demands challenging roles on the part of its female population and it is only education which empowers them to take control of their lives. It helps them to overcome oppressive customs and traditions which throttle their needs, aspirations and rights. Education is the key which provides them with greater opportunities and choices not only to improve the quality of their own lives but also that of their families. Finally, our society should remember that "For full development of human resources, the improvement of human being and for moulding the character of children during the most impressionable years of infancy, the education of women is of great importance than of men"- (Kothari Commission - 1964 – 66).

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READING NOVELS AFTER 9/11 : RESISTING THE EMPIRE IN  
MOHSIN HAMID'S *THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST*

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**Abstract :**

*The horrifying turn of events during Holocaust made Theodor Adorno wonder if we could any longer write poetry after Auschwitz. Poetry attempts to show what is true and beautiful in human creativity but the darkness inherent in our minds that came to the fore in the concentration camps, negates the possibility of any transcendental and essential truth. Death was reduced to an administrative decision as man was diminished to a specimen. Fifty years after Auschwitz the world was shocked by the horrors of 9/11 and its gruesome aftermath. The images of the torn towers at the Ground Zero and the heap of human bodies at the prison of Abu Ghraib assailed our faith in the grand narrative of civilisation—a gradual evolution of a better species. As the contemporary novelists all over the world tried to encounter the trauma of the meaningless deaths and violation of human dignity, they realised that the act of writing*

*and reading could no longer be the same. Every literary activity would have to be put under the ambit of political negotiations with a reality that is rooted both in the factual and the virtual. Thus to write would be to restructure the world around us.*

*Of the several perspectives of looking at the post 9/11 novels, the paper shall firstly try to focus on the concept of nation that has evolved through these novels. With the emergence of the global society, the power dynamics of the world has changed. Instead of nation-states, limited by its geographical reality we now have the Empire with its omnipresent virtual domination. Thus, as the world witnesses the emergence of multicultural societies—bonhomie between various cultures, the conflict zones also multiply, till nation itself becomes a zone of conflict.*

*Secondly, the paper shall argue how the post 9/11 novels have changed their narrative technique by becoming more direct in describing the experiences of violence and trauma. A close study of Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* would reveal how the typical dreams of an emigrant in USA suffer a severe jolt after the events of 9/11. It is not simply a heightened sense of historical*

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*reality that disturbs the protagonist of the novel, but a severe identity crisis that debars him from accepting the values of a nation that otherwise was his utopia. The conflict here is not constricted to a factual reality but has become a metaphysical query into the nature of human identity.*

*Finally, the paper shall venture to see if the post 9/11 novels could reiterate the importance of literature as a vehicle of protest by consciously denying the inevitable reality and escaping into the imaginary world of essence.*

**Keywords :** resistance, post 9/11, novels, nation, Mohsin Hamid, Empire.

All art is at once surface and symbol. Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril. Those who read the symbol do so at their peril. It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors. Diversity of opinion about a work of art shows that the work is new, complex, and vital. (Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*)

Purpose of art is the matter of an age-old debate that has not yet lost its critical edge even in the modern times. Art should teach, it must not only entertain, but at the same time, philosophers suggest that the teachings of art must not be entirely dull; it should be such that it can retain the interest of its readers or audience. For a long time art attempted to strike a perfect balance between morality and amusement. However, as the importance of

art changes with time, so does its function and nature. The cave men who would draw in the stone walls and the postliterate<sup>1</sup> youth who would draw in his smart phone—both use art which are incomprehensibly different from one another in their form and function. Yet, in spite of all the differences, the art is essentially same in all ages: it is an expression of the artist, only the artist and the art of representing that expression change every time.

Questions are also raised about the ability and necessity of art to represent reality. How far should we believe in a form of expression that is based on fiction and make-belief? Those who argue against the principle that believes that fantasy is art would point out that the characters in the novels are the figments of the writer's imagination, the situations are imagined, and therefore, the solutions are contrived: they do not happen in real life. However, many forms of art thrive on this unreality: Bollywood films, for instance. Therefore, the question on the basis of which the argument of the paper would lie is if reality itself is not an act of representation. Many Americans, who had switched on their televisions on the morning of 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2001, thought that the image of the twin towers crumbling down was a fictitious video, some hoax, or a horror film. After that event, the American security advisors, while making an estimate of the possible future attacks on their country, had actually sought the help of

the Hollywood disaster film directors, who were asked to imagine greater disasters scenarios. The imaginative quality for which the art work is never accepted as wholly truthful is perhaps present in every factual 'representation', for example annals, social theories, history, political treatises, every day news bulletin, and so on. Fiction, in the postmodern universe is not a matter of choice; it has an obligatory presence in everything around us. Thus, my first proposition is that fictions and facts are irredeemably intertwined; art is not the only one to be blamed for being fictitious.

No art stems out of the fantastic. It has strong connection with the reality that it represents. Thus, art need not be overtly expressive about the social order, for in its very structure, it would have imbibed the societal conditions<sup>2</sup>. The core of the matter now lies on determining the nature of relationship between art and society. Here also, one needs to be careful: to say that art is a product of the society is to reduce art to an object and let it enter into the modes of production<sup>3</sup>, where the price of anything is decided by its utility. Thus reified, art could never be true to its artistic spirit. Again, art, as we have already seen could not reject the social forces altogether of which it is composed. Hence, our second proposition, the essence of art lies in its power to resist the forces of production. To quote Theodor Adorno,

Art will live on only as long as it has the power to resist society. If it refuses to objectify itself, it becomes a commodity. What it contributes to society is not some directly communicable content but something more mediate, i.e., resistance. Resistance reproduces social development in aesthetic terms without directly imitating it. (Adorno [1970] 242)

Adorno's concept of resistance of art stems from his reaction to the horror and trauma of Auschwitz. In his famous essay, 'Meditations on Metaphysics: After Auschwitz', he had confirmed that the abstract business of philosophy is embedded in real social relations. Metaphysics fails, as its transcendental quality is taken away from it. The immutable is no longer truth, and the mobile, transitory can no longer be seen as appearance. The incidents of Auschwitz, which would be a permanent mark in the history of mankind, cannot be taken as true expression of human development. Thus, writing poetry after Holocaust would no longer be the same. Similarly perhaps, writing literature would be a more difficult task after the horrors of 9/11 or the Abu Ghraib prison.

That art should not necessarily be social, must not lead to the conclusion that art is an expression of ataraxia: a serene calmness, which can be related to our modern individualistic notion: 'how does it affect me?' Art is not an escape. It is difficult to point out then how art can express the social condition

yet does not become a part of it. Adorno envisions this quality of art in its ability to resist, while Jameson moves to the concept of allegory and Gramsci to organic intellectuals. Resistance to be reduced to a mere production and assessed by its quality to be of utility can be achieved through the form of art. Thus Adorno speaks of Kafka's epic style, where the bizarre is normal as it reflects the social reality. He opines that the artistic subject is essentially social, and the job of the artist is to save it from the repressive collectivism of the modern world, which she shall achieve by not conforming to the social conventions and control that is exerted by language, culture and other institutions. Jameson, speaks of a particular form of allegory<sup>4</sup>, whose 'polysemiotic' nature would inhibit it from being easily assimilated into the social conditioning. He introduces the concept of national allegories, where the public-private divide, a typical capitalist cultural practice is rejected. Jameson believed that such artistic ability is an offspring of an alternative economic system<sup>5</sup>, which in turn is able to infuse new qualities in the 'predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel' (319). The final aspect of this view of art can be drawn from Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectuals, which will help us to understand the duty of the artist in advocating this art. In his letter to his sister-in-Law, Tatiana, Gramsci first said that he wanted to extend the notion of the intellectuals. In his *Prison Notebooks*,

he commented that every society has its own set of intellectuals, the political and cultural intermediaries, who are entrusted to maintain and reproduce a given economic and social order, or the hegemonic practices. If the working class needs to take control of the productive system, then it must have its own set of intellectuals. He used the word 'organic' in order to signify a break from the age-old labour division between the mental and manual labours. This intellectual community will be firmly rooted in their class background, and educated in such a way that they can bridge the gap between the leader and the led, ideology and praxis.

It is important for the present study to see art as a means of resistance for specific reasons. Firstly, after the events of 9/11, we have come to see a total change in the ideological universe of man. Francis Fukuyama had believed that we had come to the end of history for the human society has achieved the highest form of evolution through capitalism till perhaps the day when the two planes smashed the two towers down. It was realised by many that the world would not be the same again, and this event would be the interregnum<sup>6</sup>, till a total paradigmatic change takes place in every aspect of human knowledge and understanding. In such a context the function of art has to be refurbished. Secondly, art has the potential to voice the 'manyness<sup>7</sup>' in a society, that refers to the disparate economic, political, and

cultural locale of the people it represents. Once again, just by showing people of different backgrounds, it cannot achieve this multiplicity. Multiplicity has to be achieved through a thorough and vigorous restructuring of the existing norms. Thirdly, in the age when the state power is propagating a holistic control over every individual and collective domain<sup>8</sup>, art has the ability to show to us the exact nature of the control and also its effect on our daily lives. Thus, the simple tale of people's lives is not a naïve tale at all; it conceals within it the various social parameters. To quote Kathy Acker, 'Literature is that which denounces and slashes apart the repressing machine at the level of the signified.' (P 12) Literature is a method to interrogate the metanarratives of the society.

Though Acker was speaking about the patriarchy, my study would aim at interrogating the notion of the nation-state in the post-global context and the use of the concept of conflict in understanding the contemporary political scenario. The rhetoric of conflict plays an important role in shaping the nature and content of the post 9/11 novels. Contemporary critics like Richard Gray and Leerom Medovoi have brought these novels together and marked them as a separate genre emerging after the crisis. These novels are neither American nor postcolonial but instead they reflect a more complex reality that is occasioned by a total change in the power dynamics of the world. Before going into the

details of our novel, I would like to discuss briefly the reason and nature of this socio-political change that has questioned the conventional structure of the nation-states.

The unprecedented advancement of technology and science has in many ways changed the way in which the nation-state used to perform. Along with great economic changes that the world witnessed after globalization, the easy mobility of labour has ultimately resulted into the multicultural society, where the nation-state has to accept the outsiders for its own survival. As the borders become more porous, the traditional function of the State<sup>9</sup>, i.e., to protect its boundary, increase its territory suddenly becomes redundant. Thus, the state loses its imperial function and its economic sovereignty is compromised with the opening of the market to international competition. The decline of the sovereignty has led to the shift of the power to a different political body that has an international scope of operation. This global order is identified by Michel Hardt and Antonio Negri as the Empire, which fills up the vacuum and replaces the old sovereign power of the state. Now, there is no reason to believe that this power of the Empire is exerted by a transnational organization like the UN or IMF or by the powerful countries like the USA or China. The commanding authority is invisible yet is present in every field of modern human activity, like politics, economics, culture or language. It is a global

order, drawing its verve from the capitalism of the postmodern age<sup>10</sup>. Negri argues that at the beginning such a supranational body was juridical in scope and nature and fostered a Romantic dream of the war-torn international (read European) community that sought to organize humanity under 'the supreme ethical idea'. However, over the years, being subjected to the variations of the capitalist mode of production that in itself adjusted to the changing economic and political patterns of globalization, the structure, logic, and nature of the Empire have undergone complete transformation. Instead of several contending sources of authority, the new ecological condition requires 'a single power that overdetermines them all, structures them in a unitary way and treats them under one common notion of right that is decidedly postcolonial and postimperialist' (Negri, 9). This Empire is exhaustive in nature: it is all-pervasive in terms of space for it 'envelopes the entire space of what it considers civilization, a boundless, universal space' (ibid, 11); it is all-consuming in terms of time for the 'Empire exhausts historical time, suspends history, and summons the past and the future within its own ethical border' (ibid, 11). Finally, it is justified in itself for its intention to resolve all conflicts and lead to peace, and therefore it is 'permanent, eternal and necessary' (ibid, 11). Thus, one may argue that this Empire is not formed on the basis of force, or the whims of a dictator or totalitarian ruler, but on the tremendous

moral and ethical necessity of the human society to serve to the right cause and establishment of peace. To quote Negri again: 'all conflicts, all crises and all dissensions effectively push forward the process of integration and by the same measure call for more central authority.' (P14) The Empire is thus a postmodern phenomenon, because though seemingly it advocates the dissipation of power through various channels, it ultimately controls the entire process from the determining position of the panopticon. The empire is virtual; it is governance without government. It draws its strength from its apparent invisibility that underscores its omnipresence. One can draw a parallel between the concept of the Empire and Richard Gray's concept of 'universal nation', which he uses to describe the post 9/11 America. America is not just a nation but an identity that is composed and shaped by the Empire.

Thus, it follows that these post 9/11 novels are strictly not American novels, rather we may borrow the term used by Leerom Medovoi and call them a part of the world-system literature. Professor Medovoi identifies that after the 9/11 the literature has definitely taken a more international turn: 'One important trend in American literary scholarship since 9/11 has been precisely this turn from the study of a national literature to the literature of an empire' (P 649). Accordingly, these 'literatures of the

American imperium' (ibid, P 650) are different from other postcolonial writings for they are replete with a consciousness that does not strictly adhere to any one nation or culture but traverses a wide spatial range along with their migrant authors or characters—Medovoi succinctly puts it as a reading of the 'geopolitical unconscious' (ibid, P 650). This literature does not simply represent the multiplicity of global locales in the texts but rather, speaks about the politics of rearrangement of power and wealth, logics of capital and territory, in the age of globalization :

World-system literature is not simply literature that maps the scales and coordinates of the globe for us as might a chart of gross domestic products, oil consumption rates, or ballistic missiles. Rather, it is a literature that maps the dynamics of the system as interplay of subject and object—power and desire, force and affect—as they are propelled by the spatial dialectics of territory and capital. (Medovoi, 657)

Such literature attempts a re-narration of both the global and local histories from a very different perspective and this is how *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* strikes its readers. America to young Changez strikes as the seat of power and wealth and unequalled material advancement, a chance to reclaim the status that his family has lost in Pakistan. His family was not poor but has gradually lost their

prosperity owing to the steady deflation of the value of money and the hardship faced by the professionals over the years. So, as Changez says, his grandfather could not afford what his father could, and his father could not afford what *his* father could, and when time came to send him to college, 'the money simply was not there' (P 10)<sup>11</sup>. Yet their class-consciousness did not decline so rapidly and they retained the prestigious club membership, showed disdain towards the rising class of entrepreneurs. Coming from such a family background it is easy to understand that Changez' academic brilliance was seen as a means to procure a good job with steady income so that he could restore things to their former status. So he came to America, and to Princeton University, where he hobnobbed with the elite of a rich country, 'hungry' for success. He maintained his public persona of a 'young prince, generous and carefree' (P11), whereas in reality he held down three jobs as quietly as possible and prepared for his studies throughout the night. It is this shame and desperation that helps him win his position at Underwood Samson, a renowned valuation firm. In the first meeting, he struck the right chord in his interviewer and future mentor Jim who had come from a similar economic background. His rise in this company is fast and meteoric. At the same time he also seems to find some satisfaction in his love with his fragile girlfriend Erica. All seems to go well, Changez find himself being successfully integrated to his job and

love and largely to America till the morning of the 11th of September. At the sight of the falling towers at first he feels a strange sense of elation. His identity is severely questioned by the security personnel at the airport. He gradually feels alienated from both his colleagues and Erica and made to become growingly conscious of his 'other' identity. He feels disturbed by the impending threat of war by the US and the precarious nature of the Indo-Pak relationship at that juncture that also increases the volatility of the political condition of his country. His work life suffers first. His visit to Valparaiso in Chile signals the end of his promising career. As it was the case of the music-business in Manila, in Valparaiso the book-selling firm of Juan-Bautista was under the threat of Underwood Samson's evaluation process that would definitely lead to an end of his 'not-so-profitable' business. Faced by this threat Juan-Bautista seems to be unflinching and adamant. True to his name, he finds the discord lurking in Changez's heart and baptizes him to a new understanding. Taking him out on a lunch he asks Changez to compare his work at the firm with that of the janissaries in the Medieval Ottoman Empire. Janissaries were Christian boys captured at a young age and trained to become loyal soldiers of the Muslim army who were the greatest force at that time. Changez realizes the analogy perfectly well; he was the

...modern day janissary, a servant of the American empire at a time when it was

invading a country with a kinship to mine and was perhaps even colluding to ensure that my own country faced the threat of war. Of course I was struggling! Of course I felt torn! I had thrown in my lot with men of Underwood Samson, with the officers of the empire, when all along I was predisposed to feel compassion for those, like Juan Bautista, whose lives the empire thought nothing of overturning for its own gain. (152)

He refuses to work any further and as a consequence puts an end to his career. At the same time, Erica's mental condition deteriorates and she is institutionalized. One day, before he was leaving America, Changez goes to the institute to find out that Erica has suddenly disappeared, probably has committed suicide. He comes back to Pakistan. He joins a university and supports radical movements, perhaps even fomenting terrorist acts.

There is a constant danger of reading the novel as a political allegory which I would consciously try to avoid for I believe that though the act of writing is a political act nevertheless it is not only a political act and there is every scope of aesthetic complications that should not be forgotten. It is easy to see how America appears to young Changez as the land of opportunity and material progress. His job at Underwood Samson, a name which can be abbreviated to US (Medovoi 646), is a sure road to that success that he eventually

leaves. At the same time his relationship with Erica, a name which can be seen as a shortening of America (Medovoi 646) represents the complexity of his relation with the country that finally betrays his trust by turning him into a janissary. But the novel is not a mere bi-national allegory or an inversion of the immigrant narrative that shows the immigrant's failure of inclusion into a foreign culture; it is a study of the Empire and its effect on a human being who gradually sees how his private life is gradually engulfed by the overwhelming presence of the Empire.

What first struck Changez was the multi-ethnicity of New York. It creates no borders among nations, people or colour. It was not a city in a country; it was the capital city of a global empire that honed the best from the entire world into its ambit. Like Lahore, it was 'democratically urban', a place where a man in a four-wheeler is forced to get down and become a part of the crowd. Thus,

...for me moving to New York felt—so unexpectedly—like coming home. But there were other reasons as well: the fact that Urdu was spoken by taxi-cab drivers; the presence, only two blocks away from my East Village apartment, of a samosa-and-chana serving establishment called the Pak-Punjab Deli; the coincidence of crossing Fifth Avenue during a parade and hearing, from loudspeakers mounted on the South-Asian Gay and Lesbian Association float, a song to which I had danced at my cousin's wedding. (33)

In the subway his skin colour would fall in the middle of the section and tourists asked him for direction. He was never an American, but he could immediately become a New Yorker. It was his merit that gave him place in the prestigious Underwood Samson. He stopped thinking of himself as a Pakistani, representing a civilization that had prospered on the banks of the Indus centuries before the West was born, but now strangely lagging behind due to the inscrutable ways of history. He was now an Underwood Samson trainee. It is based on meritocracy—only the best candidates from the best schools were brought in, tested regularly and finally recruited. When Changez looks at his fellow trainees he is greeted by Wainwright, who imitated Van Kilmer in *Top Gun*, a well-known Hollywood film and whispered to him the famous lines from the movie. Changez is not unfamiliar to this code of language and replies back. He is indeed at home.

Changez is gradually pulled into this great whirlwind of success. What he does not realise at this point that he is becoming a part of this giant machinery of the capital that always flow from the powerless to the powerful. It is capital which is meritocratic. It has no favourites; it flows to the person who can promise greater return. It is not inclusive in nature. Parallel to Changez's story is the story of Jim who has come from a middle-class agricultural family. He was the first from his family to come to a college and had to



self-finance his study by working at different places. He always felt out of place in Princeton, among the elite class of students. But like Changez found his footing because the capital fosters merit, Jim also survived because of his efficiencies. The vision of America that his father's generation nurtured was different from his own. They were manufacturers. They lived and died making things with their hands. But the country shifted from manufacturing to service, a change which perhaps have thrown out many from the circle of prosperity. Jim reflects to Changez:

The economy is an animal...It evolves. First it needed muscle. Now all the blood it could spare was rushing to its brain. That's where I wanted to be. In finance. And that's where *you* are. You're blood brought from some part of the body that the species doesn't need anymore. The tailbone. Like me....Most people don't recognize that....They try to resist change. Power comes from *becoming* change. (97)

There are two aspects of this argument which I would like to underscore: first, it legitimizes the atrophy of a third world (not the political third world, but a third world is also there within the empire from which Jim has emerged, 'the tailbone'). Investing in the empire both Jim and Changez was disinvesting themselves from their roots/their own identity. And secondly, the process of becoming the change is not an easy one. The force can discard the very group it has chosen

over the wasted one. Changez was needed till his ethnicity was not a threat but after the 9/11 things changed again, and this time it did not favour Changez for economic prosperity is wedded to security issues. The Empire would definitely try to protect itself from threats of any kind. The attack on the twin towers has a significant symbolic function; it is a destruction of this very citadel of economic and political power that defines this Empire. It suddenly changes the city of Changez's success:

'The metaphorical blood flow of finance associated with the global city now give way to a military exercise of power, a redirection of capital that will shed real blood' (Medovoi, 651). Changez recounts how the national space reclaims the global city:

Your country's flag invaded New York after the attacks; it was everywhere. They all seem to proclaim: *We are America*—not New York, which, in my opinion, means something quite different—*the mightiest civilization the world has ever known; you have slighted us; beware our wrath.* (79)

The ethnic bonhomie that was flirted for the need of the capital is changed to a rigid homogenization of identity to which no Changez can ever conform. His dissociation with the empire begins and so begins his search for a new self.

Changez's failure is best realised in a particular instance in his relation to Erica. I have already suggested as to why I shall not see the characters from an allegorical

viewpoint but it is true that the private relationships parallel the individual's relationships with the historical and political forces, particularly in the case of the novels emerging from this conflict zone or conflict times, as Jameson spoke about the political allegory of the third world literature. In this novel, Erica and Changez's story acts as a subplot that subtly adds contours to the events of the main plot. Changez's relation to Erica, a representative of the American elite class, is definitely a mark of his ascendancy in the social rung and inclusion into a different culture. But Erica was never totally his. She was constantly fighting her loss of her boyfriend Chris and in her conversation with Changez she always mourned her loss. This constant mourning stands in the way of the consummation of their relationship. Just after America has declared war on Afghanistan causing tremendous turmoil and anger in Changez, he meets Erica. In this meeting he tries to take their relation forward to which Erica could not condescend. 'Are you missing Chris?' to Changez's question she nods. "'Then pretend...pretend I am him.' I do not know why I said it; I felt overcome and it seemed, suddenly, a possible way forward." (105) That night Changez might have gained the long-desired physical proximity but this was his final and pathetic attempt to approximate the identity that was not his. He could never be the American like Chris and Erica could never whole-heartedly support his romantic exploits. This incident closes all the

avenues leading to his inclusion and becomes conscious of the depth of his self-deception :

I felt at once both satiated and ashamed.  
My satiation was understandable to me; my shame was more confusing. Perhaps, by taking on the persona of another, I had diminished myself in my own eyes; perhaps I was humiliated by the continuing dominance, in the strange romantic triangle of which I found myself a part, of my dead rival... (106)

Changez now runs the danger of becoming the mimicry of Chris. Chris's identity is framed entirely by a longing for the past which is best recounted by the picture he painted<sup>12</sup>. The picture depicted a tropical island with a steep volcano which had a serene lake in its crater. The lake contained a small island. The idea of an island within another island, gave it sense of being sheltered and calm. The picture was inspired by one of Tintin's comics, *Flight 714*. The picture becomes symbolic of America's glorious past.

This nostalgia for a glorious past is translated into Erica's mourning for her boyfriend and inability to accept the proposal of Ahmed. I would not go as far as to suggest that Ahmed, a Muslim, represents the emerging world, whereas Chris represents Christianity (Medovoi 656-7), and extending such argument we might say that Erica's final disappearance suggests the author's representation of an inglorious future for America. Instead, Changez's return from

America can be best explained as a denial to be appropriated by the Empire that uses and abuses its citizens as mere tools to forwarding its survival. Whether he becomes a supporter of an Islamic movement and thereby becomes tool for another hegemon is not under the purview of this novel. Hamid has kept the end open and I believe that it is the best to do. Changez foregoes the identity of a janissary, reclaims his personal life. Erica reclaims her life as well by a total dissolution and disappearance. She also refuses to let her mind be a reservoir of nostalgia for nostalgia is also an ideological enterprise. Thus, I would like to read a note of protest in her suicide.

I have begun my paper by quoting Oscar Wilde, which said that art can operate both at the surface and deeper level. Art may look unsuspecting of any change but within it may have approaches to resist the forces of the state coercion. It is this power of art that could counter the forces of the totalitarian Empire that the world is being reduced to. Art may not be able to alter the economic parameters of any society but it may indeed influence the ideological structures which may ultimately cause significant changes in the holistic patterns of the society.

**Notes :**

<sup>1</sup> Postliterate generation refers to the modern tech-savvy people who can read but refuses to do so for their obsession with the other multimedia forms through which they are able to gather information in alternative forms like

the audio-book, radio, video games, cinema and so on.

<sup>2</sup> The subject matter of any art work is unconditionally determined by the society. What remains in the hand of the individual writer is perhaps its form, through which he can enter into a negotiation with his surroundings. This point is elaborated further in the later part of the essay.

<sup>3</sup> By mode of production I would like to refer to the capitalist mode of production where the ultimate production is that of money as a commodity. The economists would refer to the model as M-C-M, i.e., money is transferred to the commodity only to generate more money. This is what Marx meant by capital accumulation and the system that would ensure this production is referred as the mode of production. In this system, every object would be changed into a commodity to further increase the capital. Such economic pattern would be able to survive only because of the necessary cultural assistance, which in turn is formulated by different social forces. Thus, in such a viewpoint, economy is definitely the essence of every cultural or political change of the society. Art can very well be a part of this system, a very example of it is perhaps the advertisements. However, art might not be so overtly propagandist; its very content can be in accordance with this social pattern.

<sup>4</sup> Jameson spoke highly of the third world literature, which he believed was being able to project this resistance for the third world

itself is engaged in a deadly battle against the first world culture, which tries to homogenize any difference through its political and economic ventures, like colonization.

<sup>5</sup> Jameson speaks of two alternative systems to western capitalism: primitive, tribal society and Asiatic mode of production. (P319)

<sup>6</sup> Interregnum refers to the period when one set of myths become obsolete and a new set is not yet fashioned.

<sup>7</sup> I came upon this term in the writing of Y.T. Vinayaraj in his essay titled, 'Reconfiguring Christian Unity: Towards an Ecumenism of "Manyness". He writes :... "manyness" does not promote an anarchical pluralism; rather it is an experience of multiplicity which cannot be subtracted to one. Deleuze and Guattari speak about a "pure multiplicity which cannot be derived from the One, but it is something from which One is always subtracted." They call it as rhizome.... The logic of manyness or multiplicity dismantles the logic of "Oneness"... (P122)

<sup>8</sup> The modern state has a more humane face and easy accessibility, but that does not prove that it has made any compromise with its control. The nature of power has changed of course; it is now more ideological than military. Michel Foucault has made us aware of the politics of the welfare State.

<sup>9</sup> State for me is the geopolitical realization of nationalism. It tends to legalize, institutionalize and moralize its control over the people who had believed in their common ancestry in the form of a national identity.

<sup>10</sup> Negri has pointed out that the capitalism of the postmodern age is different from the capitalism of the industrial society because both the nature of the workforce and labor have changed due to globalization.

<sup>11</sup> All the references to the text are made to the same edition listed below.

<sup>12</sup> There is a worth-noting analysis by Leerom Medovoi. The picture was drawn by Chris himself, inspired by the famous Tintin comics *Flight 714*. The comic strips by Belgian George Remí presents a Eurocentric world view through its central character's adventurous exploits in different parts of the world. In this particular work, published in 1968, during the Vietnam War, he shows his belief in the American ascendancy and in the emergence of a New World Order. This particular incident of history has been defined as a 'signal crisis of the US hegemony, very similar to that of 9/11. A signal crisis is defined as revelation of the unsustainability of any empire's indefinite period of economic and military supremacy. 'Any such period of crisis is followed by a period an apparent hegemonic restoration that is nonetheless the time of transition, when the crack within the hegemon's power can be discerned through

its liquefaction into finance, and the flow of its capital toward emergent powers' (Medovoi 656). Chris's sketch of a peaceful island 'wonderfully sheltered' from the brewing storm outside, can be interpreted as the empire's nostalgia for a strong and secured past, which it is being denied of in the present economic and political situation. However, the reference to aircrafts in the connection to this picture has an ironic touch that any reader would understand.

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# PERCEIVED WORK ENVIRONMENT AND ACCEPTED COPING MECHANISM. A STUDY ON I.T. EMPLOYEES

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## **Abstract :**

*Information technology (I.T.) is playing a crucial role in today's socio- economic scenario in India and in global economy as a whole. I.T. companies have a distinct pattern of work environment. Every year a host of youngsters after getting some specialized degree and training in this area get appointed in many I.T. companies across the nation. Work load, long hours at work, pressure to meet deadlines, adjusting in a competitive work environment, threat of downsizing, etc. causes occupational stress. Present study aimed to find out the perception of employees regarding the work environment and various coping mechanisms adopted by them to deal with occupational stress depending upon the gender difference and duration of service. A sample of 60 individuals both males and females from some eminent I.T. companies of Kolkata city was studied. Data were collected using a General Information Schedule, Perceived Work Environment Questionnaire*

*and Accepted Coping Mechanisms Questionnaire.*

*The study revealed that there was no significant mean difference between male and female employees with varied duration of service regarding the perception of the work environment and coping mechanisms.*

**Keywords :** information technology, work environment, occupational stress, perception, coping mechanisms.

Information Technology (IT) is playing a crucial role now a days in the contemporary society and on global economy as a whole. Information Technology is a technology used to store, manipulate, distribute or create information. The technology is any mechanism capable of processing this data. UNESCO defines IT as, "Scientific, technological and engineering disciplines and the management techniques used in information handling and processing information, their interaction with man and machine and associated social, economic and cultural matters."

I.T. industries have a distinct pattern of work culture and work environment as well. Work environment can be defined as the

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surroundings at work place. Physical work environment comprises of the physical working conditions like sitting arrangements, air, temperature, humidity, noise level, parking facility, transport, child care facility, etc. On the other hand, work environment has psychological sphere which is comprised of interactions with co-workers, boss and employee relationship, acceptance by others at work, job satisfaction, job involvement, compulsion for the completion of project within specified time limit etc. Individual performance in work depends on the distinct individualistic perception of work related factors to a large extent. The values, beliefs, historical and social experiences of the employee influence the interaction with work and thus influence performance of the person (Bell, 2008). Perception is a part of life, even if an individual is not aware of the fact that he is applying it, it occurs. Perception works like a two- way mirror. Since, most of the working people spend about one third of their lives at work, perception matters a great deal in the work environment as well. Perception at work does not just refer to persona, it pertains to an environment also. In any particular situation two different people perceive the same situational factors in different ways and because of that they respond differently. Person at work can have a significant impact on the level of satisfaction, as well as the individual's emotional well being. One cannot choose the personalities of whom one works with. But, constantly this perception of surroundings

including other co-workers, supervisors and physical environment influence the performance of the individual. So, at the workplace and also coming back home this perception influence the broader spectrum of an individual's life to a great extent. High expectations and low control over situations at work place causes more strain on any individual. Various work environments give birth to immense amount of occupational stress among those professionals. Researches conducted by many researchers have reported that employees in this field perceive that they are less paid than they worth. An employee's gender can illustrate difference in perception related to organizational structure, problem solving styles and view of work related conflicts. According to the book "Managing in the Age of Change: Essential Skills to Manage Today's Workforce" by Sophie Hahn and Anne Litwin men and women have distinct patterns of perception of the working style as well. Women prefer collaborative work environment where everyone works as a part of a whole and on the other hand men perceives that work environment should be independent in nature sans any assistance of others. Research done by Karad C.A. of Brihan Maharashtra College of Commerce reveals that most of the IT sector employees are undergoing some or other kind of job stress due to different work related factors. These jobs often come with a fair share of problems, such as work pressure, extended working times, over arching goals, non supportive work environments etc. Computer

and communications revolutions have made companies more efficient and productive than ever before. This boon in productivity however, has caused higher expectations and greater competition, putting more stress on the employee (Primm, 2005).

To avoid stressful conditions, change it or learn to cope with it, knowledge about stress, physiological fitness, time management, assertiveness, readjusting life goals, relaxation is necessary. Coping refers to the conscious efforts of the individual expended to solve problems and seeking to master, minimize or tolerate stress. Different individual handles this burden in different manners, emotion focused or problem focused depending on different situations.

The study aims at exploring the relation between male and female employees' distinct perceiving style regarding the working ambience. Another important fact to be studied is whether there is any difference between accepted coping mechanisms among male and female employees in this sector.

## **METHOD :**

### **Sample :**

Study was done on 60 individuals (30 males and 30 females) having at least degree of graduation of 21-30 years age from eminent I.T. companies of Kolkata city. Respondents were at least graduates and engaged in service for minimum 1 year. A general information schedule, Perceived work environment questionnaire and Accepted coping

mechanisms questionnaire were administered on them. Willing individuals were instructed properly.

### **Tools Used :**

1. General Information Schedule: It consists of items like name, address, age, gender, educational qualification, designation, monthly income, family type, marital status, duration of service, working hours etc.
2. Perceived Work Environment Questionnaire (PWEQ): It consists of thirty statements answerable in a four point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree where high score indicates good and favorable attitude towards work environment and vice- versa. Odd-even split half reliability is 0.83.
3. Accepted Coping Mechanisms Questionnaire (ACMQ): It consists of thirty statements answerable in a four point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree where high score indicates positive ways of coping and vice- versa. Odd-even split half reliability is 0.81.

### **Data Collection and Analysis :**

The subjects were selected in the sample according to the specific criteria i.e. equal sex ratio, educational qualification of graduation and age between 21 to 30 years. Rapport was established with them and willing subjects were handed over the selected questionnaires



with proper instructions. The completed questionnaires were scored to obtain scores. Required statistical treatments were done; mean and SD for different variables were computed. The obtained data were analyzed using t-test to obtain differences of mean between the two groups.

**Results And Discussion :**

**Table:1** Table showing Mean, S.D and t-values for male and female groups on Perceived Work Environment Questionnaire (PWEQ) and Accepted Coping Mechanism Questionnaire (ACMQ)

Gender	PWEQ				ACMQ			
	Mean	Mean of Total Sample	SD	t-value	Mean	Mean of Total Sample	SD	t-value
Male	86.9	87.36	14.11	0.77	79.4	78.41	5.46	0.27
Female	87.83		9.83		77.43		8.02	

Individuals included in the sample gave responses in all the items in any one category of the four point scale of Perceived Work Environment Questionnaire (PWEQ). The highest score could be obtained was 120 and the lowest score possible was 30. Both, male employees (M= 86.9, SD= 14.11) and female employees (M= 87.83, SD= 9.83) perceived the work environment positively as the mean scores are tended to be higher for both the group in accordance with the score range (i.e. Range= 30 to 120). So, there is a slight difference in their mean scores. But,

comparison made on the basis of gender difference reveals no significant difference between the two groups in this regard. This might be due to the fact that there is no such difference between male and female employees when it comes to the job and duty distribution. Physical work environment, interpersonal relationship among employees, tasks and duties to be performed etc are not varied with gender difference. So, they feel ease at work and thus they perceive the work environment positively. But, some studies have shown that females often view themselves as treated worse than males in the

workplace (Graddick & Farr, 1983; Stokes, Riger & Sullivan, 1995). Because females often attach more importance to certain work conditions than males (Manhardt, 1972; Reitz & Jewell, 1979). Another important aspect of work life in I.T. industries is meeting tough deadlines (Cooper, 2005). Individual’s awareness or feeling of dysfunction associated with the conditions of the work environment makes the individual to perceive the work environment as negative and on the contrary when it becomes functional and productive makes the individual to perceive it positively.

Basic difference of psyche of males and females reflect in their perception of situations also. According to the book, “Managing in the Age of Change: Essential Skills to Manage Today’s Workforce”, by Sophie Hahn and Anne Litwin, women employees perceive that individual work style should be collaborative, where everyone works as a part of a whole. Men, on the other hand, perceive that work should be completed independently without the assistance of others. Women also tend to be more supportive managers, whereas men are more direct.

Comparison made on the basis of calculations done using obtained scores on Accepted Coping Mechanisms Questionnaire (ACMQ) reveals that mean of the scores of

copied styles and lower on rational and detachment coping (Matud, 2004). By nature men and women have distinct and different pattern of coping with the burden of strain. Female employees tend to seek social support and talk to others. But on the other hand, men tend to suppress their emotions and deal with problems in a logical and unemotional manner (Lim, Teo, 1996). Some researches show that professional women most often use the defensive and avoidance style of coping.

**Table:2** —Table showing Mean, S.D and t- values for both group of respondents Below and Above 5 years of service on Perceived Work Environment Questionnaire (PWEQ) and Accepted Coping Mechanism Questionnaire (ACMQ)

Duration of Service	PWEQ				ACMQ			
	Mean	Mean of Total Sample	SD	t-value	Mean	Mean of Total Sample	SD	t-value
Below 5 Years	86.67	87.2	11.95	0.74	77.13	78.16	6.13	0.26
Above 5 Years	87.74		12.74		79.19		7.53	

male and female respondents are 79.4 and 77.43 respectively (where the range of score is 36 to 144) and SD values are 5.46 and 8.03. Females scored lesser than males in this category which means they have obtained for more positive ways to cope with the environmental pressures. Earlier researches show that women scored significantly higher than the men on the emotional and avoidance

Depending on the duration of service, those who are engaged in the job for less than 5 years scored high (M= 86.67, SD= 11.95) in PWEQ. This means they perceived the work environment as favorable. The other group which comprises of those employees who are engaged in this work field for more than 5 years also perceived the same as favorable one which is reflected on their mean score i.e.

87.74 which is slightly greater than the prior group. Although the difference is not significant, the difference in the mean scores can be attributed to the fact that with time employees get well acquainted with the environment of work place. Long hours at work place, work overload, project deadlines, increased responsibility, expectations for better performance etc get increased with time.

Comparison of the scores obtained by the above two groups reveal that employees engaged in service for less than 5 years scored lesser than the other group, as the mean score for the first group is 77.13 and the value is 79.19 for the other one in case of coping strategies adapted by them. SD values for them are 6.13 and 7.53 respectively. But the difference in the mean values is not significant as the t- value is 0.26. The first group scored lesser which means that they went for more negative ways to handle their stress, whereas employees who are working for more than 5 years tended to go for comparatively positive ways of coping.

### **Conclusion :**

Work environment was perceived as healthy and more positive by the female employees than males. Especially those who are working for less than 5 years in the companies perceived the same. But professionals having service life more than 5 years in this field showed comparatively

negative perception regarding this. On the other hand, male employees went for more positive ways to cope with the stress at workplace whereas females adopted negative ways of coping. The employees engaged for lesser than 5 years showed that they used negative strategies of coping in comparison with those who have longer period of service.

Negative perception regarding the work environment makes the employee's life so stressful that they cannot perform their best. So their careers suffer negatively along with the adverse impact on the mental condition. They feel stressed and their adjustment capacity decreases with time. Irrespective of gender both male and female professionals face various problematic situations at work and thus they have to cope with them in order to maintain their functionality at office. The organization must take efforts to make the environment friendly and cooperative so that employees feel ease to perform and do their best for the success of the projects assigned to them by the authority. As well as at the individual level, the person must take some positive initiatives to handle with the level of stress. Inevitably every work procedure has some kind of task difficulty and deadline to finish the job. These factors make the individual under this work environment stressed. But as an obvious consequence this strain causes negative effect on the person. The person definitely adopts some of those coping styles which are negative in nature but

give instant relief from problems, but hamper the well-being in long run. So, people must adopt positive techniques to handle the stress in life, to adjust with the surrounding more effectively and to become more functional and productive at work.

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# CHILDHOOD OBESITY – A CURRENT EPIDEMIC

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## **Abstract :**

*When a child is well above the normal weight for his or her age and height is known as childhood obesity.*

*The present study aimed to find out the possible causes of childhood obesity and also its effects on child health, its prevalence among our society & the way how to treat & prevent it.*

*It is a serious medical condition which adversely affects the health of children & adolescents as well. Overweight and obesity in childhood have significant impact on both physical & psychological health. Psychological disorders such as poor self-esteem & depression occur with increased frequency in obese children. Overweight children are more likely to have cardiovascular & digestive diseases, diabetes in adulthood than those who are lean. It is a chronic disorder that has multiple causes. It is believed that both over consumption of*

*calories and reduced physical activity are mainly involved in childhood obesity.*

*The strategies for controlling the current epidemic of obesity seem to be more effective in children than in adults. These strategies can be initiated at home and in preschool institutions, schools or after-school care services for influencing the diet and physical activity. Further research needs to examine the most effective strategies of intervention, prevention and treatment of childhood obesity.*

**Keywords :** childhood obesity, child health, over weight.

## **Introduction :**

Nowadays the number of overweight individuals is increasing rapidly than in earlier decades. The term overweight and obesity have different meanings as related to body composition. When overweight is the result of excessive body fat rather than enhanced muscle or skeletal tissues, then the term over fat or obese is appropriate. During the early part of the twentieth century, the prevalence of obesity increased slowly and around 1980 it began to increase more rapidly. Children are also affected by obesity. For children a social stigma is associated with the weight problem.

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The energy we spend during the day for our various activities, the energy needed to heat our bodies and keep the body temperature at 37°C, the energy needed to keep our hearts beating, our brain working, our kidneys excreting urine and intestines digesting foods whether we are awake or not. Energy is also used for physical activity when we sit, stand, walk, run or do other daily activities. Over weight develops when energy intake is more than the expenditure. The main characteristic of all forms of obesity is the enlargement of the individual fat cells all over the body. As people gain weight the first change in the cells is to enlarge to accommodate the extra fat. Childhood obesity is more likely to occur in early infancy and between 5 and 7 years of age. Bottle-fed infants are more likely to be obese than the breastfed if the formula is prepared with packed or heaped scoops and is accompanied by extra feeding of solids. It is believed that childhood obesity is characterized by increase in the size as well as number of fat cells.

### **Methods to be used for Determination of Obesity :**

**Body weight-** An adult weighing 10% more than the standard weight is overweight and 20% more is obese.

**Body Mass Index – BMI** is accepted as a better estimate of body fatness.

$$\text{BMI} = \text{Weight [kg]} / \text{Height}^2 \text{ (m)}$$

**WHO Grading Of Obesity Based On BMI**

<b>Grade III</b>	-	<b>&gt; 40</b>
<b>Grade II</b>	-	<b>30-40</b>
<b>Grade I</b>	-	<b>25- 29.9</b>
<b>Not obese</b>	-	<b>&lt; 25</b>

**Waist circumference –** It is the most practical tool a clinician can use to evaluate a patient’s abdominal fat before and during weight loss treatment.

**Measurement of body fat –** A more accurate definition of overweight and obesity should be based on the total amount of body fat. The upper limit of body fat for defining obesity has been set as 25% for males and 30% for females. A simple instrument called body fat analyser gives the percentage of body fat.

**Waist to Hip Ratio –** The predominant distribution of fat in an obese person, whether in the upper part or the lower part of the body, may determine the disease pattern.

The normal ratio => waist/hip = 0.7

But with upper body obesity the ratio is 0.85 in women and greater than 1 in males.

**Broka’s Index –** The formula is

$$\text{Height [cm]} - 100 = \text{ideal weight[kg]}$$

### **Objective :**

This article reviews the problem of obesity among children. The focus of the article is to review the causes, the methodological aspect, the prevalence and the prevention of childhood obesity.

## DISCUSSION

Childhood obesity is a condition where excess body fat negatively affects a child's health or well being. Due to the rising prevalence of obesity in children and its many adverse health effects it is now considered as a serious public health hazard.

The first problems to occur in obese children are mainly psychological. It can lead to life threatening conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart diseases, sleep problems, cancer and other disorders such as liver disease, early puberty or menarche, eating disorders e.g. anorexia & bulimia nervosa, skin infections, asthma and other respiratory problems. Overweight children are more likely to have cardiovascular and digestive diseases in adulthood as compared with those who are lean. Obesity during adolescence has been found to increase mortality rates during adulthood. Obese children often suffer from teasing by their peers and also harassed by their own family which may lead to low self esteem and depression.

Childhood obesity can be caused by a range of factors which often act in combination "Obesogenic environment" is the medical term set aside for this mixture of elements. The greatest risk factor for childhood obesity is the obesity of both parents which may be reflected by the family's environment genetics. Child's body type and some

psychological factors may also lead to obesity. Today's consumerist Society with easy access to energy dense foods and less energy requirements in daily life may also cause obesity. Calorie rich drinks and foods are readily available to children. Fast food restaurants give out toys in children's meals which also attract the children to buy fast food. 40% of children ask their parents to take them to fast food restaurants on a daily basis. Some literature has found a relationship between fast food consumption and obesity. Fast food restaurants near school increase the risk of obesity among the student. Physical inactivity of children may be a serious cause of childhood obesity. Children who fail to engage in regular physical activity are at a great risk of obesity. Staying physically inactive leaves unused energy in the body, most of which is stored as fat. Many children fail to exercise because they are spending time doing immobile activities such as computer usage, playing video games or watching television. Fig 3 shows physical inactivity prevalence in India by age group.

According to the most public health researchers and clinicians prevention could be the key strategy for controlling this epidemic. Prevention may include primary prevention of overweight, secondary prevention or avoidance of weight gain following weight loss. Most approaches have focused on changing the behavior of individuals on diet and exercise. These

strategies have an impact on the obesity epidemic.

### **Determination of Obesity among Children :**

- Annual measurement of weight, height, BMI for age
- Child's medical history
- Parental obesity
- Family medical history
- Other health problems related to obesity
- Dietary, physical activity and other behaviors.

Childhood obesity has been increasing the last 20-30 years

- Only 5% of children between the ages of 2 and 5 were considered over weight in the 1971-1974 survey. While 13.9% of children at this age were overweight in the 2003-2004 survey.
- Only 4% of children between 6-11 years were considered over weight in the 1971-1974 survey. While 18.8% of children at this age were overweight in the 2003-2004 survey.
- 6.1% of children between the ages of 12 and 19 were considered over weight in the 1971-1974 survey. While 17.4% of children at this age were overweight in the 2003-2004 survey.
- Reports from several developing countries indicate prevalence rates of obesity > 15%

in children and adolescents aged 5-19 years, in Mexico 41.8 %, in Brazil 22.1 %, in India 22%.

- There is an alarming increase in obesity in developing countries ,in Brazil from 4.1-13.9% between 1974-1997 in China from 6.4-7.7 % between 1991-1997 and in India from 4.9-6.6% between 2003-2004 to 2005-2006

Children are the priority group for starting prevention because weight loss in adulthood is difficult and there are a number of interventions for children than adults. School, preschool institution and after-school care affect the food and physical activity environment of children. It is difficult to reduce excessive weight in adults once it is established. So it would be more beneficial to initiate prevention and treatment of obesity during childhood.

Some interventions strategies that could be considered for prevention of childhood obesity

#### **I. Built environment**

1. Walking network
  - a. Footpaths (designated safe walking path)
  - b. Trails (increasing safety in trails)
2. The cycling network
  - a. Roads (designated cycling routes)
  - b. Cycle paths
3. Public open spaces (parks)



4. Recreation facilities (providing safe and inexpensive recreation centers)

## II. Physical activity

1. Increasing sports participation.
2. Improving and increasing physical education time
3. Use school report cards to make the parents aware of their children's weight problem
4. Enhancing active modes of transport to and from school
  - a. Walking
  - b. Cycling
  - c. Public transport

## III. TV watching

1. Restricting television viewing
2. Reducing eating in front of the television
3. Ban or restriction on television advertising to children

## iv. Food sector

1. Applying a small tax on high-volume foods of low nutritional value (e.g. soft drinks, confectionery, and snack foods)
2. Food labeling and nutrition 'signposts' (e.g. logos for nutritious foods)
3. Implementing standards for product formulation

Fruits and vegetables are an essential part of the human diet. Increased fruit and vegetable consumption may also assist dietary weight management strategies to prevent obesity. Energy density is reduced by higher intake of fruit and vegetables. Eating larger

amount of fruits and vegetables increases the feeling of satiety and results in the displacement of more energy-dense foods.

Television commercials of foods high in fat, sugar or salt greatly influence eating habits of the young which make them vulnerable to non-communicable diseases, World Health Organisation (WHO) has urged countries to reduce exposure of children to such marketing by implementing a set of international recommendations. WHO said a large share of unhealthy foods is marketed through TV commercials and a systematic review of evidence revealed such advertisements influence children's food preferences, purchase requests and consumption. In May 2010, WHO member-states endorsed a new set of recommendations on marketing foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children, calling for national and international action to reduce exposure of children to ads that promote foods high in saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, free sugars, or salt. While some countries have taken off advertisements of such products from prime time television and radio and regulated their marketing, a large number of countries, particularly developing nations such as India, are yet to take proactive measures. As per WHO, about 43 million pre-school (under five) children worldwide are obese. Of these, nearly 35 million live in developing countries.

WHO developed a global strategy on diet; Physical Activity and health at the request

of the WHO member states which was endorsed by the 57th World Health Assembly, in may 2004. It is the prevention based strategy that aim to reduce the prevalence of childhood obesity.

Schools play an important role in preventing childhood obesity by providing a safe and healthy environment. At home parents can help to prevent obesity by changing family eating habits. Parents need to lead a healthy lifestyle. Some jurisdiction attempts to use laws and regulations to steer kids and parents towards making healthier food choices such as banning of soft drinks from sale at vending machine in school. Children food choices are also influenced by family meals. An American study released in 2011 found the more mothers work the more children are more likely to be overweight or obese. Breast feeding may protect against obesity in later life. Feeling of depression can cause a child to overeat. Fig 4 & Fig 5 shows the world wide prevalence of obesity.

Childhood obesity is prevalent due to the upsurge of technology, increase in snacks and portion size of meals and the decrease in physical activity. If the children had a less sedentary life the rate of obesity can be decreased. Children have to put down the electronics devices and spend more time to outside playing. Parents should encourage their children to be more physically active. Exclusive breast feeding is recommended in all newborn infants for its nutritional and other beneficial effects. Rates of childhood obesity

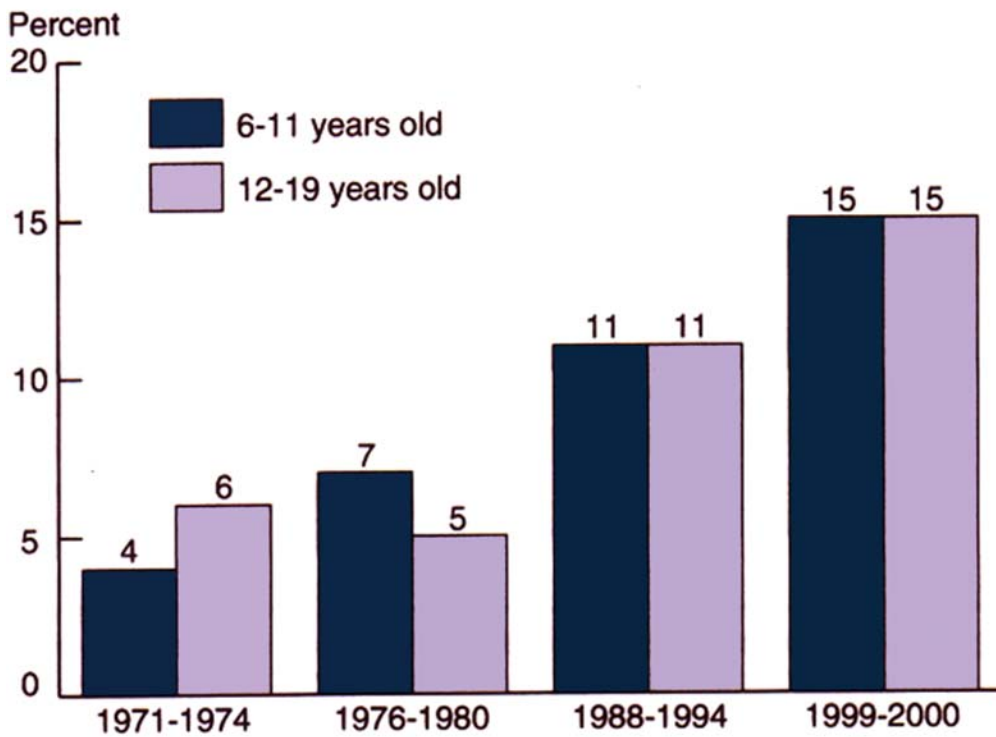
have increased greatly between 1980 & 2010. Currently 10% of children worldwide are either overweight or obese. Fig 1 shows the prevalence of overweight among U.S. children and adolescents, age 6 – 19 years and Fig 3 shows growth in childhood obesity from 1971 to 2008.

Childhood obesity has become a public Health problem all over the World. This problem can be reduced by educating the parents and children both about healthy nutrition and encouraging them to be physically active. Effective interventions and government policies are the key factors for its prevention. So that the children can adopt healthy behaviors and have a healthy life.

#### **Conclusion :**

Obesity is a chronic disorder that has multiple causes. Over weight and obesity in childhood have significant impact on both physical and psychological health. In addition, psychological disorders such as depression occur with increased frequency in obese children. Overweight children are more likely to have cardiovascular and digestive diseases in adulthood as compared with those who are lean. It is believed that both over-consumption of calories and reduced physical activity are mainly involved in childhood obesity. Further research needs to examine the effective strategics of interventions, prevention and treatment of obesity. There strategics should be culture specific, and consider the socioeconomic aspects of the targeting population.

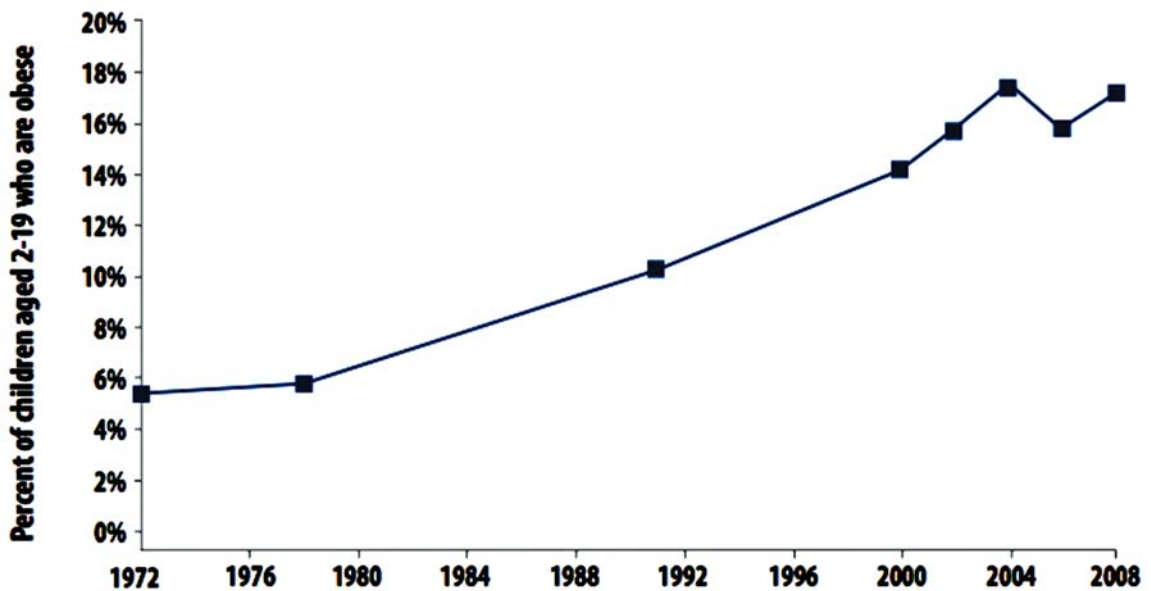
**Figure 1. Prevalence of overweight among U.S. children and adolescents, ages 6-19 years**



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics.

Fig. 1 Prevalence of overweight among U.S. children and adolescents ages 6 – 19 years.

**Growth in Childhood Obesity, 1971 to Present**



Source: CDC, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys.  
 Note: Obesity is defined as BMI  $\geq$  gender- and weight-specific 95th percentile from the 2000 CDC Growth Charts

Fig 2 Growth in childhood obesity.

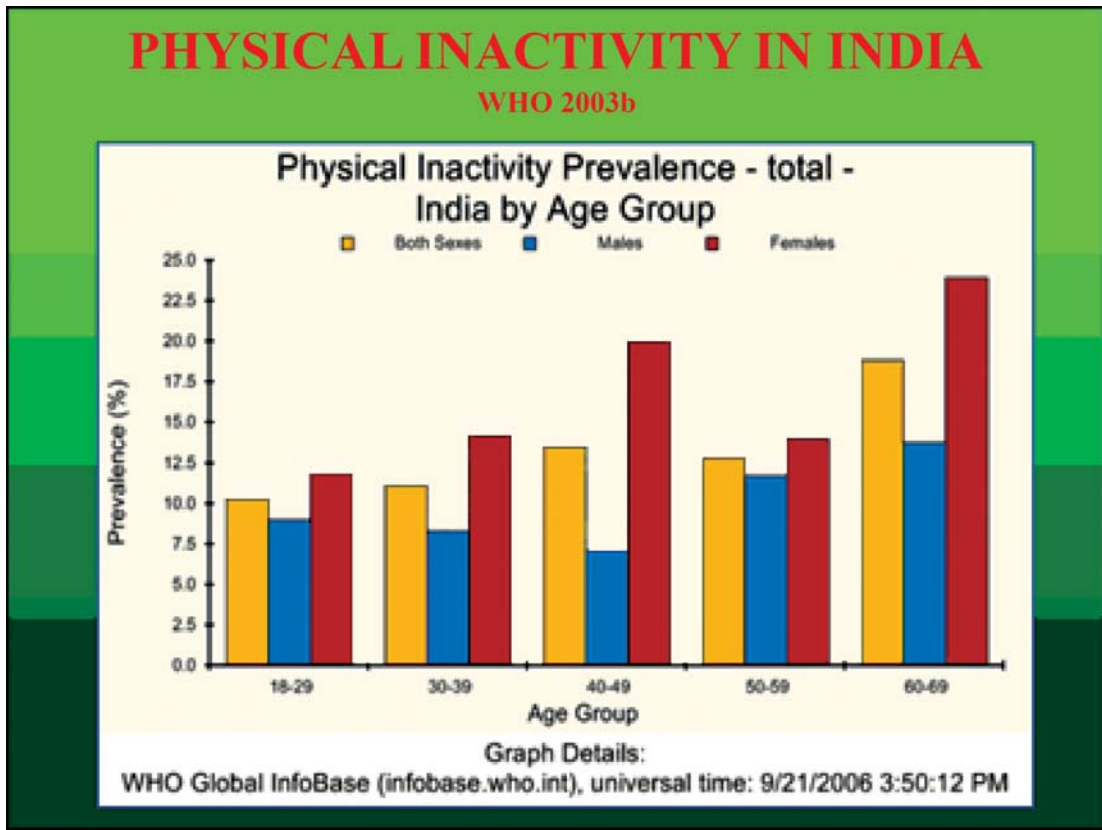


Fig. 3 Physical inactivity prevalence in India by age group

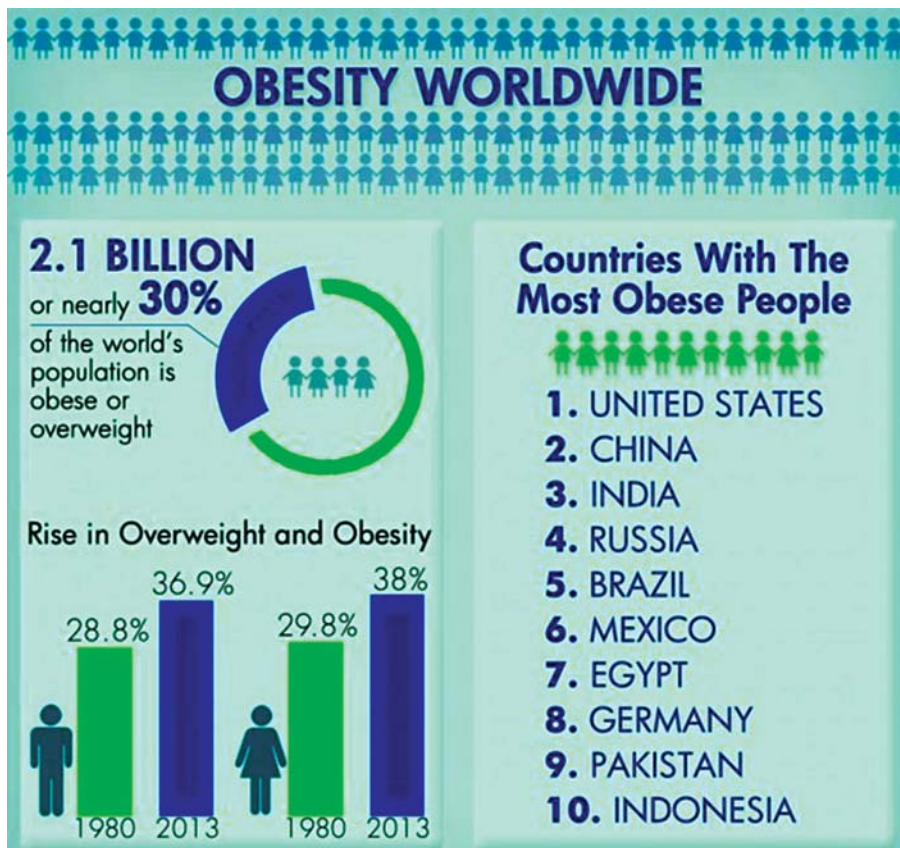


Fig. 4 Obesity worldwide

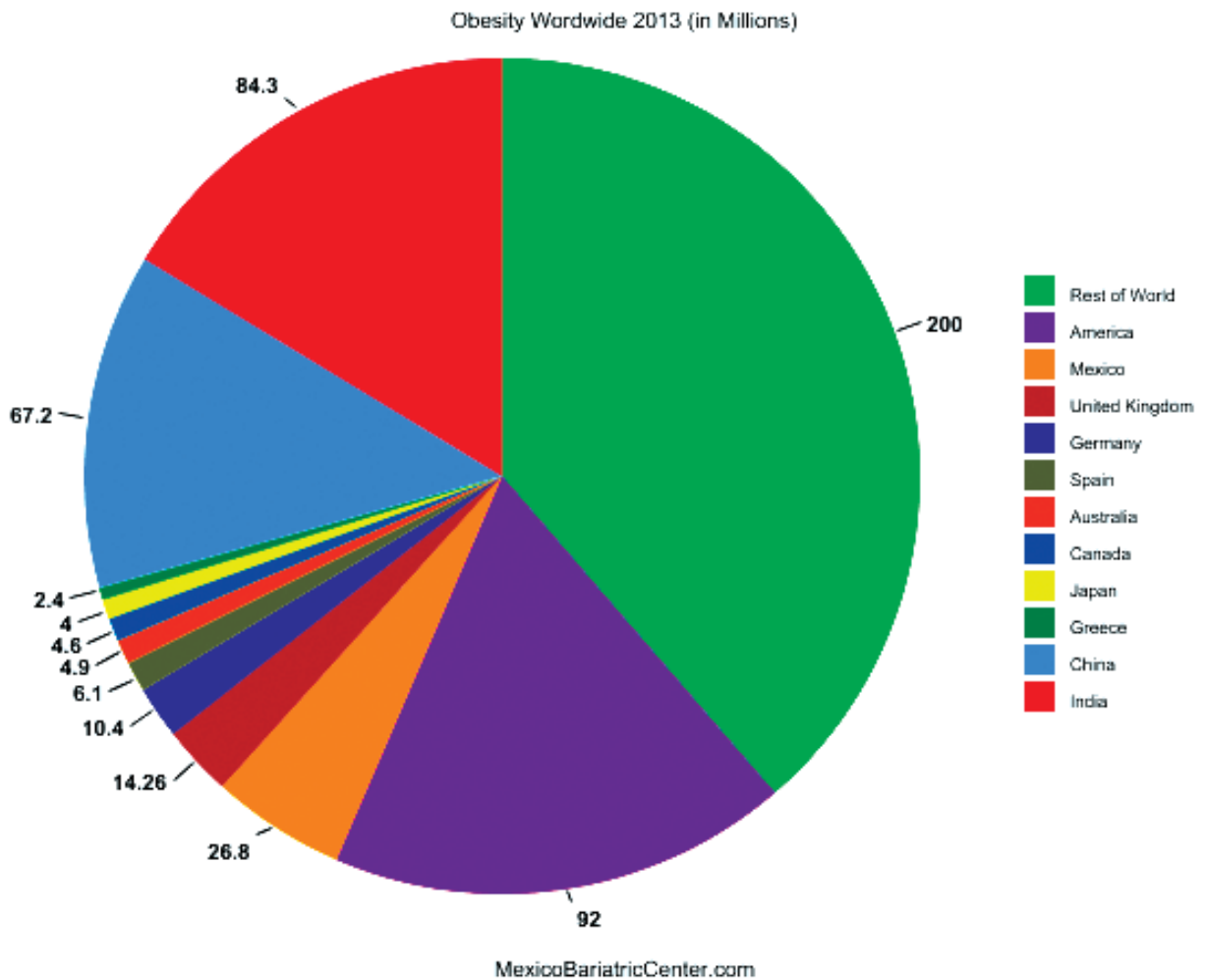


Fig. 5 Prevalence of obesity in different countries 2013.

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