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RAJAGIRI COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
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CONTENTS

Cropping Pattern and Land Degradation in Kasaragod, Kerala

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Abstract

The consequence of the Green Revolution and the continued impact of globalisation and economic reform policies, the agricultural sector in the Kasaragod district witnessed a paradigm shift. For a higher yield and high income the farmers apply fertilisers and pesticides without considering its impact on even the the minmimum requirments. Similarly, the diversification of crops from food crops to non-food crops and from one non-food crop to yet another non-food crop also emerged. All these factors have caused challenges to the agricultural sector and created a conflict in the form of land degradation. This study shows that there is constant and continuous decline in both soil health and in soil fertility in general and also in the decline of P, K soil status and pH status in the rubber cropped areas as compared to other cropped areas in the district.

Keywords

cropping pattern; land degradation; soil fertility

Introduction

Kasaragod district was organised as a separate district of Kerala on 24 May 1984. The district is the northernmost district of the state of Kerala. The land use pattern in the district in the last few decades showed diversification in agriculture. Data on the area under major crops shows that paddy cultivation has decreased from 9,158 hectares in 2000-01 to 4,991 hectares in 2009-10; the area under coconut cultivation decreased from 59,073 hectares in 2000-01 to 57,057 hectares in 2009-10; the area under cashewnut cultivation decreased from 20,448 hectares in 2000-01 to 11,667 hectares in 2009-10; the area under tapioca cultivation decreased from 1,373 hectares in 2000-01 to 452 hectares in 2009-10; whereas the area under rubber cultivation increased from 22,232 hectares in 2000-01 to 28,230 hectares in 2009-10. During 1985-86 the order of the first six crops were coconut, cashewnut, rice, pepper, rubber and arecanut in the descending order of their shares as compared to the total cropped area. In 2009-10, the first six crops were coconut, rubber, arecanut, cashewnut, pepper and rice. Then Rubber attained the second position by pushing rice to the sixth position. The main crops losing area and importance between 1985-86 and 2009-10 were rice and tapioca.

The diversification of crops in Kerala was noticed during the last few decades. Crop diversification mainly towards rubber and coconut has also been observed in the recent years. The diversification of crops and the consequent application of chemical fertilisers and pesticides resulted in the depletion of macronutrients, plant nutrients and micronutrients of the soil. The overuse of chemical fertilisers and pesticides in the Kasaragod district leads to land degradation and creates conflict in the sustainability of the agricultural sector of the district. This paper therefore makes an attempt to look at the changing cropping patterns in Kasaragod district of Kerala with a view to understand the impact of it on the environment and its land.

Methodology and Materials

Data for the study was collected from various publications of the Government of Kerala such as the Economic Review and Statistics for Planning and Agricultural Statistics (Government of Kerala, 2010). Secondary data were also collected from the Analytical Register, Assistant Soil Chemist Office, Kasaragod; Soil Fertility Card, Vasutha Programme; and District Panchayat, Kasaragod and Package of Practices, Kerala Agricultural University, Trissur.

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The decline in the fertility of its native soil, the deficiency of plant nutrients and decline in micronutrients are the three main indicators for the unsustainability of the land. Among these, the first one has been considered in this study due to the lack of data on the rest of the other two indicators. Decline in the soil fertility of Kasaragod district was taken as aproxy for land degradation. Panchayat-wise soil fertility status of the all 36 panchayats in the district was worked out for the period 2000-09. Soil fertility in different cropgrowing areas (paddy, coconut, arecanut and rubber) was also worked out from the Analytical Register, Assistant Soil Chemist Office of the Kasaragod district for 2000-09.

Analysis and Discussion

The main agricultural systems comprising of seasonal crops, annual crops, tree crops and plantation crops are prevalent throughout the district of Kasaragod. The agricultural scenario in the district continues to be the most important and the single largest sector of its economy in terms of income and employment. The most significant change in the agricultural sector of the district is the shrinking area of the food crops.

Cropping pattern means the proportion of area under different crops, the nature of rotation of crops and the area under double cropping in a region or in a country. "A change in cropping pattern means a change in the proportionate area under different crops" (Deshpande, 2000: 218). The changes in cropping pattern broadly reflect the changes in the relative profit expectations of the alternative crops at different points of time. Cropping pattern indicates the level of development and economic prosperity of a region. Cropping pattern is a manifestation of the cropping system, which is described as the kind and sequence of the crop grown over a period of time under the specified soil conditions. It is a dynamic process and occurs due to changes over space and time with cumulative effects subject to that of the past and present decisions. Farmers allocate their land to alternative crops in order to maximise their expected returns subject to economic, technical and institutional factors.

The change in the cropping pattern from food crops to garden, land or tree crops has important economic and environmental implications on households in terms of food availability, income, employment, health, livestock and water, soil and chemical pollution. This paper discusses the environmental impact of changes in the cropping pattern on land degradation in the Kasaragod district as well.

Coconut, arecanut, rubber and banana showed increase in the proportion of the area used during the time periods of 1985-86 to 2009-10 in this district. Areas under rice, pepper, cashewnut, tapioca, cardamom and ginger experienced declining trends during these periods. The area under rice decreased from 16.2 per cent to 3.22 per cent and the area under rubber increased from 9.6 per cent to 18.2 per cent during the time periods of 1985-86 and 2009-10 respectively (Table 1). One important feature of the cropping pattern of Kasaragod district is the high proportion of arecanut area when compared to the the total cropped area.

Table 1
Cropping pattern in Kasaragod district in Kerala (1985-86 to 2009- 10)

Crops	1985-86	1990-91	1995-96	2000-01	2005-06	2009-10
Rice	16.19	10.08	7.39	5.94	3.89	3.22
Coconut	25.35	31.28	38.15	38.33	37.52	36.79
Arecanut	6.46	8.66	8.06	8.77	11.38	9.71
Rubber	9.57	12.92	12.22	14.43	16.39	18.20
Pepper	6.72	4.80	4.19	4.04	4.31	4.29
Cashewnut	20.58	17.46	15.57	13.27	11.67	7.52
Tapioca	4.00	1.72	0.94	0.89	0.37	0.29
Coffee	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tea	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cardamom	0.00	0.59	0.53	0.33	0.24	0.24
Ginger	0.40	0.12	0.10	0.09	0.04	0.04
Banana and other plantains	1.32	1.74	1.92	2.30	2.14	1.81

Land, which is the most precious heritage and the physical base of biomass production of life supporting system, is finite andinelastic. It is the major input in agriculture and is steadily reducing both in terms of size and its productivity. Land degradation problems have become a major and serious issue not only in India but is also being recognised as a global one (Sejwar, 2004). The percentage of degraded agricultural land are "as high as 75 % in Bangladesh, 61 in Pakistan, 44 in Srilanka, 26 in Nepal and 25% in India" (Singh et.al., 2004: 176). Unsustainable agricultural activities like "overuse of chemical fertilisers, the use of high yielding varieties of seeds, intensive cultivation, cultivation on steep slopes, shifting cultivation, etc," are some major causes of land degradation (Lal, 2004: 39).

Growing agricultural crops implies that nutrients (N-Nitrogen, P-Phosphorus, K-Potassium, etc.) are removed from the soil through the agricultural produce (food, fibre, wood) and crop residues. In permanent agricultural systems, soil fertility is maintained through applications of manure, other organic materials, inorganic fertilisers, lime, and the inclusion of legumes in the cropping systems, or a combination of these. Nutrient removal may result in the decline of the soil fertility status.

Soil fertility is defined as "the quality of a soil that enables it to provide nutrients in adequate amounts and in proper balance for the growth of specified plants or crops" (Murthy and Hirekerur, 1997). A decline in soil fertility implies a decline in the quality of the soil and is an indicator of land degradation. Soil fertility decline is defined as "the decline in chemical soil fertility or a decrease in the levels of soil organic matter, pH, Cation Exchange Capacity (CEC) and plant nutrients" (Hartemink, 2006: 1618). Soil fertility decline thus includes (i)nutrient depletion or nutrient decline (large removal than addition of nutrients), (ii) nutrient mining (large removal of nutrients and no inputs), (iii) acidification (decline in pH), (iv) the loss of organic matter, and (v) an increase in toxic elements. The land use alternation and changes in cropping pattern also changes soil fertility. The studies conducted by the Centre for Earth Science Studies (CESS) pointed out "deteriorating soil fertility due to changes in the cropping pattern in Kerala" (Chattopadhyay and Frank, 2006: 90).

Changing soil fertility status in the Kasaragod district is analysed by taking a panchayat-wise soil fertility status during the different years from 2000 to 2009 and were assessed by calculating the average of the pH and NPK (Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium)) status for each panchayat for each year from the Soil Analytical Register of the Assistant Soil Chemist office Kasaragod and the Vasutha Programme of the District Panchayat Kasaragod. Soil fertility status is assessed in two ways— firstly it is based on panchayat-wise results of the average native soil fertility (macronutrients—N, P, K) during the past ten years, and secondly it is based on the panchayat wise average pH status during the past ten years from 2000 to 2009.

The pH and NPK status of the soil in the district are grouped and graded into different classes from 0 to 10. The zero class is the lowest class in the group with 0 to 4pH, 0 to 0.16 kg per hectare N, 0 to 3 kg per hectare P and 0 to 35 kg per hectare K. Class 9 and 10 are the highest class with 8.1 to 10 pH, 2.17 to 2.5 kg per hectare N, 31.1 to 34.5 kg per hectare P and 356 to 395 kg per hectare K respectively and above class 9 is in the 10th group or class. The class of 0 to 3 indicates low soil fertility status group, the class 4 to 6 indicates medium soil fertility status group, the class 7 to 9 adequate soil fertility status group and above 9 shows or indicates a high soil fertility status group.

Among the 36 panchayats studied in the district, 21 of the panchayats showed soil pH in the fourth class, 13 panchayats showed soil pH in the fifth class and two panchayats showed class six pH during 2000. The number of panchayats in the fourth class soil pH continuously decreased to eight in 2005 and reached one during 2009. During 2000, 58 percentages of the panchayats showed 5.6 to 6 pH, 36 percentages of the panchayats showed 6.1 to 6.5 pH and the remaining panchayats showed 6.6 to 7 pH. During the year 2000, there was no panchayats in the district having class 1, class 2 and class 3 pH. But after 2004 the number of panchayats in these classes increased and reached 18 in class 1 and 17 in class 2 during 2009. In 2009, 97 per cent of the panchayats in the district had low or very low soil pH (that is pH below 5). Table 2 reveals that the average soil pH of the majority of the panchayats in the district decreased after 2000 and reached a low or very low percentageduring 2009, showing steady decline in soil fertility.

Table 2 shows that during the period 2000-09 considerable variations in the soil fertility status in Kasaragod district were observed. Out of the 36 panchayats studied 32 had high N, 24 had high P and 4 had high K nutrients during 2000. In 2009 the number of panchayats observed high macro nutrients were nine for N, one for P and none for K. For available P and K more than 50 per cent of the panchayats are rated low or very low (below 17 kg per hectare P and below 155 kg per hectare K). Of

these, "low available P is of greatest concern as soil parent materials are generally K rich and this is reflected in predominantly moderate to high levels of exchangeable K" (Lhendup and Duxburg, 2008:15). The total N levels were high in more than 60 per cent of the panchayats.

The various trends in the soil fertility status of the Kasaragod district as shown in Table 2 identify the major features: (i) nearly 97 per cent of the panchayats had low or very low soil pH (that is, pH below 5), (ii) the total N levels were high in more than 60 per cent of the panchayats (that is, above 1.5 kg per hectare of N), (iii) the available P levels were low or very low in more than 50 per cent of the panchayats (that is, below 17 kg per hectare of P), (iv) K nutrients were relatively low or very low in 53 per cent of the panchayats (that is below 155 kg per hectare of K), and (v) there is nutrient depletion or decline and acidification in the soil of Kasaragod district over the years.

There are several studies that indicate that intensive cropping with high doses of inorganic fertilisers has led to deficiencies in the soil fertility status in several parts of India (Chattopadhyay and Franke, 2006; Hartemink, 2006). It is an important indicator to measure the quality and health of the soils which determines agricultural sustainability and environmental quality.

Table 2
Class wise analysis of soil fertility status in the Kasaragod district (pH)

Class	Year									
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	18
2	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	10	15	17
3	-	1	5	8	13	27	29	25	12	-
4	21	25	22	20	21	8	6	1	1	1
5	13	8	7	6	1	-	-	-	-	-
6	2	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36

N

Class	Year									
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	1
5	-	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	3
6	1	-	-	-	1	-	4	3	3	5
7	1	1	-	-	1	2	3	4	11	11
8	2	2	5	3	7	9	10	12	8	8
9	4	4	6	10	16	16	15	12	8	4
10	28	27	24	22	10	7	2	2	1	1
Total	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36

P

Class	Year									
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5
3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	5	6
4	-	1	1	1	1	4	8	8	10	10
5	2	1	2	4	9	6	5	5	5	2
6	2	4	5	4	-	2	1	4	4	8
7	2	1	1	2	4	6	1	4	5	3
8	5	5	4	5	5	1	8	5	3	1
9	4	2	3	3	3	8	9	5	2	1
10	20	22	19	16	13	8	2	1	1	-
Total	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36

K

Class	Year									
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1
2	-	2	2	2	2	3	2	5	8	11
3	6	4	6	6	6	12	12	9	11	6
4	5	5	6	6	12	11	12	17	11	12
5	7	8	5	6	10	7	6	1	3	4
6	8	10	10	8	3	3	3	3	1	1
7	4	1	3	2	3	-	-	-	1	-
8	2	5	3	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	4	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36

Figures show the number of panchayaths.

In the present analysis four crop growing areas were selected to measure the changes in the soil fertility status in the Kasaragod district (paddy, coconut, arecanut and rubber) and the data collected from the Analytical Register, Assistant Soil Chemist office, Kasaragod. For each crop the average soil fertility status was calculated for the period of 2000-09. The soil fertility evaluation on the basis of soil test results in the four crop based systems are done in two ways—firstly by analysing the macronutrients (NPK) and secondly by analysing the pH status.

Table 3

Average soil fertility status in different crop growing areas in the Kasaragod district
(2000-09, macro nutrients (NPK) in kg per hectare)

Year	Rubber				Arecanut			
	Macro nutrients (NPK)				Macro nutrients (NPK)			
	pH	N	P	K	pH	N	P	K
2000	5.65	2.96	19.56	131.48	6.10	3.11	51.94	261.53
2001	5.55	2.91	19.02	130.13	6.00	2.93	50.63	257.18
2002	5.45	2.82	18.51	129.70	5.95	2.88	47.75	252.75
2003	5.45	2.75	18.38	127.44	5.90	2.75	47.02	248.75
2004	5.40	2.69	18.21	123.70	5.60	2.60	32.63	243.73
2005	5.35	2.55	17.55	122.62	5.45	2.57	29.39	231.25

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Year	pH	N	P	K	pH	N	P	K
2006	5.35	2.46	13.94	96.13	5.40	2.42	27.83	227.58
2007	5.15	2.41	12.06	76.89	5.15	2.37	24.13	225.45
2008	4.40	2.36	11.62	68.13	4.95	2.34	20.89	216.66
2009	4.20	2.14	11.23	61.50	4.80	2.07	20.31	208.33

Year	*Paddy* Macro nutrients (NPK)				*Coconut* Macro nutrients (NPK)			
	pH	N	P	K	pH	N	P	K
2000	6.15	2.91	36.34	211.36	5.96	3.37	55.14	292.56
2001	6.10	2.84	34.24	209.85	5.90	3.18	45.34	284.53
2002	6.05	2.67	33.06	201.15	5.83	3.00	43.59	270.03
2003	6.00	2.53	31.15	195.18	5.76	2.78	42.23	262.16
2004	5.85	2.45	29.57	185.94	5.53	2.62	32.11	220.41
2005	5.45	2.27	26.13	172.23	5.40	2.49	29.44	205.18
2006	5.45	2.20	24.21	164.66	5.33	2.42	28.69	203.90
2007	5.30	2.14	21.83	156.33	5.33	2.31	27.27	203.67
2008	5.00	2.06	19.09	149.50	5.03	2.11	26.08	198.29
2009	4.95	2.01	18.11	145.50	4.46	2.09	24.50	193.50

Source: Computed from the Analytical Register, Assistant Soil Chemist office, Kasaragod District.

Table 3 shows that there is a decrease in the average soil pH from 2000 to 2009 in all the crop growing systems. An inter-crop comparison reveals that the decline was severe in rubber cropped systemscompared to the other crop growing systems. In 2009, the average soil pH in the rubber cropped system was very low (4.20). The NPK status revealed that during 2000 except for the rubber cropping system all other systems had a very high NPK status (3.1 kg per hectare N for arecanut, 2.9 kg per hectare N for paddy, and 3.37 kg per hectare N for coconut; the P status is 51.94 kg per hectare for arecanut, 36.34 kg per hectare for paddy; and 55.14 kg per hectare for coconut; the K nutrient was 261.53 kg per hectare for arecanut, 211.36 kg per hectare for paddy and 292.56 kg per hectare for coconut). In the case of the rubber cropping system the NPK status was 2.96, 19.56 and 131.48 kg per hectare during 2000, which decreased to 2.14, 11.23 and 61.5 kg per hectare respectively during 2009.

Table 3 shows the continuous decline of soil fertility as well as, the soil health in general and the deterioration of P and K soil status in particular to the rubber cropping system in the district. It is found that P and K elements are low in the rubber plantations of the study area. Studies by Balagopalan (1995) and Amma et al. (1996) found that NPK components are lower on rubber plantations than those of other vegetations (Chattopadhyay and Franke, 2006). This substantiates the findings of the earlier studies that the organic matter content on rubber plantations had lower values than other cropping systems and vegetations (Shaji and Abraham, 1994). The analysis confirmed that the change in cropping pattern and expansion of rubber cultivation had caused the soil NPK status todecline and had been in fact, showing a tendency of further deterioration in the soil fertility status of the Kasaragod district in Kerala; indicating land degradation and a threat to the sustainability of the cropping system.

Conclusion

From 1985-86 to 2009-10 the cropping pattern of Kasaragod district experienced vast changes. The main crops losing their cultivation area during this period were rice and tapioca while rubber rose to the second position. All these are challenges to the agriculture sector and create conflict in the sustainability of the agricultural sector of the district in the form of land degradation.

Land degradation is an effect of change in the cropping patternis studied by analysing the soil fertility status (pH and macro nutrients) of 36 panchayats in the district during the period 2000-09. In 2000, 58 per cent of the panchayats showed 5.6 to 6 pH, 36 per cent of the panchayats showed 6.1 to 6.5 pH and the remaining panchayats showed 6.6 to 7 pH. In 2009, 97 per cent of the panchayats in the district had low or very low soil pH (that is, pH below 5). Out of the 36 panchayats studied 32 had high N, 24 had high P and 4 had high K macro nutrients in 2000; in 2009 the number of panchayats that had high macronutrients were 9 for N, one for P and zero for K. In 2009 the available data

showed with regrd to P and K, more than 50 per cent of the panchayats were rated low or of very low status. Some negative features of the soil fertility status over the years are also worth noting. They include: (i) nearly 97 per cent of the panchayats studied had low or very low soil pH, (ii) the available P levels were low or very low in more than 50 per cent of the panchayats, (iii) K nutrients were low or very low in 50 per cent of the panchayats, (iv) P nutrient status was very low in 40 per cent of the panchayats, and (v) there is nutrient depletion, decline and acidification in the soil of the panchayats studied.

The decline in soil fertility was measured by calculating the average soil fertility status of four crop growing areas (paddy, coconut, arecanut and rubber) for the period of 2000-09. The soil fertility status was evaluated by analysing the pH and NPK status. The analysis revealed that (i) pH was decreasing over the years in all crop growing areas but the decline was severe in rubber cropped systems and (ii) the continuous decline of soil health and soil fertility in general and the decline of P and K soil status in particular were observed in the rubber cropped areas compared to other cropped areas.

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Empowering Women in Asia and Africa:
A Comparison

Sangit Sarita Dwivedi[1]

Abstract

Efforts at mainstreaming women in the development process began with an emphasis on issues of equity and redistribution as well as meeting the basic needs of the people. Negative and harmful traditional practices such as male child preference, early marriages, and domestic violence against women indicate the cultural subordination of women in Asia and Africa. The introspection of the current approaches to gender equality and sustainable development from a cultural perspective is critical in achieving a balanced development. It is imperative that cultural factors be integrated into current discourses for enhancing gender equality and sustainable development. This study is intended to examine and compare the relationship between gender and development from an African and an Asian perspective as it is necessary to delve into the past to identify the historical factors that may impinge on current developmental outcomes. In reviewing the future perspective, women's grassroot organisations are identified as critical for women's empowerment in the developing countries. The experiences of the developing countries of Asia and Africa show that empowering women is a powerful strategy for reducing poverty and achieving other developmental goals. The objective of the paper is to reveal the centrality of an approach to development in the on-going debate for an inclusive gender and development strategy to enhance sustainability and scrutinise the main phases of the development and debate upon their perception of the womens'role in development.

Keywords

women; empowerment; gender; equality; Asia; Africa

Introduction

Analysts understand empowerment as a multidimensional and multilevel concept. Very often, womens' empowerment and gender equality are used interchangeably. While they are related, they are not the same. Charmes and Wieringa (2003) have designed a Women's Empowerment Matrix that consists of six dimensions, namely physical, socio-cultural, religious, economic, political, and legal; and six levels of the individual, which are, household, community, state, region, and global. The concept of women's empowerment is the outcome generated by the women's movement, particularly by 'the third world' feminists. They state that women's empowerment really requires is to challenge the patriarchal power relations that result in women having less control over material assets and intellectual resources. Women's empowerment must become a force that is an organised mass movement which challenges and transforms existing power relations in society. Gender equality is about women's status relative to that of men while true women's empowerment is about women's ability in an absolute sense to exercise control, power, and choice over practical and strategic decisions (Grown, 2008). Gender is a socio-cultural variable, seen in relation to other factors, such as race, class, age and ethnicity. It refers to both women and men, and to their status, relative to each other. Gender equality refers to that stage of human social development at which the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals is determined when both men and women realise their full potential.

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Unequal opportunities between women and men continue to hamper women's ability to lift them from poverty and gain more options to improve their lives. More often women's economic contributions go unrecognised and their work undervalued. Research show that inequalities persist in the way paid and unpaid work is divided between women and men. In fact women remain the sole caregivers at home, and also in their limited access to resources. These imbalances slow economic growth. This study intends to examine and compare the relationship between gender and development from an African and an Asian perspective as it is necessary to search into the past to identify historical factors that may impinge on current developmental outcomes. The paper addresses the conceptual issues related to women's empowerment, the trends in women's empowerment in key areas such as education, health, economic and political participation, and finally the role of state and non-state actors in empowering women in Asia and Africa. The present study attempts to capture the gap between men and women in terms of economic participation by comparing unemployment levels, the levels of economic activity and remuneration for equal work. The goal is to provide a comparison between Asia and Africa, based on the factors that determine empowerment and how the vary as per the geographic locations. However, the yearly individual country surveys vary. The study is an attempt to consolidate data obtained by comparing figures on the national economy, politics and education in a manner that allows us to take a closer and more structured look at a relative country's strengths and weaknesses. These comparisons are meant to identify existing strengths and weaknesses, and serve as a useful guide for policy, based on learning from the experiences of these continents that have had greater success in promoting the equality of women and men.

Economic Role of Women in Asia and Africa

Women's economic empowerment i.e., their capacity to bring about economic change for themselves is increasingly viewed as the most important contributing factor to achieve equality between women and men. Economically strengthening women not only spur economic growth, but also advance women's human rights. When governments and communities invest in women,the entire nation becomes a stronger player in the global market. Women's increasing economic participation is one of the most visible trends of the global economy marked by increasing feminisation of the labour force, increased participation in the informal or vulnerable economy, and migrating to work in the service industry. Between 1980 and 2007, this increase was second highest in North Africa (Desai, 2010). In South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, the increases were more modest. Despite this increase, the gender gap in labour force participation remains large, particularly in North Africa, South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2012).

Women in Africa are not empowered because of poverty and negative cultural practices. Traditionally women in Africa were involved in the economy since they were de facto managers of income generating activities on farms as husbands were involved on non-farm business. The colonial economy created title deeds, making men the sole owners of land, thereby rendering women economically weak. The colonial regime also uprooted men from villages to work in urban areas and plantations like rubber plantations in Congo, Cocoa plantations in Ghana and Coffee plantations in Kenya, amongst others. Women consequently were overburdened with running homes, making them economically unstable. In another study of four other countries in Africa—Benin, Madagascar, Morocco, and South Africa—in urban areas women spent between 16 and 55 per cent of their time in paid market activities compared to men's 80 to 84 per cent of their time in paid activities (Desai, 2010). Although the percentage of women in vulnerable employment has dropped since 1997 in most regions, disparity between men and women still exists, especially in North Africa, and sub-Saharan Africa (UNIFEM, 2010). At the national level in Africa, the inadequacy of information, data, and resources render these problems daunting.

During the early stages of economic development, rapid industrialisation and urbanisation lead to a major growth in the manufacturing sector, and the rise of factory employment in South Asia and South East Asia. The situation of women's economic participation is partly responsible for women's lack of access to assets and productive resources. Women's lack of access to land and the insecurity of their property rights pose constraints on women's access to agricultural services, including credit, that require formalised ownership of land.

Sixty per cent of all farmers in Africa are women—making them major contributors to Africa's agriculture based economy (The State of Food and Agriculture, 2011). Sub-Saharan Africa has a very small gender gap in agriculture, which employs over 60 per cent of both men and women (Desai, 2010). Women who live in countries with a large agricultural sector, such as Egypt, tend to work mainly in that sector, although some North African countries have been more successful in getting

women into non-agricultural occupations (Desai, 2010). Morocco and Tunisia, for example, have been able to engage women in the countries' export-manufacturing sectors. Women's participation in the labour force is still low. Only 20 per cent of women aged 15 and older in North African countries are in the labour force—the lowest level for any world region (Desai, 2010). The highest levels of native female labour force participation in North African countries are found in Morocco, where women constitute more than 25 per cent of the labour force. But those rates are lower than rates found outside the region.

East Asia and the Pacific have the least sex-segregated workforce. In South Asia, more than 60 per cent women are employed in agriculture as compared to 40 per cent of men (Desai, 2010). In India, from 1990 to 2005, states with the highest percentage of women in the labour force grew the fastest economically and saw the largest reductions in poverty (Desai, 2010). There has also been progress in many countries to unionise informal sector workers based on the model of Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India. They have successfully changed legislation at the state and national levels to award the same protection to informal workers as formal workers and they have also formed global networks to facilitate this process, such as Women in Informal Employment Globalising and Organising. Men in India spent the least amount of time in unpaid care work while men in South Africa spent the most, a reflection of the high unemployment rate among men in South Africa (Desai, 2010). But even in South Africa women spend almost three times as much time in unpaid care work (Desai, 2010).

Accessing credit is the major constraint on the women's ability to earn an income. The microfinance sector is now taking the African women back to their role of being involved in the economy as they were in dire need of other income generating activities to supplement their small farms. It is estimated that women comprise 74 per cent of the 19.3 million of the world's poorest people now being served by microfinance institutions. In Africa Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) have recorded notable gains (Janet, 2014). The sector has transformed from an insignificant player in the national psyche to a recognised sector with potential to equitably offer financial services to the active poor women in viable micro-enterprises, empower enterprising women through financial access and skills and drastically reduce poverty.

South Africa's Expanded Public Works Programme and India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which mandates a third of the jobs for women, have both been successful in increasing women's livelihoods, which has also resulted in better education and health outcomes for their children. In 2005, the Indian government passed the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), which has resulted in the creation of the world's largest social security system (UNIFEM, 2010). The Indian government has also undertaken a social insurance programme for workers in the informal sector, Unorganised Sector Workers Social Security Scheme Bill, which will cover a majority of urban workers (Barrientos, 2010). Indian Parliament has passed an ambitious law aimed at ensuring social security to workers in the unorganised sector, comprising 94 per cent of the country's labour force.

In 2008 Southern African Development Community countries signed a protocol on gender and development that calls for 50 per cent representation of women in all levels of government by 2015 (Gender Monitor, 2013). It also promotes equal participation of men and women in economic policies and utilisation of gender sensitive and responsive budgeting. It calls for examining all laws relating to access and control of resources both in formal and informal economy to ensure women's equal access. Women in many countries such as Kenya, Rwanda, India have had difficulties in gaining inheritance rights. Still, many countries have passed land reforms that have included gender parity in ownership of communal land such as Tanzania, Namibia, and Rwanda (Desai, 2010). An increasing number of low income countries, including South Africa, Namibia, Bangladesh and India, are introducing fully tax-financed pension schemes, making pension a source of income even in poorer countries. Integrating gender perspectives in the design of pension schemes is essential to avoid excluding large numbers of women. Promoting women's economic empowerment facilitates the achievement of other important public policy goals such as economic growth, improved human development, and reduced violence.

Women and Political Participation in Asia and Africa

Political empowerment refers to the equitable representation of women in decision-making structures, both formal and informal, and in exercising their voice in the formulation of policies affecting their societies. It is important to study the history of women's participation in politics as it is an indication of how difficult it has been for women to penetrate power structures and also make a

difference to women's lives by voicing their problem. Measuring the disparities is a necessary step towards implementing corrective policies. With an overall rank of 33, the Chinese government's much touted gender equality objective still falls far short of expectations. Nonetheless, China remains the highest ranking nation in Asia, followed by Japan (38). The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) remains the most comprehensive document of the world's commitment to women's rights. The inequality between men and women in the sharing of power, family responsibilities and decision making at all levels is one among the 12 critical areas of concern adopted in the Platform for Action at Beijing. The year 2005 marks the 10th anniversary of the Beijing World Conference on Women, bringing renewed focus and energy to the efforts to empower women. As demonstrated in East Asia in the 1990s, it is often the case that women are only able to secure employment during rapid expansions, employment that is usually transitory and insecure, and performed under harsh conditions. From the period of 1990 to 2008 the number of women in national parliaments was: 18.6 per cent in Asia, and 17.8 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa (Desai, 2010). In 2008, Rwanda became the first parliament with a majority of women members 56.2 per cent (Kagame). The target of 30 per cent representation has been met in only 24 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America (CSW, 2009). India is one among those countries that have passed legislation to increase women's participation in local government, panchayats, to 33 per cent (Inter Parliamentary Union, 1997).

Role of Education in Empowering Women

Educational attainment is the most fundamental prerequisite for empowering women in all spheres of society, for without education of comparable quality and content to that, which is given to men, its relevance to existing knowledge and real needs, the women will be unable to access well-paid, formal sector jobs. They will not advance among themselves, participate in, and be represented in the government and will neither gain political influence. Education is a key part in the strategies to improve the individuals' well-being and societies' economic and social development. In North Africa, access to education has improved dramatically over the past few decades, and there have been a number of encouraging trends in girls' and women's education. Primary school enrollment is high or universal in most Middle East and North African (MENA) countries, and the gender gaps in secondary school enrollment have already disappeared in several countries. Women in these countries are also more likely to enroll in universities than they were in the past. As women's educational attainment in North African countries has increased, more women have moved into the job market. In sub-Saharan Africa, inequality between men and women in education and employment suppressed the annual per capita growth during 1960–92 by 0.8 percentage points per year (Sharma and Keefe, 2011). A boost of 0.8 per cent per year would have doubled the conomic growth over that period. While South Asia does better than sub-Saharan Africa in tertiary education, it lags behind sub-Saharan Africa in primary educations. But the increase in South Asia and Oceania, hide the still low enrollments of girls to boys, 77/100 and 85/100 respectively (Desai, 2010). Most of the North African women who work outside the agricultural sector are college-educated professionals employed mainly in the government. A smaller share of women work in factories, but many lack the educational qualifications of factory workers in countries such as China and Vietnam. The current high unemployment rates among men in North African countries make it harder for women to compete in the male-dominated job markets, and women's unemployment rates are higher than those of men in the region.

Improving the quality of education, providing more vocational training, developing job-creating programmes, and removing obstacles to women's entrepreneurship can help alleviate the high rates of female unemployment. From 1990-2008 the ratio of female to male primary enrollment has increased in Asia and Africa. Primary school completion rates have also improved in all regions including sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The literacy rate for girls 15-24 between 1990 and 2008 increased in all regions of the world (Nallari and Griffith, 2011). There is no gap in literacy in East Asia and the Pacific. While gains were made in South Asia, North Africa, and Sub-Sahara Africa, there is still a large gap of 10 per cent between male and female literary and in sub-Saharan Africa the overall literacy rate is also low.

Physical and Socio-Cultural Dimension

The 1990s brought international attention to issues of sexual and reproductive rights, violence against women, and gender inequality. Non-discrimination and equality of sexes are some of the principles proclaimed in the international instrument drawn up since the end of the Second World

War. Even in the developing world, in some countries in Asia there are more females than males. Women generally live longer than men but in parts of Asia, particularly China and India due to gender-based discrimination, female life expectancy is lower than that of the males (WHO, 2009). Grown (2010) notes that the least progress has been made in preventing maternal mortality, even though it is easy to do, primarily due to lack of health care. While gains have been made, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa continue to have very high mortality rates (Rogo et al., 2006). Lack of access to primary care, births without attending midwives, and poor nutrition are among the reasons for this high mortality in addition to the HIV/AIDS crisis which has affected all health outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa and will to a greater degree in South Asia as its rates of infections increase. African women are often seen as victims of sexual oppression. At the global level, life expectancy has improved slightly but in East and Central Asia it is now above 70 years. South Asia and North Africa have made the most gains, while sub-Saharan Africa lags behind at mid-50s. Azarnet (2009) uses abortion laws as a measure of empowerment and its impact on women's education in Africa.

Policies that support training of community level midwives have been effective in both South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Some countries in Africa like Burkina Faso and Ghana had reduced their adolescent fertility rates by 10 per cent each while Columbia, Peru, Dominican Republic, Madagascar and Zimbabwe showed a reverse trend of increasing rates (Morrison et al., 2008). In South Asia, high adolescent fertility takes place within marriage, hence an important policy consideration is raising the age of marriage (Grown, 2010). In South Asia and China, where sons are valued over daughters, this lack of autonomy is particularly evident in the increase in sex-selective abortions, often against the women's wishes. Women's movements in India have been successful in getting legislation against such abortions and have also focused on public awareness campaigns that promote the value of daughters. While gains have been made, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa continue to have very high mortality rates.

Regional Institutions in Empowering Women

The International Women's Movement, punctuated by world conferences of the United Nations on women, has for a long time attracted the attention of specialised agencies which take care of development as well as government for the need to integrate the woman's dimension in the development process. The result was the proclamation by the General Assembly of the United Nations naming the year 1975 as the International Year of the Woman with a three-fold objective: equality, development and peace. In the early 70s when the concept of Women Development (WID) emerged, then a thought process aimed at tying the question of the feminine gender to development, by showing the advantages that exist in this link, especially at the level of economic growth, showed how it was wise to "invest in women." This approach lays emphasis on the contributions that women could offer to development, rather than how development could improve the lifestyle of women. Furthermore, the concept of Women in Development led to another concept that of Gender and Development (GAD) and was understood to have aimed at a social rapport between the women and men.

To establish gender equality around the world, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was established as a separate fund within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1984. The General Assembly instructed it to ensure women's involvement with mainstream activities. The ILO Convention No. 156 on `Workers with Family ' provides guidance on policies and measures needed to enable female and male workers to combine family and work responsibilities. To help remedy worldwide gender disparities, the UN's Millennium Development Goals prioritise gender equality and empowerment of women. It is necessary to evaluate the deeds of women's movements for peace in Africa in order to ensure that they form pressure groups to make themselves ' heard, by organising marches, to proclaim messages, and call upon the fighting factions to halt their carnage. Women are the main victims of crisis on the African continent and are aware of the important role they have to play for peace and so actively organise these needs at the national, regional and international levels to promote tolerance and peace. At the Organisation of African Union (OAU), the women section is particularly committed to these causes. It promotes African women and their participation in the decision making process, by organising conferences for groups of female members of governments as well as female related NGOs. This is done in collaboration with other bodies, especially women's units of the Economic Commission of Africa (ECA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In the armed conflict areas such as Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan, women's movement for peace have been known to make spirited efforts. For example, in Liberia, even if women had no chance to take part in

negotiations and in meetings held by the different parties, all the women's associations and groups were mobilised and have succeeded in making declarations to the United Nations, the OAU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The goal of the Population Reference Bureau's Middle East and North Africa Programme was to respond to regional needs for timely and objective information, an analysis on the population, socio-economic and reproductive health issues. The programme raises awareness of these issues among decision-makers in the region and in the international community, in the hope of influencing policies and improving the lives of people living in the region. NGOs have been prime actors in educating women and, as a result, produce some of the greatest political leaders in the global society today. One such example is Marie Elise Gbedo who was the first African woman candidate for the Presidential Elections in Benin in 2001 and 2006. Programmes in Asia have started to publicly address the causes of trafficking in women in the area. The participants in the Asia/African Forum on the Economic Empowerment of Women, having met in Bangkok from July 16-18, 1997, acknowledged the progress made in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995; the Tokyo Declaration on African Development, 1993; the recommendations of the first and second Asia/Africa Forums in Bandung, 1994, and Bangkok, 1997; and, the work of the First Global Women Entrepreneurs' Trade Fair and Investment Forum in Ghana, 1996.

Challenges and Limitations Facing Women

Achieving gender equality, however, is a slow process, since it challenges one of the most deeply entrenched of all human attitudes. Violence against women of all kinds is routine. During an armed conflict or internal strife, the women are not exempted. She endures the same suffering as the whole population; be it mass execution, torture, arbitrary imprisonment, forced migration, taking of hostages, threats and intimidation. She is equally subjected to direct and indirect effects of hostilities such as bombings, famine and epidemics. Besides she is the single target for all kinds of sexual violence. However, comparison of estimated data demonstrate that Philippines and Vietnam, both in South East Asia, have the highest education level, highest rates of economic participation, and the lowest fertility rates (Chaudhuri, 2010). Cambodia has the highest female to male ratio. Pakistan and Nepal have lowest education. Pakistan and Bangladesh have the lowest economic participation rates and highest fertility rates. India has the lowest sex ratio (Chaudhuri, 2010).

Some of the challenges facing microfinance industry in Africa are: High cost of service delivery with poor infrastructure, regulatory policy issues and the need to develop institutional leadership. Because the infrastructure and communication technology remain largely underdeveloped in Africa, it is significantly more expensive for microfinance institutions (MFI) in Africa to operate compared to their peers in developing countries. Another challenge in Africa is policy making and government regulations, which vary in each country. Government regulations faced by MFIs are usually ambiguous and opaque. For instance in 2008, Kenya Women Finance Trust fought for increased transparency in regulatory policy by urging the government to approve and publish regulations which guide MFIs in the formalisation process (Janet, 2014). The Microfinance Act of 2006 of Kenya became operational on 2 May 2008 and allowed MFIs to register under it to take deposits. A low population density area where the number of women to form a viable group is inadequate also poses a great challenge. The situation is complicated by the unequal distribution of the family resources, which makes it difficult for women to raise the necessary savings and participate in a group. Thereby underlying the course of a good approach to solve the problems of the poor women in rural and disadvantaged areas of Africa to move out of their poverty levels. For this, the women must develop the capacity to generate and maintain their means of livelihood so as to increase their savings.

CARE, the global poverty fighting organisation, announced the start of its new `Pathways' programme on 23 February 2012. Pathways will enable 150,000 women farmers of small holdings and their families for over five years, living in Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Malawi, Mali and Tanzania to improve food security and implement a model which will improve their access to land, water, markets, agricultural training and services. The Pathways model is centered on the proven success of CARE's Village Savings and Loans Associations, and will work with community-based savings and producer organisations to build their capacities and skills for additional sustainable agricultural activities and markets. Technology helps women increase their productivity as well as launch income-generating pursuits and entrepreneurial ventures. These kinds of outcomes empower women to become stronger leaders and to contribute more effectively financially to their families, communities and countries.

The challenges of gender inequality in society at large are:

- In Ghana as in many other countries, women's life prospects are hampered by inequalities in gender relations. Although not all women are uniformly affected by this situation, only a minority of women are able to break into the male dominated professions and activities.
- The absence of women from political structures is serious because they represent the most important areas of decision making in society.

Forced marriage and bride-burning are still prevalent in the Asian sub-continent. A pregnant woman in Africa is 180 times more likely to die of pregnancy complications than in Western Europe. India and China, with the fastest economic growth rates, also have the highest number of missing girls, so economic growth does not guarantee gender equality or security (Beneria, 2007; Elson, 2006; Harcourt, 2010; Molyneux and Razavi, 2006). Because of the society's perception of a woman's place is the home, some women are not aware of the existence or availability of other sources of finance.

Economic development efforts to combat poverty can only succeed if women are part of the solution.

Policy Recommendations

Empowering women requires much more than providing access to health care, education and financial resources. In addition to improving their own health, knowledge and skills, women must also contend with social structures, cultural traditions and personal relationships that affect their success. Empowerment is a process by which those who have been denied power gain power, in particular, the ability to make strategic life choices. For women, these could be the capacity to choose a marriage partner, a livelihood, or whether or not to have children. Globalisation has greatly improved the lives of women worldwide, particularly the lives of women in the developing world. There have been some positive changes in some key indicators of women's empowerment particularly in enrolments at the primary education level and to some extent in the secondary and tertiary levels and increased participation in national parliaments and in the labour force. To a lesser extent there has also been a decline in maternal mortality and fertility and increase in contraceptive use. However, the changes vary across regions—with South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa showing the greatest gaps—and within countries urban and rural poor, ethnic minorities, and older and disabled women fare worse on all indicators. Training community-based health care providers has also been successful in addressing basic health care as well as supporting HIV/AIDS patients in South Africa and India (Desai, 2010). Bangladesh performs relatively well on economic participation, Malaysia on health and well-being (Lopez-Claros and Zahidi, n.d). But the great challenges remain. Despite having ratified the Beijing Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, most of these nations lack a coherent strategy for empowering women. Many people especially girls are still excluded from education, fertility and employment and the important elements in women's empowerment.

- The woman still has to be ready to fight and to seize the opportunities offered by the democratic process to occupy positions of their choice to decide their future.
- It is necessary to firmly support women NGOs that are emerging and women entrepreneurs because they indicate that women are agents for development.
- It is important to encourage the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate the revitalisation of positive socio-cultural values and conflict prevention at national levels with provisions giving priority to women.
- Make the empowerment of women and girls a priority of development policy.
- Increase gender equality in terms of access to and control over land and property rights.
- Women's rights should be made known and enforced.
- Empowering women requires changing perceptions of women's roles in family and society.
- Establish networks of female entrepreneurs, gender-based non-governmental organisations, women in the labour force and government officials from Asia and Africa.

To empower a woman, it is imperative to ensure her: economic participation, economic opportunity, political empowerment, educational attainment, health and well-being. However, women's economic empowerment is the most important factor contributing to equality between women and men.

Conclusion

No country either in Asia or in Africa has yet managed to eliminate the gender gap. Women have the potential to change their own economic status, as well as that of the communities and countries in which they live. It is time to increase awareness of the need to empower women through measures to increase social, economic and political equity, and broader access to fundamental human rights, improvements in nutrition, basic health and education. Experience in developing countries of Asia and Africa show that empowering women is a powerful strategy for reducing poverty and achieving other developmental goals. When women own property and earn money from it, they may have more bargaining power at home. This in turn can help reduce their vulnerability to domestic violence. When women are economically empowered, they raise healthier, better and educated families. Investing in women helps speed up the development of local economies and creates more equitable societies. Women can not only address and deal with their own issues, but with issues of the state, with issues of war and peace, with issues of their communities. Women are ready and eager to assume their rightful place in their societies, individually as well as collectively.

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Indian Teenagers and their Family Relations in the Social Networking Era

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to find out the difference in the social networking media usage patterns of teenagers and their time spent on family communication. A secondary objective is to determine the structure of attachment of teenagers to their parents. A structured questionnaire was administered to 556 students (using social networking media) from high schools and higher secondary schools in India. Results show that there is a significant difference between the teenagers with internet at home and those without internet at home in their time spent for family communication. The factor analysis of the structure of teenagers' attachment to their parents yielded a three factored solution. Subsequent factor analyses of the structure of attachment of boys and girls to their parents also yielded three factors. However, some changes were observed in the factor structures of these different groups.

Keywords

social networking media; teenagers; family communication; family relation; parent attachment

Introduction

Family communication refers to the way verbal and non-verbal information is exchanged between family members (Epstein et al., 1993). One of the most difficult challenges families face today is finding time to spend together. Graham and Crossan (1996) stated that lack of time for family communication was a greater problem than the lack of money. There is a strong link between communication patterns followed in each family and satisfaction within family relationships (Noller and Fitzpatrick, 1990). Markman (1981) found that couples who rated more positively their communication within the family were found to be more satisfied with their family relationship even when interviewed after a gap of five years. These studies indicate that communication within the family is an essential element of family bond or attachment. Parents and children are found to be closer if they spend more time interacting with each other. The main obstacle between parent and the adolescent is the "stubborn insularity" of the adolescent and in the present age, this narrow-mindedness has its own electronic enabling techniques (Siegel, 2012: 21). Today's teenagers are influenced by the multimedia technology to a great extent. Teens are spending increasing amounts of time, using the internet and cell phones. Teenagers and youth today are unable to think about a day in their life without any of these media facilities(Diamanduros et al., 2007). In 2004, an American survey revealed that 73 per cent of teenagers owned a computer and 44 per cent owned a mobile phone. By 2009, 75 per cent of American teenagers owned cell phones (Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2010).

If it was the advent of the mobile phone which caused such a great concern in the past, now it is the turn of the internet and social networking media. Online social networking sites like Facebook and YouTube are fast emerging as the most popular services on the Web (Thompson, 2014). These systems are able to capture a significant portion of Web users. In January 2011, Facebook counted more than 500 million active users and about 50 per cent of active users log on to Facebook at any

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given day (http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics). Statistics reveal that if it were to be taken as a country, then Facebook will be the third largest country today in terms of population after China and India (http://www.economist.com/node/16660401). An online gaming site named roi world conducted a study in June 2010 and concluded that on average, American teenagers spend around two hours and 20 minutes a day on the internet and most of that time (1 hour and 50 minutes; i.e., almost 80 per cent of their 'internet time') on a social networking site (http://www.scribd.com/doc/33751159/Teens-Social-Networks-Study-June-2010). According to their study the time spent online on a weekly basis by a teenager is 16 hours and 24 minutes, in which approximately 13 hours will be spent on social Networking Sites.

In a Symantec Study in 2007, the researchers found that parents of teenagers in Australia thought that it was only six hours a week that their teen-aged sons and daughters were spending online; whereas in reality the young people reported spending an average of 12 hours online (www.ozchild.org.au/userfiles/docs/ozchild/research). This is true in the case of Indian teenagers too as studies reveal (Shastri, 2011; Varghese and Nivedhitha, 2012). Whereas the teenagers in the West are reporting increasing amounts of Facebook fatigue (the exhaustion due to over use of Facebook) (http://www.scribd.com/doc/33751159/Teens-Social-Networks-Study-June-2010), the Indian teenagers are getting more and more attached to the social networking sites (Shastri, 2011). Teenagers find these sites as a means of easy communication with their peers. India is known for its strong family bonds and attachment between parents and children. The prevalent system in India is such that the children live with their parents at least upto their marriage.

According to family communication experts like Laura Schlessinger, social networking sites have replaced the intimate interactions which usedto occur within most families (http://www.examiner.com/article/social-networking-sites-and-the-effects-on-family-interaction). She informs us that these sites are having a negative effect on the family structure and young teens are most affected by this growing trend (Moore, 2009). RACP Study in 2004 concluded that there is a negative correlation between time spent on the media and the chances of interacting with the family members (https://www.racp.edu.au/index.cfm/RACP,+2004). National Altitudinal Poll conducted in 2006 revealed that the number one media concern for parents has shifted from television to the Internet: 85 per cent of the parents reported that among all forms of media, the internet posed the greatest risk to their children (www.commonsense.com). Internet today, through its social networking hands, provides the teenagers freedom and privacy in communicating whatever they want to and to whomever they like. Teenagers may find it easy to communicate with anyone outside their friends' circle or family through social networking sites and this in turn accounts for a sizeable amount of time spent with or even without the knowledge of their parents. Researchers like Kavitha Subrahmanyam would say that the socially anxious teens have a tendency to identify communication online as a substitute for real life interactions (Subrahmanyam et al., 2004).

Some researchers have argued that `The internet' use in the home is an asocial activity (Nie and Hillygus, 2002); however, another study argued that the internet sustains social activities (Wellman and Haythornthwaite, 2002). Valentine (2004) states that though the teenagers have desire to be part of the general political or cultural public they are denied the right to do that. Danah Boyd is of the opinion that teenagers are always restricted from entering into the arena of "publics" because of their under age. But once they are "of age", the so called "public" sphere enlarges itself to include them too (Boyd, 2008: 21). It is in this context the teenagers make their own "counter publics" (Warner, 2002). Teenagers at this stage will have their own public sphere. They make their own peer publics. Hine suggests that the freedom and rights of teenagers are eroding more in this century compared to that of the last centuries (Hine, 1999). The social networking sites have entered the teenagers' world as an extension of their peer publics. The freedom and personal space the social networking sites provide to them have worked as a catalyst to attract more and more teenagers to this fascinating networking world.

Review of Literature

There are not much studies or research conducted on how social media or any other new media devices influence the teenagers' relationship with their parents. But indications of the existing studies are that social media may increase the amount of time for peer communication at the expense of their interaction with the parents or family members (Subrahmanyam and Greenfield, 2008). The review of literature considers several components of family communication and social networking media usage and is presented under three headings: Effect of the internet on family relations and family communication, teenagers and social networking media, and teenagers' attachment to parents.

Effect of the Internet on Family Relation and Family Communication

Communication, according to many researchers, is a key to healthy relationships and attachments in the family. Members of the families that communicate in healthy ways are more capable of problem-solving and tend to be more contented with the bonds they cherish in their families (Peterson, 2009). It is through communication that we achieve quality relationships in any group. Researchers have found that communication acts as a good cause for quality human relationship in different circumstances (Montgomery, 1988). Many studies tell us that in order to have effective family communication the family members must listen actively, communicate frequently, openly and honestly, and must think about the person with whom they are communicating (Peterson, 2009). A research conducted in the USA in 2007 found that the internet use was significantly correlated with decreases in face-to-face communication with family members and with decreases in desire for face-to-face communication with family members. Again, the internet use displaces not only the time the teens spent with the family, but also their desire for spending time with parents and family members (Shim, 2007). A study by Nie and Erbring (2000) found that the more people use the internet, the lonelier they feel and the less they engage in interpersonal communication even among their families. Another study noted that people who like to reveal their true self on the internet than in face-to-face communication will be more likely to form online relationships (McKenna et al., 2002). Some of the studies found a positive impact of the internet on social interaction within the family and friends (Lee and Kuo, 2002) and on community and political involvement (Katz et al., 2001). But there are more studies which reported negative impacts of the internet use on people's face-to-face communication (Shim, 2007).

Teenagers and Social Networking Media

Early researches on social networking media show that teenagers make use of the new media devices to strengthen their already existing friendships and try to form new friends (Cliff et. al., 2006). Other researchers came up with findings that adolescents use social networking sites to communicate with their offline friends and to make plans for their holidays or weekends (Lenhart and Madden, 2007). A focus group study made it clear that many teenagers have more than one account in MySpace and the parents can see only one of them (Subrahmanyam and Greenfield, 2008). Another study conducted in 2012 with the teenagers and their parents revealed that many of the Parents do not know what their children are exactly doing on the internet. Many of them are unaware of the nuances of Facebook and other social networking sites. Some even said the only interaction that happens in their family between the teen-aged son and the parents is about money (Varghese and Nivedhitha, 2012). Students in a research identified, that typing the address for their favourite sites (especially Facebook) had become "muscle memory" (Young, 2012). A 2002 survey results showed that an increase in the internet use by the teenagers caused a drastic decrease in their television viewing, but stimulated newspaper reading, radio listening, and socialising with friends. However, it had no significant impact on physical activities and interaction with family members (Lee and Kuo, 2002). In a study conducted in 2012, teenagers revealed that once they come back from the schools the first thing they do is to log in to the Facebook and start chatting (Varghese and Nivedhitha, 2012). An Indian study observed that the percentage of those getting addicted to these sites was much higher for adolescents and youngsters than other users and the more the time spent on Facebook, the more the chances of losing their control over the desire to log in (Neelakantan, 2011).

Teenagers' Attachment to Parents

Teenagers with strong attachment to parents are less likely to disobey their parents for fear of losing an existing strong emotional bond and thus will understand better the justifications behind the standards of expectations (Rankin and Wells, 1990). Teenagers with higher levels of parental attachment are at lower risk of having suicidal tendencies (Maimon et al., 2010). But unfortunately "the internet is the air they breathe" and kids spent at least four hours a day on social media in such a way that they get disengaged from their family and the outside world (Siegel, 2012: 19). Attachment is explained as an "enduring bond of substantial intensity of affection and a lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (Bowlby, 1969:194). Bowlby (1969) concluded that human beings at any stage of development are most well-adjusted when they have confidence in the accessibility and responsiveness of a trusted other person. An observational research in 1978 has found out that attachment traits can be reliably classified as secure and insecure (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Weiss (1982) observes that while there are increasing intervals during which parental accessibility is not necessary for teenagers' felt security, as their confidence in their parents'

commitment to them remains crucial. Thus there are three factors identified as key to parent-teenager attachment. They are:

1. Parental understanding and respect and mutual trust (Trust)
2. Extent and quality of verbal communication (Communication)
3. Feelings of alienation or isolation (Alienation) (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987).

Methodology

This study was conducted in Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala, a southern Indian state. The city for the study was first divided into different zones. Schools, public (government) and private, were selected from each of these zones. Three government schools (out of six) and three private schools (out of six) were randomly selected from the north zone. Four government schools (out of eight) and four private schools (out of nine) were selected randomly from the central zone. Similarly, three government schools (out of five) and three private schools (out of seven) were randomly selected from the south zone. Permission to administer questionnaire to school students was obtained from the school managements. During the course of the study two more government schools were added in order to increase the number of respondents from government schools. Overall, 12 government and nine private schools were selected from the city. A total of 556 teenagers (292 males and 264 females) from Classes 8th to 12th were the participants in the study. The questionnaire was administered to all the students in a class who use social networking media. Table 1 shows the number of students selected from two types of schools and classes (VIII to XII) for the study.

Table 1
Class-wise distribution of respondents

Class	Government School	Private School	Total
VIII	5	16	21
IX	23	72	95
X	104	60	164
XI	49	58	107
XII	72	97	169
Total	253	303	556

A survey method using a structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire had three sections of demographics, The internet usage and parent attachment inventory. This paper is based on analysis of the data obtained from these three sections of the questionnaire. The first section of the questionnaire consists of questions related to the demographic details like age, class, gender and the type of school. The second section includes questions pertaining to the internet usage patterns of teenagers. Questions like preferred online activity, time spent online daily, time spent online for education, and the time spent for social networking media were included in this section. The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) was taken as the basis for the study (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987). The inventory was developed by Armsden and Greenfield in the early 1980s to analyse the level of attachment of the teenagers to their parents as well as their peers. The attachment to parent scale comprised of 28 items whereas the peer attachment scale had 25 items. It was administered to 179 undergraduate students at the University of Washington. This study adapts the 28-item parent attachment inventory. The Armsden and Greenfield (1987) study yielded three factors, namely, trust (α=.91), communication (α =.91) and alienation (α =.86). In this study, nine items that had high loadings on the three factors in the Armsden and Greenberg (1987) study cited above were selected. The items selected are:

Trust: Parents respect my feelings; parents accept me as I am; and parents trust my decision.

Communication: I can count on my parents; I will tell my parents about my problems and troubles; and my parents encourage me to talk.

Alienation: My parents don't understand what I am going through these days; I get upset a lot more than what my parents know about; and I feel that no one understands me.
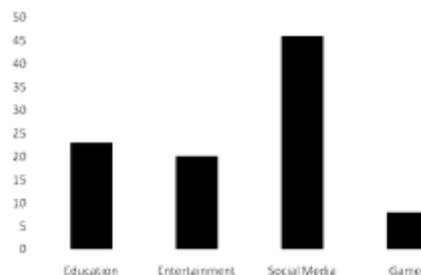
Hypotheses:

1. Time spent for family communication and social networking media usage are correlated.
2. There is a difference between boys and girls in their family interaction time patterns.
3. There is a difference between boys and girls in their time spent on social networking media.
4. There is a difference between teenagers with the internet facility at home and those without the internet facility at home in their time spent for communication with their family members.
5. There is a difference between teenagers with the internet facility at home and those without the internet facility at home in their time spent on social networking media.
6. There is a difference between high school and higher secondary school students in their time spent for communication with their family members.
7. There is a difference between high school and higher secondary school students in their time spent on social networking media.

In addition, this study is aimed at finding out the structure of teenagers' attachment to their parents. The study also examined whether there were any differences in the structure of attachment of boys and girls to their parents.

Results

For about half (46.4%) of the respondents, social networking media is the most preferred activity online. For 23 per cent education is the most preferred activity while 20 per cent use the internet mainly for entertainment purpose. Eight per cent prefer to play games online (Figure 1). Around 35 per cent of the students spend more than two hours on the internet for social networking sites. Around 31 per cent of the teenagers log into their favourite social media sites more than once a day. A slight difference is seen between boys and girls in their frequency of logging in to the social networking sites. Thirty-two per cent of girls log in to social networking sites more than once a day whereas only 30 per cent of boys log in to it more than once a day. Facebook is the most preferred social networking media for 82 per cent of teenagers.

Figure 1
Preferred online activity of teenagers

Hypothesis 1:

Those who spent more time on social networking media were found to be talking less with the n family members. There is a significant but negative correlation between the time spent on family communication and time spent on social networking media (p = .0005, r =-.416).

Hypothesis 2:
No significant difference was found between boys and girls in their family interaction time patterns (t (553)= -1.29, p>.05).
Hypothesis 3:
There is a significant difference seen between boys and girls in their social networking site usage (t (552)= -.54, p<.05). Sixteen per cent of girls spend more than four hours daily for social networking sites whereas only 11 per cent of boys spend more than four hours in these sites.
Hypothesis 4:
There is significant difference between the teenagers with the internet access at home and those without the internet access at home, in their time spent for family communication daily. Those who have the internet facility at home tend to talk less (around one hour per day) with their family

members compared to those without the internet access at home (around two hours) (t(553)= -6.18, p<.05).

Hypothesis 5:

Teenagers with the internet facility at home tend to spend considerably more time on social networking media (around three hours on an average per day) than those without the internet at home (less than one hour) (t(552)=15.38, p<.05).

Hypothesis 6:

High School students are found to talk more (around two hours) with their family members compared to their Higher Secondary counterparts (t(553)= 3.77, p<.05).

Hypothesis 7:

There is a significant difference between high school and higher secondary school students in their time spent on social networking media (t(551)= -4.28, p<.05). Higher secondary students are spending comparatively more time (2-3 hours per day) on social networking media than the high school students (1-2 hours per day).

Structure of Attachment of Teenagers to their Parents

One of the main objectives of this study was to find out the structure of teenagers' attachment to their parents. At a secondary stage, the sample was split into two groups based on gender and two factor analyses were conducted to examine whether there were any differences in the structure of attachment of boys and girls to their parents. The nine items of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment were factor analysed using principal component analysis with varimax rotation. A three factor solution was obtained. Table 2 shows the results of factor analysis of the nine items of Parent Attachment Inventory. The three factors cumulatively explained 68 per cent of the variance.

Table 2
Structure of attachment of teenagers to their parents

Factor	Items	Loading	Reliability
	Parents respect my feelings	.81	
Trust	Parents accept me as I am	.72	.84
	Parents trust my decision	.70	
	I will tell my parents about my problems	.58	
Alienation	My parents don't understand what I am going through these days	.78	.72
	I get upset a lot more than my parents know about	.76	
	I feel that no one understands me	.71	
Communication	I can count on my parents	.82	.61
	Parents encourage me to talk	.63	
Total Variance Explained (per cent)			68
Principal component analysis with varimax rotation			

(N=556)

Trust

The items loading high on this factor are: 'Parents respect my feelings', 'Parents accept me as I am', 'Parents trust my decision' and 'I will tell my parents about my problems and troubles.' This factor accounted for 27 per cent of the variance and the reliability was 0.84.

Alienation

The three items loading high on the factor Alienation are: 'My parents don't understand what I am going through all these days', 'I feel that no one understands me' and 'I get upset a lot more than my parents know about'. It accounted for almost 22 per cent of the variance and the reliability was 0.72.

Communication

Items loaded high on the factor communication are: 'Parents encourage me to talk about my difficulties'; 'I can count on my parents'. This factor accounted for 19 per cent of the variance and the reliability was 0.61.

Gender Based Factor Analysis

Having examined the structure of attachment of teenagers to their parents, we examined whether the structure of Parent Attachment Inventory is similar for boys and the girls. Using principal component analysis with varimax rotation a three factor structure was obtained for the male student group. These three factors cumulatively explained 65 per cent of the variance (Table 3).

Table 3
Structure of attachment of male students to their parents

Factor	Items	Loading	Reliability
	I can count on my parents	.80	
Communication	I will tell my parents about my problems	.63	.69
	Parents encourage me to talk	.60	
	Parents Respect My feelings	.81	
Trust	Parents accept me as I am	.73	.76
	Parents trust my decision	.53	
	My parents don't understand what I am going	.77	.67
Alienation	through these days		
	I get upset a lot more than my parents know about	.75	
	I feel that no one understands me	.69	
Total Variance Explained (per cent)			65
Principal component analysis with varimax rotation			

(N=292)

Next, we repeated the procedure to determine the factor structure of female students' attachment to their parents. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation yielded three factors structure. These three factors cumulatively explained 69 per cent of the variance (Table 4).

Table 4
Structure of attachment of female students to their parents

Factor	Items	Loading	Reliability
	Parents respect my feelings	.79	
Trust	Parents trust my decision	.69	.87
	Parents accept me as I am	.66	
	I will tell my parents about my problems	.58	
	My parents don't understand what I am going through these days	.82	.76
Alienation	I feel that no one understands me	.70	
	I get upset a lot more than my parents know about	.58	
Communication	I can count on my parents	.82	.68
	Parents encourage me to talk	.47	
Total Variance Explained (per cent)			72
Principal component analysis with varimax rotation			

(N=264)

Overall, the number of factors obtained from factor analyses of the three groups yields a three factor solution. However, differences can be observed among the male and female groups and the general group. Another analysis based on the types of attachment of teenagers to their parents gave us the result that 67 per cent of teenagers are securely attached to their parents while 33 per cent are insecurely attached to their parents.

Discussion

This study attempted to understand the relationship between the time spent for social networking media and time spent for family communication. It was also an attempt to understand whether gender, class or the internet facility at home makes any difference in the time spent by teenagers for family communication and the time spent on social networking media. Those who spent more time on social networking media were found to be talking less with the family members. Gender makes no

significant difference on the time spent for family communication. But, there is a significant difference between boys and girls in their time spent on social networking media.

A statistically significant difference was found between the teenagers with the internet access at home and those without the internet access at home in their time spent on family communication daily. The availability of the internet at home makes it easy for the teenagers to use it for a longer period which in turn may interfere with the time they are supposed to spend on communication with the family members. The higher secondary students are spending more time on social networking media and on the other hand high school students are found to talk more with their family members. This will be because of the amount of freedom they enjoy being both a senior at school and an elder at home. All these could be well related to the fact that there are a lot of teenagers who do not have a secure attachment with their parents. Though the majority (67%) of teenagers are securely attached to their parents we should not neglect the fact that 33 per cent are having alarmingly low levels of parental attachment. This could be regarded as a threat for family relations as the number of teenagers and elders using Facebook is going up day by day.

Teenagers prefer Facebook among all the social media sites. According to a recent survey by the internet and Mobile Association of India Facebook is the leading website accessed by almost 97 per cent of all social media users in India (Kannan, 2013). The recently conducted Times of India-Ipsos survey found out that 29 per cent of the teenagers in Kochi have Facebook accounts whereas 33 per cent of teens in Bangalore and only four per cent of teens in Chennai have Facebook accounts (Nair, 2013). The three cities (Chennai, Bangalore and Kochi) are located in south India.

Factor analysis of the parent attachment inventory showed some differences between the attachment pattern of boys and girls. The factors and the items in them varied in the case of boys and girls. Whereas the boy's group factor structure was similar to the structure that Armsden and Greenberg study found, the girl's group factor structure was similar to the factor analysis of the overall sample of this study (Table 5). There was no significant difference found between males and females in their levels of parent attachment in a 2008 study (Ma and Huebner, 2008).

Table 5
Structure of attachment to parents of three groups

Factor Label	Variance Explained	alpha	Factor Rank	Summary
Trust	Total sample = 27	0.84	1	Trust is the most important factor explaining the largest amount of variance for both the general group and the girls' group. But it is ranked second for the boys' group. The number of items was three in boys group. The item 'I will tell my parents about my problems' which is an item on communication for boys and was loaded highly on Trust in both the general group and the girls' group.
		0.76	2	
		0.87	1	
	Male = 21			
	Female = 27			
Alienation	Total Sample = 22	0.72	2	Alienation ranks second in both the general group and the girls' group. But this was the third ranked factor in boys' group. The items were the same in all the three groups. The items 'I get upset a lot more than my parents know about' and 'I feel that no one understands me' swap positions for the boys' group.
		0.67	3	
	Male= 20	0.76	2	
	Female= 24			

Communication	Total Sample =	0.61	3	Communication is the first ranked factor
	19	0.69	1	in boys' group, whereas it ranked third
	Male= 24	0.68	3	on both general group and girls' group.
	Female= 21			The factor has two items in both general
				group and girls' group. Boys group has
				three items. The item 'I will tell my
				parent about my problems' is an
				addition to this factor only in the boys'
				group.

Note: The three groups are: group comprising both boys and girls; group comprising of boys, and group comprising of girls.

This study examined the structure of attachment of teenagers to their parents. Factor analyses were done three times for the general group, the boys group and girls group. Differences were found among the three groups based on the structure of factors and of the items loaded on each of the factors. Except for the factor Alienation the number of items and their order were different for the different groups.

Conclusion

This study was designed to focus on a new aspect of the social networking media, namely its influence on family relationships. We would like to draw some conclusions and give some suggestions at the end of this study. It was found that the more the time the teenagers spend on social networking media the less the time they spend on family communication. The results of this study could be taken into a social discussion level from the academic level. Teenagers always wanted to be noticed, to be listened to and to be loved. David Elkind suggests that teenagers think about an imaginary audience whom they think are watching them always (Elkind, 1967). But generally teenagers are deprived of the chances to get noticed or listened to in public. Danah Boyd (2008) says that teenagers are not given a chance to enter the public sphere of the elders. Warner (2004) suggests that teenagers try making their own counter `publics.' This space can be called peer public. Teenagers get their needs to be loved, listened to and noticed in this peer public when that peer public is made online. Facebook provides them a stage to get these needs fulfilled. If teenagers do not get their needs fulfilled in the general public they will turn to platforms where their needs are met. If the family cannot provide them a situation where their needs are noticed, or listened to and the need to be loved are met, then, they in turn will look for its fulfillment in Facebook or other social networking sites as other alternatives. A possible solution for this crisis of the teenagers' and their over-dependence on Facebook could be the readiness of families to give time for their teenagers so that they may be noticed in families, they may be listened to by the family members and they may be loved by the family members. Freedom and personal space are two things teenagers would like to have in their age. Parents and family members should learn to allow freedom to the teenagers in the family and the teenagers must learn to use this freedom responsibly. Teenagers are to be heard by the elders in the family and the elders must respond to their teen talks too. At the same time the wrongdoings of the teenagers must be corrected in privacy. They must have trust towards their parents so that they can reveal anything / any information to their parents in a confidential manner. Teenagers must be regarded a little more seriously and appreciated profusely. It could be in the form of a simple gift as a token of appreciation or a favourite dish of their choice. Thus "silent correction" and "loud appreciation" are two elements of better parenting as far as teenagers are concerned. Teenagers will be more attached to the family if and only if they get a feeling that the "like" and "comment" in Facebook are nothing compared to the respect they get in their own families.

Though we cannot, from this survey method, conclude the cause-effect relationship between these two variables (usage of social networking media and time for family communication), the findings of the study stresses the importance of further experimental and elaborative studies on this topic. This study was conducted only for a group of 556 teenagers and that too from a single city of south India. In order to have a wider understanding of the social networking media usage patterns of Indian youth, an extensive study based on a large scale research setting, connecting all the regions of the nation is required.

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Social Exclusion among Elderly: Analysis on Ambedkar's Humanistic Perspective

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Abstract

This paper is on the social exclusion of elderly through an analysis of several of their exclusionary dimensions. It discusses the humanistic philosophy of Ambedkar. The study finds as a specific vulnerable group, the elderly population which is totally not free from any kind of deprivation. The emphasis is on elder people's 'engineered' dependency and marginalisation, which are attributed to factors such as imposed retirement age, restricted social roles, inadequate retirement income, exclusion from labour market and from the social domains of everyday life, and from the capability to exercise economic choice. It discusses the gender dimension too, namely the exclusion of the elderly persons and finally the paper calls for the recognition of the problem of elderly people's exclusion in the light of Ambedkar's humanism and for social work intervention to solve these problems through a community based inclusive care strategy.

Keywords

social exclusion; elderly; dependency; marginalisation; gender; humanism

Introduction

Ambedkar's interpretation of caste system with regards to its exclusionary character and consequences has important lessons, for various contemporary efforts to develop inclusive policies not only for groups suffering from the institution of caste and untouchability but also for groups suffering from discrimination associated with ethnicity, religion, gender and other forms of exclusion. It recognises that group-based exclusion essentially generates outcomes which are detrimental for the excluded group. This paper deals with realities of social exclusion among elderly in contemporary India, seeks solutions by critically analysing the same in the light of Ambedkar's humanistic philosophy, with special significance in regard to the gender aspects in the elderly especially their social exclusion.

Elderly as Vulnerable

Ageing is a universal biological fact and a natural process. It begins from the day we are born, or perhaps even before. The perception of age, however, is socially constructed. Isolation, exclusion and marginalisation of the older persons are the consequences of age discrimination. It not only undermines the status of the older people /persons, but also threatens the overall development of the society. The quality of life of the older persons however, can be improved by mainstreaming their concerns systematically into the overall developmental agenda.

In the modern times, the role of the family has been undergoing significant changes. Even in the traditional societies of Asia or Africa there is a visible change taking place as far as the role and function of the family is concerned. The traditional joint family system is gradually making way for the nuclear family mode. The family, nevertheless, occupies a unique place in the traditional, as well

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as modern societies even today. It assumes diverse forms and functions that vary from region to region. In a society, as large, culturally diverse and complex as India, changes take place at different pace /speeds and at different levels of population. As such, the directions and pattern of change tend to vary not only among different segments of society, but also in different kinds of family organisations, which vary considerably both structurally and functionally. Family, which has been predominantly joint or extended one, remained stable despite some marked and drastic social, political, economic and religious changes over the last few decades. It has, however, retained certain structural forms and traditional values. The historical cultural tradition of care and respect for the elderly within the family and the community has made the task of caring and empowering the aged relatively smooth and easy, both for the society and the government of India.

Since the traditional norms and values of the Indian society laid stress on respect and care for the aged, the aged members of the family were normally taken care of by the family itself. In recent times, the socio-economic transformation has affected every aspect of the traditional Indian society. Industrialisation with resultant urbanisation and migration of population has affected institutions like the age-old joint family. Technological advancement, impact of mass media and higher degree of mobility has influenced long established life styles, conventional value systems and the customary place given to the aged and women in the society. Thus, the society is witnessing a gradual but definite withering of the joint family system as a result of which a section of the family, primarily that of the elders, are exposed to emotional neglect and a lack of physical support. This leads to further discrimination and neglect and ultimately to social exclusion.

As a result of demographic changes and the changing family context, it can no longer be assumed that the older persons live comfortably at home receiving care from the family members. Given the trend of the ageing population in India, the older persons face a number of problems ranging from the absence of ensured and sufficient income to support themselves and their dependents, to ill-health, to absence of social security, to loss of a productive social role and recognition, and to non-availability of opportunities for the creative use of their free time. The trend clearly reveals that ageing poses a major challenge, and resources are required towards the support, care and treatment of the older person. There is an emerging need to pay greater attention to ageing issues and to promote holistic policies and programmes for dealing with an ageing society. Care for the older persons is a growing concern of every individual and social security of the elderly is one of the prime responsibilities of the state.

As per the Census 2001, the number of older persons in 2001 was 76.6 million (7.4%). As per Census 2011, the recorded population of older persons is 103.8 million (8.6%). It is projected as 143.7 million in 2021(10.7%) and 301 million in 2051.The growing elderly population will override the younger population by 2050. This indicates the seriousness of the issue especially that of the exclusion of the elderly which may greatly impact the society in India.

The gender position of the elderly reveals that the life expectancy of women is expected to remain higher. For the period 2006-10, the life expectancy among the females was 68.1 against 65.8 of males, which will steadily rise to 72.3 for the females against 69.02 for the males during the period 2011-16. This indicates that the population of elderly women will account for a larger chunk compared to their male counterpart in 60+ age bracket. In absolute terms, the projection for male population in 60+ age group was 35 million in 2001, projected to be 40.7 million in 2006 and 48 million in 2011 as against the female population in same age group was 36 million in 2001, 42 million in 2006 and 50.2 million in 2011. From the projected figures for the year 2006-11 and 2016, 2021 and 2026, it is also clear that the percentage of female population in 70 + age group will outnumber their male counterpart in the same age group. This accounts for a larger female population in the overall 60+ age group compared to the male population in the years to come. Many of the women in the 70+ age group would be either a widow or single without any ostensible support for themselves (Census, 2011).

As the population rate tends to increase, the quality of life of the elderly will be affected in the reverse, unless and until some pro-active steps are taken, as they are at a greater risk of physical and cognitive decline, disability and death (Allessandro et al., 2011). This may further lead to increased discrimination and exclusion of the elderly in the society.

Social Exclusion: A Social Reality

The concept of social exclusion is a matter of debate in the analysis of the exclusionary process of a society. It aims at investigating the life situation of people at the fringes of the mainstream society and thus extending the well-established concepts of poverty and social inequality. Stichweh (1997)

says exclusion is a multi-dimensional, cumulative and sequentially combined process of exclusion from a plurality of functional systems (cited in Littlewood et al., 2007:22). The term 'cumulative' is to be taken in the sense of multiple deprivations that combine to reinforce the state of exclusion. The concept of social exclusion is closely connected to problems of unemployment and poverty in society, later applied to a wider range of areas. Kronauer (1997) listed different dimensions of the multidimensional of the concept as:

Exclusion from labour market in terms of long-term unemployment with no prospect of new work.

Economic exclusion in a more general sense of poverty conceived of in relation to socio-cultural values on standard of living.

Institutional exclusion due to discriminatory treatment of private and public institutions from welfare programmes and exclusion from direct access to public institutions.

Cultural exclusion in connection with dominant patterns of values and behaviour, and expectation towards certain groups in a society.

Social exclusion i.e. exclusion by isolation and lack of social relationships.

Spatial exclusion like local segregation in living area or confinement of the excluded within distinct neighbourhoods or zones of a city or region (cited in Littlewood et al., 2007:22). Social exclusion is viewed as a continuum of combined and accumulated disadvantages, which emerge gradually in a process of reduced social participation. The term marginalisation was coined to define this gradual process and is defined as the process of becoming detached from the organisation and the communities of which a society is composed and from the rights and obligation that it embodies. Marginalisation focuses on relational issues such as inadequate participation, the lack of social integration and the lack of power. Thus, it is closely connected with a denied access to the principal social areas and on the basis of this, to the process of multidimensional disadvantages that finally enables the identification of vulnerable groups in a society (Room, 1999).

Social Exclusion among the Elderly

In the field of research, the concept of social exclusion and marginalisation among elderly has appeared fairly recent (Chamberlayne, 2001). Traditionally the focus has been more on understanding the risks of poverty and deprivation associated with old age. Further developments were to emphasise older people's 'engineered dependency ' and marginalisation which were attributed to factors such as an imposed retirement age, restricted social roles, inadequate retirement income, exclusion from labour market, from social domains of everyday life and from the capacity to exercise the economic choice (Townsend et al., 2000).

More recently social exclusion has been discussed in relation to the increasing income inequalities between older people themselves, particularly when comparing sources and levels of retirement income. Also, the favouritism and discrimination of the local authorities in the selection of the beneficiaries of old age pension schemes is a major cause of economic exclusion among many poor Indian elderly people (Boban and Sultana, 2014). Here, we should have to ensure strict, criteria-based implementation of welfare programmes and policies.

Marginalising older people from the labour force and redundancy measures, so as to favour the younger less expensive labour force, which may be done to reduce the economic resources prior to retirement, may lead to increased risk of poverty or income vulnerability in later life. Scholars consider exclusion in relation to the older people's abilities or opportunities to access and use neighbourhood and community facilities. Room (1999: 238) writes, "deprivation is caused not only by lack of personal resources, but also by insufficient or unsatisfactory community facilities like remotely sited shops and poor public transport networks and so on. Indeed such an environment tends to reinforce and perpetuate household poverty.

Towards a broader approach Scharf et al. (2004) argue that there are specific considerations involved in trying to apply the concept of social exclusion to older people as a specific group. Compared to the other age groups, the elderly people with advancing age will be more likely to experience reduced income and increasing physical impediments. Finally, they argue that the concept needs to be extended both to the home and neighbourhood environments which if not adapted to their physical and mobility needs, then their later life can become a source of exclusion, when they inhibit a physical and social engagement with the others. A sense of 'belonging' in later life may also be lost, if older people find themselves in a community or neighbourhood environment which undergo significant environmental changes, such as closure of amenities or significant movement of local population so that their familiar social and community networks are affected.

Along with the attempts to clarify the conceptual meaning of social exclusion and to identify what it means in particular to older people, researchers have also focussed on measuring its prevalence, and on identifying the factors which are more likely to increase the chance of the older people experiencing exclusion. For example, research has demonstrated that the likelihood of experiencing multiple forms of social exclusion will be greater in old people who live alone and have no children, who are tenants with low income and who find it difficult to be mobile and communicate with others, because they cannot access transport or a telephone facility (Mays et al., 2007). Other contributing factors include the extent of service, provision for health, shopping and transport facilities (Kenway et al., 2005).

The longitudinal study of ageing conducted in the UK has identified seven dimensions of social exclusion. They are: the social exclusion from social relationships, cultural and civic activities, access to basic services, neighbourhood life and financial and material goods or products (Mays et al., 2007). Increasing disability and decline of physical and cognitive efficiency, may isolate the older people from reaching out to the outer society leaving them confined in their home and segregated to a specific space at home. This is leading to certain kind of spatial exclusion by isolation. In the Indian situation, it is a traditional norm that the older person has to withdraw from his social affairs and to engage with salvation-oriented activities. Culturally, their participation and relevance are restricted so that they have to withdraw themselves to introversion. The present generation's aggressive nature and lack of social values of respect and courtesy also contribute largely to this. Moreover, the increased education and additional skills of the new generation make them more in demand in the labour market, and most of the elderly have to depend on their offspring or grandchildren for their sustenance. This may affect their self-esteem to a large extent.

The findings from an on-going study on successful ageing in the Indian scenario by Boban and Sultana (2014) highlight a changing trend of the `empty-nest syndrome', where the younger ones of the family are migrating to other parts of the globe, leaving their old parents at home. This kind of long term isolation may make them depressive and lead to other mental disturbances. Bereavement is another major problem among the older Indian adults. Loneliness from the bereavement is a prime reason for depression among the widowers. As a result `elderly singles' living alone is increasing in India. Kerala like many Indian states now face the phenomenon of displacement migration of huge labour forces from other states. This makes the situation of elderly singles who live alone, especially of the elderly single women, more vulnerable. Here we can observe the cumulative effect of social deprivation in exclusion.

Multiple deprivation indicators generally serve the purpose of showing just how much access older people have, to material and social resources and can include the measurement of things such as educational qualifications and experiences (Rowe and Kahn, 1998).

Gender Aspects of Social Exclusion among Elderly

Gender constitutes a critical social factor in the ageing experience and it is considered a pervasive marker of inequality. Men and women often differ with regard to the experiences of their earlier life especially in the various opportunities they encountered which then shape their future situations during their later life.

Although gender issues may vary depending on the social, cultural, and political context, in which people grow older, research suggests in the following areas elderly men and women differ frequently, i.e. life expectancy, health, social relations, and socio-economic resources.

Life-Expectancy: Generally, the trend indicates women have more life expectancy worldwide. In the US, the life expectancy of women on an average is seven years more than that of men (Barer, 1994) where as in less industrialised nations, the expectancy gap is not much greater, nevertheless it exists (Knodel and Ofstedal, 2003). The social influences that have an impact on the shorter male life expectancies stem out of culturally sanctioned masculine behaviours like smoking, drinking or working in hazardous areas. The shorter life expectancies of men crucially affect the well-being of women because they remain as widows as they are less likely to remarry, hence they become more vulnerable socio-economically. Isolation from bereavement is a major cause of social exclusion among older women. The increasing number of widows in the pilgrim centers of India, say for example widows of Brindavan, is a cross-sectional view of forced exile trends of this globalisation era (Boban and Sultana, 2014).

Health: Physical health status varies too based on gender in their old age. Older women are more vulnerable to chronic diseases and functional limitations than men. In case of mental health too,

women are likely to experience more stress and depressive symptoms in old age. This functional limitations and depressive symptoms lead to social exclusion.

Social Relations: Women are less likely to benefit from social relations as compared to men. Similarly, the negative consequences that arise from relationship conflicts affect older women more. Social relations of older men and women differ with regard to cultural, social, literacy aspects as well as other aspects. In the Indian context the elderly women are hesitant to indulge in social interaction due to their specific cultural backgrounds and other limitations like illiteracy.

Socio-Economic Resources: Older women and men vary in the ability to have access to socio-economic resources in later life. The higher educational level among men makes it possible for them do income generating occupations. This leads to inequalities in income levels, even in the retirement benefits and pension programmes. The inconsistent nature of employment (due to maternity and other house-hold responsibilities), lower wages and lack of benefits widen these inequalities. Women become more dependent on their offsprings in her later life (Phillips et al., 2010).

It is hoped that by changing gender norms, especially with increased educational opportunities for women, may bring about a healthy change in the ways that elderly women are treated and perhaps be less excluded.

Ambedkar and his Humanistic Perspectives

B.R. Ambedkar was one of the very few Indians who struggled to re-structure Indian society with the most egalitarian and humanitarian principles. He advocated social and economic democracy and insisted that without them, there would be no peace, happiness and prosperity in India. He was an ardent supporter of cherished values of liberty, equality and fraternity. Men with dominant qualities of humanism not only change their life styles, but also change the course of society at large, establishing the close link between the self and society. The same is true of Ambedkar too.

Humanism, in general, implies that there is goodness, happiness and welfare of all human beings on this planet. It represents the specific course of the universe, the basic nature of human beings and to the problems relating to them. Humanism claims that human being is the only reality and there is nothing real besides this. Humanism tries to emancipate human beings from the clutches of religious orthodoxy and dogmatism. Positively, humanism stands for values like happiness, love, kindness, compassion, tolerance, pleasure, freedom and removal of fanaticism, rigourism, intolerance, feudalism, despotism, egoism and self-glorification.

As the founder of scientific and social humanism, Ambedkar absolutely refused the idea of the existence of god and a permanent soul and its trans-migration and meta-physical maxims. His philosophic approach was quite scientific, rational, and humanistic. It was observed by him that all kinds of exploitation in every sphere of life should be rooted out to save humanity.
Ambedkar's humanism has the following dimensions.
Rationalism
Social equality
Socialism
Democracy
Ambedkar's humanism stands for liberty, equality, and fraternity of all human beings. He stood for a social system which is based on right relations between human beings in all spheres of life. His humanism or social justice is closely connected with his concept of religion and morality.

The religion which he conceives is a rational, ethical, spiritual and humanitarian one, full of karuna. It is a religion which grants equality and treats all its believers equally. Ambedkar's rational and humanistic approach does not approve of any hypocrisy, injustice and exploitation of humans by other humans in the name of religion.

He considered the varna system as the greatest evil of the Hindu religion and it is the founder parent of caste system and untouchability. He had deep faith in human beings and in their powers. The individual was the centre of his religion. According to him, it is the human being who is solely responsible for his/her own miseries and therefore he/she, himself has to mitigate his own woes, slavery and poverty (Kuber, 1973).

Being an empiricist, Ambedkar was concerned with human beings and their well-being in the world. Humans were the centre of his thought and action. Human beings are the masters of their fate and they are also the captain of their souls. He says, "one will attain self elevation, only if he can learn self-help, regain his self-respect and self-knowledge (Keer, 1995:71)."

Ambedkar was also an eminent economic thinker, to be more exact an authority on public finance. In his life timehe was over-whelmed by the problems of the downtrodden and he struggled to

bring about a mixed economy and state socialism. He laid great stress on the nationalisation of economy and firmly believed that the capitalist economy cannot in anyway solve the economic crisis of the suffering people. In a capitalist economy, there are more chances of unemployment, inhuman treatment of labourers, long hours of work, vicious working conditions, and numerous repressive measures. He believed that without economic and social equality, the freedom that was attained was insufficient and he voiced the need for social and economic freedom and equality (Jatava, 1965).

Ambedkar also championed the cause of women. He discussed a number of problems and sought solutions for them. His arguments on the maternity benefit bill and on birth control, were quite relevant as he tried to recognise the dignity of women. He supported the Maternity Benefit Bill. His argument was that it is the interest of the nation that the mother should get a certain amount of rest during the prenatal period (Keer, 1995) and subsequently the crux of that bill is based entirely on that principle. Ambedkar criticised the traditional and conservative values and made Manu, the Hindu law-giver responsible for the decline of the status and dignity of women in India. He accorded equal status to women and men in every sphere and he also warned women against the misuse of their rights. In the amended Hindu Code Bill of 1951, he introduced four new items which are: the abolition of the doctrine of rights by birth, right to property to women, the right to a share of the parent's property for the daughters and provision for divorce. It would be appropriate to regard Ambedkar as one of the saviours who fought for the Indian women (Vidyasagar, 2005).

By embracing Buddhism with his millions of friends at Nagpur in 1956, Ambedkar said, "I like Buddhism because it presents co-ordination of the three principles in such a way as no other religion can do so. Buddhism teaches us prudence (Pragya), compassion (Karuna) and equality (Samata). This is the best education by which a man would want and wish to spend a pleasant and good life. Neither gods nor souls can save the society from troubles; if this main theme is known, then Buddhism would be regarded as a social doctrine. Then development will remain only as a memory / remembrance (Vidyasagar, 2005:197)."

Relevance of Ambedkar's Humanism in Social Exclusion of Elderly

It is appropriate to assess the relevance of this message of his humanism in our times, particularly in context to the social exclusion among the elderly. Modern era of globalisation poses a different trend of human life where human dignity and values are all disappearing from every sphere of human life. Due to the disintegration of the traditional support systems, people have started to suffer more. Now, self-centeredness is the living philosophy. The capitalist philosophy on economy has made inequality in the society grow wider. The gap between 'haves and have nots' are constantly increasing. The expenditure of daily life has become beyond the accessibility of those in the lower strata of the society. Cross-country migrations of the modern generation in search of education and employment is the current modern trend.

All these factors reflect the troubles faced by the elderly population of India and other developing countries. When these population trends show an increase, a corresponding decrement in the quality of life of the elderly is obvious. Exclusion in various aspects of daily life like isolation, loneliness, ill health and dependency make the elderly people as the 'untouchables' or 'underclass' of modern era. These are the modern evils, we have to fight against. Hence it is relevant to check for a remedial measure to prevent the social exclusion suffered by the vulnerable elderly population, in the light of Ambedkar's humanism.

Ambedkar emerged as a universal man to save all human beings from the scourge of discriminations made on the basis of caste, class and sex. His rationalism based on humanism is relevant to our times. His attitude towards religion is not spiritual; his approach towards religion is intellectual and socio-political. He searched for a religion which instructed people, as to how they should behave with one another and which underlined his duty to the other by a religion which called for equality, liberty and fraternity. Actually such a perspective will have to be merged to the modern era of globalisation, because the human mind has become more orthodox and ritual specific. A human being who believes in such a religion of fraternity and equality cannot be indifferent to the dignity of their fellow beings. Such a religion cannot seclude their senior citizens to be marginalised. They will accept the senior population as an asset to the society. The new generation will then consider them as the standard for a fruitful life. They will respect the experience and knowledge gained by the elderly and may look up for inspiration to it for their bright future. In such a religion were to exist, the so-called generation gaps will not be a problem to be dealt with.

He considered religion in relation to the individual and society. He held that religion was necessary for the development of an individual. Whether one believes in it or not, religion is the door to spirituality, which would help the elderly population to add to their quality of life and in the successful process of aging. Here we can argue that spirituality essentially helps in positive mental health thereby ensuring both dignity and self-worth of all human beings. With his deep faith in humans and their powers, he proclaimed that we have to learn self-help, regain self-respect and acquire self-knowledge in order to attain an elevated self. This is a call for the elderly people of our society. In order to survive the discrimination and seclusion, one would have to realise ones own limitless possibilities. This is nothing but a call for autonomy of the self, thereby mitigating the discrimination or disadvantage arising out of social exclusion.

Ambedkar's socialism is another important dimension of humanism. It is also a major contribution to the philosophy of economics or socialism which embraces not only economic equality but also social and political equality. In a capitalistic economy, youth is the preferred quality rather than experience. In the present situation, the experienced wisdom of our old work force after retirement is considered as a useless resource. Many of the retired hands are still young to pursue employment and are willing to undertake new assignments. Not forgetting that in India, a considerable numbers of unemployed already exists, but on a long-term perspective in the light of a large ageing population, there should be appropriate rehabilitation packages and policies so that we can make use of the wisdom of our retired peronnel effectively both for the development of the nation as well as, for the welfare of our older population.

The Government of India has a deep concern towards the social security of the elderly population which is reflected in the National Policy for Older Persons-1999 (NPOP), which reaffirms its commitment to ensure the well-being of the older persons in a holistic manner.Reiterating the mandate enshrined in Article 41 of the Constitution of India, this policy has brought the concern for older persons to the top of the national agenda. The National Policy for Older Persons 1999 while promising to safeguard their interest in terms of financial security, health, legal, social and psychological security, also envisages a productive partnership with them in the process of development by creating opportunities for their gainful engagement and employment (Kumar, 2008). The policy also appreciates special needs of older persons and therefore lays emphasis on empowerment of the community as well as individuals to adequately meet the challenges of the process of ageing (Prakash, 2007).

To formulate such an integrated policy, Ambedkar's humanistic perspective towards the downtrodden and his recommendations have been quite influential. As a responsible and vigilant community, it is our duty to ensure that a reasonable coverage of the welfare programmes based on the policy, quality of its implementation and effectiveness of state based security systems be implemented, where the traditional supports systems have disappeared.

While formulating reforms to the ongoing statutory voluntary programmes, the policy makers also should consider certain key challenges, associated with the Indian ageing population.

Fiscal: examining the interactions among increasing government expenditures, growth of gross domestic product, increasing dependency ratio.

Market Responsiveness: facilitating labour markets to respond with flexibility to changing demographics.

Active Ageing: encourage people to remain active and independent as they age, and

Responsibilities: examining the balance between collective and individual responsibilities, the respective role of public and private sector, ensuring that individuals are able and confident in making the choice and taking responsibilities for their lives.

A detailed and critical analysis of these four issues will help us to bring about the much needed changes in existing policies (Kumar, 2006). Ambedkar's principle of democracy is the other dimension of his humanism. For the successful functioning of democracy, there must be statutory provision to mitigate the suffering and to safeguard the interest of the suppressed and oppressed people; the society must be based on principles of liberty, equality and fraternity in order to ensure social endosmosis. The civic rights of elderly people must be respected for their choice of selection in a democratic government (Keer, 1995).

Ambedkar is hailed as a great emancipator for women. His concerns for women constitute one of the major dimensions of humanism. He argued for social equality, equal status and dignity between men and women. The principle behind his Maternity Benefit Bill is nothing but a means to preserve the health of the mothers for a less problematic later life. His recommendations in the Hindu Code Bill of 1961 are for ensuring that self-reliance and dignity of women would be supported even in their old age. He argued for the necessity of women empowerment for the development of the

society. The same strength and individuality must be kept throughout the later period of their life too. (Vidyasagar, 2005). At the end-of-life stage, the karuna of Buddha becomes more relevant. It is the right of every human to die with dignity, according to his/her wishes. It is our duty to provide for a peaceful end to their life.

Society should be careful in avoiding any kind of discriminations towards this vulnerable group. By adopting the dhamma of Buddhism, it has to form an action plan, based on the principle of inclusive care, for a home based rehabilitation of the elderly people with active community participation, through the neighbourhood networks. Here, it can and will have to observe the scope of Social Work in the field of elderly welfare. The issue of social exclusion and its prevention is at the very heart of social work (Sheppard, 2008). In India, the discipline of geriatrics has still to be nurtured, according to the social work profession which presently follows an inclusive philosophy, but will have to find new horizons in elderly exclusion too. It is primarily the social workers, who can actively participate in ensuring the essential qualities of justice and equality in the society. Certainly, Ambedkar's humanistic philosophy will prove to be a real motivation to the dedicated social worker, as they are always interacting with the weak and downtrodden of the society.

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Development Initiative

Governance at the Grassroots: Innovative Leadership of a Woman Panchayat President in Kerala

Celine Sunny[1]

Abstract

This paper is based on a study of women governance choosing a Gramapanchayat president in the state of Kerala. The objective of the study is to find out the contributions of women in governance by identifying the best woman pradhans/sarpanches who has shown remarkable improvement in local governance. The best Panchayat president was selected on the basis of specific parameters of assessment adopted for the study. The data were collected from the primary sources through interviews and informal discussions with the Panchayat president/officials/public and from the secondary sources of relevant documents. The paper deals with the innovative practices adopted and implemented by the Gramapanchayat president of Chemancheri in Kozhikkode district, in some of the important but neglected aspects of development such as education, health and sanitation, rural infrastructure, and gainful employment in the rural areas. The study shows that the woman leader has contributed towards qualitative differences in governance at the grassroot level by using the tangible and intangible technologies of blueprints, models, consultancy and problems solving methods. The constraints and hindrances faced by the Panchayat president in implementing these innovative practices are highlighted.

Keywords

governance; innovative practices; leadership; Kerala

Introduction

Gender issues are globally important and there has been an increased focus on gender equality and development in recent decades. It is often said that gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.

In India, of the total population of 1,210 million, 586.7 million (48.5%) are women. Sex ratio is 940/1000, female literacy ratio is 65.5 per cent against the male ratio of 82.1 per cent (Census2011), life expectancy of females is 64.2 years as against 62.6 of males (Government of India, 2013), work participation rate is 21.9 per cent (Jayaram, 2013), and maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births) is 212 (Government of India). The changing paradigms of social development are beginning to pay greater attention to gender strategies and initiating processes to bring women to the mainstream. The World Economic Forum has placed India in the 101st position among 136 countries in the 2013 edition of an annual report that makes a global assessment of the progress made in bridging the gender gap. But India has fared better in terms of the political empowerment of women (Ramachandran, 2013).

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The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the preamble, the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution. The Constitution empowers the states to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women and to ensure their rightful place in society. From the fifth (1974-78) Five-Year Plan onwards, there has been a marked shift in the approach to women issues from "welfare" to "development."

Women are increasingly involved in the governance in India. Good governance is primarily a function of incorporating the virtues of administration and eliminating the vices of dysfunction. Good governance means participation of all sections of the society including women, and also the poor in decision making processes at all stages in order to strengthen the capabilities / capacities of these stages for the purpose. While, equality or higher level representation may stillbe eluding at the national level, there has been significant strengthening of women empowerment at the grassroot level, only due to the efforts made to strengthen the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI). PRI is a system through which democracy, decentralisation and development are implemented for the welfare of the masses. PRI is a system of governance in which Gramapanchayats are the basic units of administration. It has three levels: village, block and district. The term Panchayat Raj is not new, having originated during the British administration. Raj literally means governance or government. Mahatma Gandhi advocated Panchayati Raj, a decentralised form of government where each village is responsible for its own affairs, as the foundation of India's political system. His term for such a vision was ultimately the Gram Swaraj.

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments in 1993 became important steps for the empowerment of women. These amendments increased the level of participation of women in decision making by reserving 33 per cent seats for women in the PRI. This paved the way for the election of around one million women at the village, block and district levels.

It is quite clear from the documents viz., *Citizens Right Document* (Chemancheri Gramapanchayat, 2003)*, Commemorative Document* (Chemancheri Gramapanchayat, 2002), *Integrated Development Document* (Chemancheri Gramapanchayat, 2005) of previous years that when conditions conducive for women to play a leading role in the decision making of the village exists, then the entire community benefits. This increased participation of women is often associated with better utilisation of financial resources, increased harmony in village and prioritisation of important but neglected aspects of development such as girls' education and sanitation. (Chemmancherry Gramapanchayath, 2002; 2003; 2005).

Status of Women in Kerala

According to the Human Development Report (Government of Kerala, 2005) Kerala is ranked at the top in gender-related development index (GDI) among the major States of India., Kerala has consistently maintained a favourable sex ratio for women (1084/1000) as against the all India figures of 940/1000 (Census 2011). On parameters such as life expectancy of females 76.3 (Government of Kerala, 2011), infant mortality rate (IMR) for females, 13 per 1000 live birth (Government of Kerala, 2011), and maternal mortality rate (MMR) 66 per 100,000 live births (Service, 2014), Kerala is far ahead of the other states in India. Further, Kerala stands second in women's enrollment in higher education (Nair, 2012) and the mean age of marriage for women is 22.1 (IIPS, 2010) which is comparatively on the higher side. Kerala presents a positive picture insofar as women's development is concerned. Women's awareness, women movements at the grassroot level, greater mobility, education and women and child health interventions have led to the overall development of women in Kerala.

As per the 73rd amendment, Kerala was in an advantageous position of facilitating opportunities for more women to partake in governance. The political atmosphere was also conducive in this regard. Hence, the state with the highest female literacy rate –92 per cent (Census 2011) in India had the privilege of fielding more educated women in the fray and they were able to impart good governance during their tenure of office. The other factors included political consciousness of women, their involvement in kudumbasree (a Kerala government initiative for eradication of poverty and empowerment of women) and self-help groups (SHGs) and the entrepreneurship skills exhibited by these women.

R.P Valsala, an educated and politically empowered woman of Chemancheri Gramapanchayat in the Panthalayani block, Koyilandi taluk of Kozhikode district had got the opportunity of entering into governance through the provision of the 73rd amendment. The Chemancheri Gramapanchayat too had the right ambiance essential for the promotion of women governance. Bringing women into politics was an impartial /act of positive discrimination. It was the pressure of law agencies combined with

the political imperative of winning elections that changed political parties' perception of women's limited capacity for public office. But crucially PRI helped change women's perception of themselves by providing opportunities for making them participate in the decision making process in governance. PRI has also given many women greater understanding of the workings of politics, in particular the importance of political parties. Women's involvement in PRI has helped them affirm their identity as women.

Over the years, women are being elected to local councils in unprecedented numbers. As a result of the 73rd amendment many of them emerged at the forefront of the decision making powers of the state. In the past, their roles were subjugated to that of men. They have now assumed roles and responsibilities of immense significance. A great deal of innovative programmes have been visualised and implemented by them. Some examples include improvement in education through better school buildings, improved bus schedules, innovative revenue generation strategies, innovative measures for fund raising, the achievement of total sanitation, and electrification of the 95 per cent of the villages.

Methodology

Women leaders are emerging. However, how the entry of these women into the formal structures of government is promoting good governance has not been analysed. The objective of this paper is to describe how the entry of an empowered woman into government structures reshaped governance at the grassroots. The paper is based on the study of the innovative programmes/best practices initiated and implemented by women leaders in local governance, their impact on the lives of the people, challenges faced by them and the lessons learnt from it. This paper focuses on the efforts/best practices followed by R.P.Valsala, the best president of the Gramapanchyat.

The study was conducted in Kerala by taking into consideration all the 331 Gramapanchayats having women presidents across 14 districts. A three-pronged approach was used to select the best Panchayat and president for an in-depth analysis, which included: a survey of all the 331 Gramapanchayats with detailed information; shortlisting the best Panchayats using specific parameters of assessment viz., number of awards won by the presidents, innovative programmes implemented and the quantum of support received from the public; and the elimination and selection of the best Panchayat and the best woman Panchayat president from the shortlisted ones by an expert committee. The tools used were interviews/informal discussions with the Panchayat president/ officials/public and verification of relevant documents. Thus, the Panchayat of the Chemancheri of Koyilandi taluk of Kozhikode, was adjudged as the best Panchayat and R.P. Valsala was regarded as the Best Woman Panchayat President.

Findings

Chemancheri Gramapanchayat is situated in the Panthalayani block, Koyilandi taluk of Kozhikode district in northern Kerala. Spread over an area of 16.76 sq. km the Panchayat is flanked by the Arabian Sea on its Western side. Its southern and eastern boundaries are marked by the Korapuzha river. The Panchayat has a population of 32,532 and 6,433 households, out of which 2,387 are below the poverty line (US$1/day). Eleven households in the Panchayat are homeless (Chemancheri Gramapanchayat, 2004).The people are mainly into farming and fishing. A few have secondary occupations in the handloom and coir sectors. The decline in agricultural output due mainly to fragmentation of land holdings, lack of irrigation facilities and the fall in prices of agricultural products has led to unemployment. Consequently, the economy of the Panchayat has suffered in recent years (Chemancheri Gramapanchayat, 2003; 2005).

R.P.Valsala, the president of the Chemancheri Gramapanchayath was part of the political scene from her early years. Her emergence as a political leader was during the school and college years. Her active role in political parties resulted in her candidacy in the 1995 Panchayat elections. She became a ward member. In the election that followed (2000-05) she contested and became a ward member again. Through consensus she was elected president as the post was reserved for women. For the third consecutive time in 2006 she won again. She is a ward member at present.

Innovative Programmes and Best Practices

Innovation is generally understood as the successful introduction of a new means or method. The innovative programmes carried out by the Chemancheri Gramapanchayat under the leadership of Valsala are different from what is going on today with technological interventions such as the use of high cost machinery or sophisticated technical know-how. There were no advanced technologies

involved and there were no top level professionals hired as consultants. The technology used was mainly people's participation. The innovative programmes carried out by the Chemancheri Gramapanchayat under the leadership of Valsala are categorised under three headings: production sector, service sector, infrastructure sector, and other sectors.

Production Sector

The activities that were carried out under the production sector include: 1) The renovation of traditional water resources; 2) the promotion of agriculture products; and 3) animal husbandry. With the intention of enhancing agricultural cultivation, the Panchayat reconstructed the water resources in Poomkulam, Meppayikulam and Thiruvangoorparakulam, Chathanadath and Poovaceherry. The renovation thus had assisted in accelerating the agricultural cultivation and earning a decent livelihood for many of the families (Chemancheri Gramapanchayat, 2002; 2005).The maintenance and renovation of the bunds and canals especially in Chathanad,Valiyakettu and Poovachery resulted in the rejuvenation of paddy cultivation. Manure was distributed to all the farmers in the Panchayat. In order to promote coconut cultivation, the prime agricultural cultivation in the area, the Panchayat initiated a project called Kalpatharu through which production increased from 30 to 80 coconuts per tree per year. The Panchayat also distributed goats and chickens to those living below the poverty line. Assistance in the construction of cattle sheds was also provided to them. These efforts resulted in high milk production that augmented income (Chemancheri Gramapanchayat, 2005). For the fisher folk a number of initiatives were carried out: renovation of the fish market, and financial assistance for the houses, and for toilet construction in their communities.

Undoubtedly, the Panchayat president's efforts to restore the dwindling employment opportunities in paddy cultivation are commendable. Developing the available sources with least expenditure and with the participation of the people make these efforts long lasting. The promotion of animal husbandry is a welcome development at a time when people tend to migrate out of the state in search for jobs (Chemancheri Gramapanchayat, 2005).

Service Sector

The innovative programmes under the service sector go side by side with provisions for education. The Panchayat with the help of anganwadi teachers and volunteers began an awareness campaign on the importance of education and for holding night classes. Accordingly, the passing rate of Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) students increased remarkably from 45 per cent in 2000 to 89 per cent in 2005 (Chemancheri Gramapanchayat, 2005). Similarly, a computer centre was opened by the president even before the introduction of the Akshaya projects in the state. A number of women from poor households earned substantial income from doing data entry and other computer jobs. In an effort to bring the mentally retarded and the disabled into the mainstream of the society, Abhayam, a Chemancheri Panchayat institution, was established. The Panchayat committee, headed by Valsala upon the realisation of the fact that the objective of the institution could be achieved only through a committed and dedicated work of an independent agency, Panchayats handed over the institution to an independent agency.

For the environment, the Clean Chemancheri Project was pursued. The aim of the project was to bring about change in solid waste management through the selfless co-operation of everyone irrespective of the political, religious and socio-economic differences. The kudumbasree members of the Panchayat collected waste from around 7,000 households of the Panchayat and deposited in a common area. With strong support from the Panchayat, the people were able to put in proper place several tons of solid waste that destroy the environment. School students of the Gramapanchayat especially of Thiruvangur Higher Secondary School also played a role in this clean project campaign. In addition to the solid management project, Chemancheri pioneered the publication of Kuruthola, a booklet of paintings and writings of primary school students in the Panchayat. Chemancheri developed a good reference library with books in different educational branches worth around Rs. 100,000.

Infrastructure Sector

The major infrastructure projects in the area include the construction of houses, roads and pathways. Roads and pathways were needed in the Panchayat. Within her five-year term, Valsala was able to provide financial assistance for the construction of 192 houses. However, the fund allocation was very limited. The Panchayat authorities collected taxes by joining hands with other government officials to form a pooled fund. With this, the Panchayat repaired 82 stretches of the road network.

And tarring was done for about 7,850 meters and soling for 7,600 meters. New roads of about 8,000 meters were also constructed.

Other Sectors

Other innovative activities were collection of taxes and implementation of government schemes and formation of kudumbasree units. The elected representatives of the Panchayat collected taxes with the help of the government officials. Taxes were collected even from big businesses like the Kappad Beach resort. The figures of 2001-05 showed that 100 per cent of the taxes were collected in the Chemancheri Gramapanchayat. The president has displayed active leadership in the timely completion of the central government-sponsored schemes.

As regards expenditures, the Panchayat was able to spent 100 per cent of the fund allocation during 2001-05. During the last few years, 193 kudumbasree units have been formed. Income-generating programmes like cultivation of oyster, horticulture, banana plantation, and repairs of electrical instruments and electronics were initiated. Under the special project scheme, a hotel was constructed. It started functioning for the Gramapanchayat. In addition, five copra-processing units were built under the kudumbasree as an income generating initiative.

To sum up, the Panchayat Council, under the leadership of the president Valsala had done a commendable job with regard to governance. The Panchayat won many awards during her tenure. The Swaraj trophy given by the Ministry of Local Self Government of Kerala and the District Collector's Trophy for completing the central government sponsored schemes in a time bound manner are some of them. During this period, the Panchayat also achieved 100 per cent tax collection and 100 per cent utilisation of state and central government sponsored schemes.

Table 1
Challenges and adopted strategies

Challenges Faced	Adopted Strategies
Lack of co-operation from the different committees of the Panchayat	Arriving at consensus through discussions
Constraints in prioritisation of projects	Discussions with people at ward level
Difficulties in co-ordinating the various activities of the various departments of the Panchayat	Holding meetings of the concerned
Local issues	Discussion with the local leaders as well as those who were directly affected by the issues
Problems in implementation of the projects due to lack of awareness among the public regarding the benefits of the projects	Massive campaigns on Awareness Generation about the projects
Mobilisation of people's participation	Frequent Interactions with the people

Lessons Learnt

A few of the prominent lessons learnt by the president while performing her roles were: Developing the skill of team work by involving other ward members and officials concerned in both decision making and implementation of the projects; importance of drawing people's participation in decision making process for sustainability of the programmes undertaken; facing the challenges/ problems confidently by interacting with stalwarts/ role models/ senior officials and activists who had confronted with similar situations and managed the same successfully; timely follow up of the activities for better results, appropriate methodologies for ensuring the participation of people in the Gramasabhas for the effective implementation of the projects, enhancing the ability of planning, directing, organising, monitoring and reviewing, to implement various programmes /projects, lobbying with the resourceful and powerful group such as politicians, religious leaders, social activists and academicians for the required support and co-operation for the implementation of the various projects, and identifying and dealing with the problems of women, far better than that of her counterpart.

Summary and Conclusion

Gender equality is desirable and productive. Among the Indian states, Kerala benefited the most from the 73rd amendment because of factors like highest female literacy rate, their political consciousness, entrepreneurial skills and involvement in kudumbasree and SHGs. The choice of Chemancheri Gramapanchayat in the Panthalayani block, Koyilandi taluk of Kozhikode district in northern Kerala as a study area is justified as Kerala had the necessary development and women-empowering conditions that other states may choose to emulate. The objective of the paper was to describe how the entry of an empowered woman into the government structure reshaped governance at the grassroots in terms of:

Innovative programmes /best practices under three heads: 1) Production sector—renovation of traditional water resources, promotion of agriculture products; and, animal husbandry. 2) Service sector—provisions for education awareness campaign for Anganwadi teachers, holding of night classes for weak children, initiation of a computer centre for income generation for the women, establishment of an institution, Abhayam, for the mentally retarded and disabled and handing over of the same to an independent agency for better performance, publication of Kuruthola, a booklet of paintings and writings of primary school students and establishment of a reference library. Improvement of health and hygiene, introduction of Clean Chemancheri Project for solid waste management through the selfless co-operation of everyone irrespective of their political, religious and socio-economic differences. 3) Infrastructure sector—construction of houses, roads and pathways. 4) Other Sectors—100 per cent collection of taxes with the cooperation of all government departments, implementation of government schemes on a time bound manner, formation of kudumbasree units, and spending 100 per cent of the fund allocation.

Impact of programmes in people's lives: The innovative practices introduced in the production sector has resulted in increased water availability for drinking and agricultural purposes and enhancement of agricultural produce. Service sector—increase in the SSLC pass rate, enhancement of computer literacy and subsequent increase of income for women and improvement of the health and hygiene condition of the people. Infrastructure— provided safe shelter to the homeless, improved the transportation facilities of the Panchayat and enhanced the income of women through the kudumbasree entrepreneurial activities.

Challenges and lessons learnt: Challenges faced included lack of co-operation from the different committees of the Panchayat, constraints in prioritisation of projects, difficulties in co-ordinating the various activities of the various departments of the Panchayat, local issues, problems in implementation due to lack of information on the projects, and mobilisation of people's participation.

Prominent lessons learnt were developing the skill of team work, importance of drawing people's participation in decision making process, facing the challenges/ problems confidently, timely follow up of the activities, appropriate methodologies for ensuring the participation of people in the Gramasabhas, enhancing the ability of planning, directing, organising, monitoring and reviewing the projects, lobbying with the resourceful and powerful group and identifying and dealing with the problems of women better than her other counterparts.

Recommendations

The major recommendations are: Proper training on the PRI system, goals and processes of self-rule, more support structures and services needed by women, more capacity building programmes, more sensitised training of male members on women's rights, more support from NGO's, 50 per cent reservation to women in the local self- governance, political conscientisation of women, women's education, formation of self-help groups for women empowerment.

To conclude, the secret of success of this woman president has to be measured in terms of her use of tangible and intangible technologies (such as blueprints, models, consultancy and problems solving) in mobilising people's participation to the maximum possible extent, prioritising the needs of the community, availing and utilising the co-operation of the people and the officials concerned in implementing the projects and completing these projects/ programmes on time. Kerala is one of the few states in India to have shown progress in building a system of grassroot governance which is getting momentum among the masses. The state has recently implemented the policy of 50 per cent reservation to women in the local self- governance—another step towards the principle of equality.

If other Indian states can emulate the good practices in governance implemented by the able leadership of Valsala, a positive change in woman governance in their respective states would be seen. Further facilitating interactive sessions and sharing of experiences of this woman with the respective women leaders of other states could instill skills of confidence, would foster will power and leadership qualities among them that could contribute to their excellence in governance. A model

like Valsala could be created in other states by pursuing measures like: selecting only those women with at least basic education, right political attitude, and appropriate skills in governance and leadership qualities. Moreover, continuous support and encouragement from the male counterparts is all the more important in achieving this goal.

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From the Field

Touching Lives:
Interventions of VOSARD

Jose Antony[1]

Introduction

Voluntary Organisation for Social Action and Rural Development (VOSARD) was founded in 1998 with the objective of transforming the lives of the poor, marginalised and the under-privileged people in the most backward and remote hilly areas of Idukki district of the Western Ghats region in Kerala. It is a registered Charitable Organisation under Travancore Kochi Cultural, Scientific, Charitable Societies Registration Act of 1955 and functioning under the aegis of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) Congregation of the Catholic Church. Since the beginning, VOSARD has been working with the poor and weaker sections in the society through self help initiatives and capacitating them to achieve sustainable development, irrespective of caste, creed, and religion. The agency strives to promote a society where the marginalised and underprivileged sections in the society are empowered to bring about positive changes in their lives. The vision of the organisation is to work for a value-based society where the poor, children, women, persons with disabilities and other underprivileged sections in the society are empowered to bring about positive changes in their lives. The mission is to enable `the targeted people' to be responsible for their own holistic and sustainable development. VOSARD started its work in 10 remote and rural panchayats of Idukki district by taking into consideration the substandard living conditions of ordinary people in the area. Gradually, the activities were extended to nearby panchayats and presently VOSARD is operational in the entire Idukki district of the state of Kerala.

Structure of the Organisation

VOSARD has a 13 member General Body and a democratically elected nine member Executive Committee that meets quarterly or as and when required to monitor proper functioning of the organisation. The organogram is given below (Figures 1 and 2).

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Figure 1
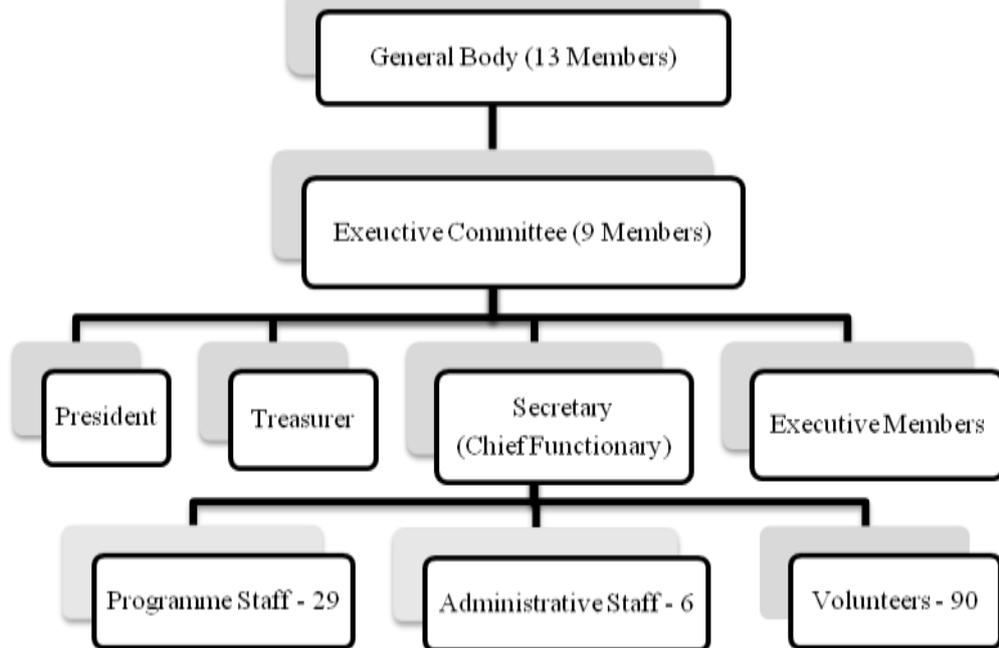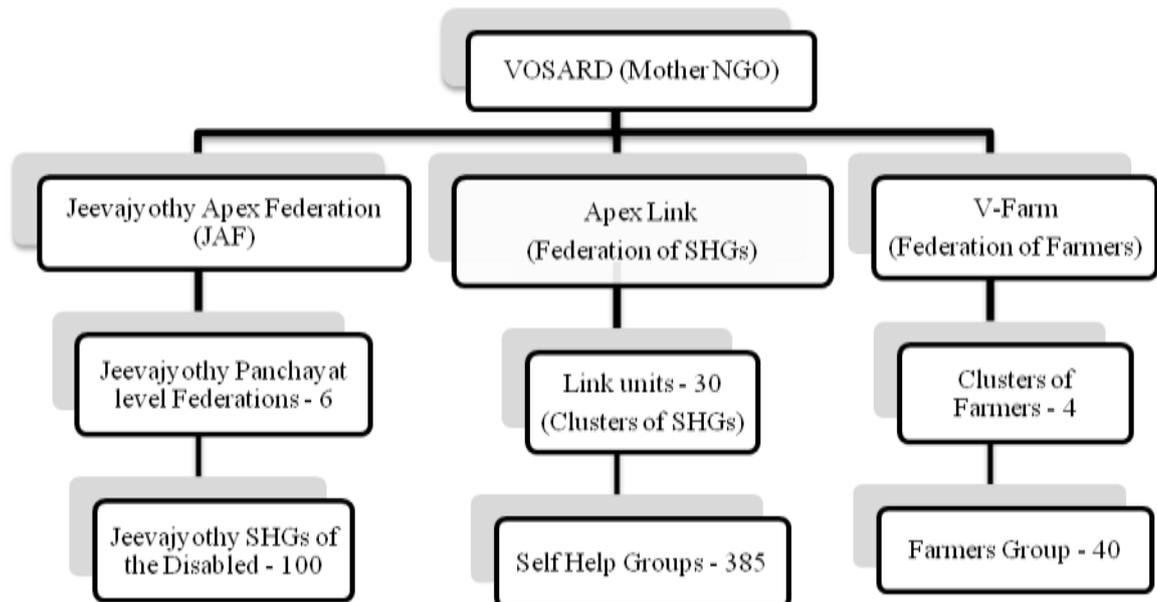Administrative Structure of VOSARD

Figure 2
Operational Structure VOSARD

Objectives of the Organisation

The programmes and activities of the organisation are centered on the following objectives:

- Organise and empower the poor and weaker sections in the society.
- Promote and sustain Self Help Groups (SHGs).
- Promotion of microcredit supported rural enterprises with women as the primary partners.
- Serve as an effective link agency between the poor and the government.
- Promote development programmes for women, children and youth.
- Undertake special projects and programmes for socially as well as physically challenged, old aged, terminally ill and all other discriminated / isolated sections in the community.
- Care and protection of children.
- Promote gender equity with special focus on women.
- Skills and entrepreneurial training for rural employment and livelihood development.
- Development of habitats and special housing schemes for the homeless.
- Empower the people to fight against social evils viz.,alcoholism, drug abuse, human trafficking and child labour.

Main Activities of the Organisation

Community Mobilisation and Capacity Building

Community mobilisation is one of the most important factors within the social work practice of a community. Since inception VOSARD has been focussing on uplifting the poor and weaker sections through self help initiatives and capacitate them to be part of the mainstream of the society. Besides providing financial assistance, orientation classes and leadership-training camps are also conducted for SHG members. The concept of micro-finance is widely introduced among them. SHGs of the men as well as women are formed as per the norms of NABARD. Over 10,000 families of the target groups located in the remote hilly terrain of Idukki district are organised into SHGs. Today, over 525 SHGs are functioning effectively in the area. VOSARD has also framed 30 clusters and an Apex Federation to coordinate and capacitate the people's structures through decentralised planning, local linkage and collaboration and collective action. Awareness creation, leadership training, skill training, livelihood and agriculture promotion activities are being initiated through these people's organisations. This social structure is helpful in implementation of projects with people's participation, information dissemination at grass root levels and monetary transactions among the groups.

Thrift and credit system has been introduced in all the SHGs to promote economical empowerment of rural people especially women. Microcredit system serves as a stimulant for initiating self help ventures. The Apex Federation coordinates and supervises microcredit activities of 30 clusters and 525 SHGs. This people's network facilitates of VOSARD makes best use of the revolving funds created for continuing the development initiatives. Along with Apex Link, it facilitates and coordinates linkage with banks for availing credit facilities and loans by SHGs and clusters for running their income generation activities and micro-enterprises.

Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) of Persons with Disabilities

Rehabilitation of the disabled is one of the major programmes of the organisation since 2002. The Agency has initiated community-based rehabilitation (CBR) approach among 2,000 persons with various types of disabilities identified from six panchayats of Idukki district with the support of Action on Disability Development India and CBR Forum, Bangalore. A network of 100 SHGs, six panchayat level federations and an Apex Federation of the disabled persons is functioning to address the needs of the differently-abled people. Special attention is given to identify and rehabilitate the persons with deafness -blindness.

Good Practices in CBR

Formation of three-tier system of Disabled Persons' Organisations: Around 1,500 Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) from six panchayats have been organised into 100 SHGs, six Panchayat Level Federations and an Apex Federation. This system is helpful in coordinating the CBR activities in the area of the entire project.

Accessing PRI schemes and benefits: When the CBR programme was initiated, the PWDs were unaware of their rights and the types of schemes/ benefits available for them from various agencies. During the last six years we could educate the PWDs on their rights and privileges. Nearly 200 leaders from the sanghams were identified and they were capacitated with leadership training so that they could direct their groups to tap locally available resources. Now they are able to demand and utilise three percent fund allocation from the PRIs. In many panchayats, leaders from the

disabled's groups have been included in the planning and implementation committee of the panchayats.

Availing schemes from Kerala State Handicapped Persons Welfare Corporation: VOSARD could facilitate 68 groups of the disabled to get Rs. 5,000 each as subsidy for formation and strengthening of their groups.

Formation of Local Level Committee (LLC) and distribution of Guardianship Certificates and Niramaya Health Insurance: With our initiative a LLC under National Trust was formed in Idukki district, in which VOSARD is a NGO member. LLC is the authority to provide guardianship certificate to the parents/ caretakers of disabled children. Disabled people are also ensured Niramaya Health Insurance Scheme of National Trust for availing free medical treatment.

Rehabilitation of Children With Disabilities

Rehabilitation of children with developmental disabilities is given prime importance under CBR programme. For the last two years we have been conducting outreach rehabilitation programmes for those children with cerebral palsy, mental retardation and multiple disabilities. Periodical identification and assessment medical camps are organised for them with the support of a rehabilitation expert. A total of 478 children with developmental disabilities have been identified and their rehabilitation plan has been prepared. Efforts were made to address the top most needs of these children like corrective surgery, therapeutic interventions, livelihood promotion and elementary education.

Community Mental Health Promotion

Community mental health promotion programme is also being implemented along with the CBR programme. This programme provides need-based services to the persons with mental illness (PwMIs), who are lacking in regular medicine, care and other rehabilitation support. Efforts are made to capacitate and facilitate the affected persons and their caregivers for accessing medicines and other rehabilitation services from various sources. Identifying the cases of mental illness, directing them to regular medication, inclusion of persons with mental illness (PwMI) and their caregivers into SHGs, livelihood promotion, training for care givers, sensitisation programmes to eliminate social stigma, and linkage with District Mental Health Programme of the government are the main components of this programme. A total of 215 persons with mental illness have benefited so far from these programmes.

Women Empowerment

Capacity enhancement: Seminars, workshops, interactive lectures, exposure visits and training camps are organised for enhancing existing capabilities of the women. Skill training in appropriate trades, leadership training, micro credit and bank linkage, motivating to contest panchayat elections are also done in this regard. Efforts are made to support and motivate them for self employment and starting micro enterprises.

Service providing centre: It is a project of the Kerala State Social Welfare Board under Domestic Violence (Prevention) Act 2005 for the protection of women from domestic violence. The Service Providing Centre (SPC) for the protection of women from domestic violence started to function in 2008. A lady advocate is employed in the centre /center for providing free legal service to the women who are victims of domestic violence.

Community Health Promotion

Medical camps: General medical checkup camps are also conducted periodically in association with hospitals in and around the district. Eye camps and psycho-socio medical camps are also conducted and need based medical support is arranged for the patients. Regular checking of the blood pressure and blood sugar monitoring of senior citizens are done regularly in two panchayats. Two trained health staff members regularly make home visits and check the level of blood pressure and sugar of these people.

Awareness creation: In order to sensitise the community on preventive aspects of communicable diseases and life style related diseases; a number of awareness creation programmes are conducted frequently.

Counselling Services

Family counseling centre: A Family Counseling Centre under the support and guidance of Central Social Welfare Board and Kerala State Social Welfare Board is functioning since 2004. The centre is

supporting the people to overcome the problems encountered by the families and strengthen the institution of the family with the required values and capabilities. Apart from settling family feuds, the counseling centre is also instrumental in handling adolescent problems, parent-child maladjustment, behavioral problems among school children, cases of substance abuse and suicidal tendencies.

Counselling helpline: Since May 2006 Swadhar Counselling Helpline started functioning under the ministry of Women and Child Development, New Delhi. Three experienced and professional counsellors are employed to provide round-the-clock counselling support over the telephone. A number of suicide attempts have been averted with the help of helpline services. It is proved to be a big consolation for the poor and marginalised people who are living in remote areas.

Health insurance: The poor and even middle class could not afford the cost of medical expenses which is increasing every day. In order to lessen the burden of the expenses for treatment, VOSARD has started a health insurance scheme which is affordable to poorest of poor in collaboration with the national insurance company.

Children and Youth Development

Childline 1098: It is a project under Integrated Child Protection Scheme by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. CHILDLINE India Foundation is coordinating the programme implemented by 200 organisations covering 104 cities/ districts across 30 states and union territories throughout the country. VOSARD has been approved as a collaborative organisation for initiating CHILDLINE services in Idukki district from 1July 2011. The 24-hour toll free tele-outreach helpline (1098) service has been set up at Kattappana and Sub-Centre at Kumily to provide assistance to children in distress particularly street children, neglected and delinquent children and children facing physical, mental and sexual abuse. It aims to reach out to those children in distress, who need help. Their main interventions are shelter, medical help, repatriation, rescue, sponsorships, emotional support and child protection to a large extent.

Skilled training for unemployed youth: In order to cater to the needs of the unemployed rural youth the Functional Vocational Training and Research Society (FVTRS), Bangalore, offer support in providing skilled training to unemployed youth. About 150 youth, both men and women belonging to rural communities were selected on the basis of their socioeconomic status and they have undergone different courses such as three-wheel and four-wheel driving, garment making and embroidery, animal husbandry, welding and fabrication. All these youth have successfully completed their training, and most of them have started work in different sectors and are earning a decent salary.

Chavara Jyothi Education Promotion (CJEP): Every year more than 450 students who are bright in studies but financially poor are selected for this programme. They are given interest free loans at the beginning of the academic year. They repay the amount within a year and the amount is rotated among needy children in the subsequent year. Besides this financial support for study materials such as books, dictionaries, umbrellas, and bags are distributed to very needy child with the support of philanthropic people in and around the target areas.

Rehabilitation of children with disabilities: Since 2006 VOSARD has been having outreach rehabilitation services for the children of cerebral palsy, mental retardation, autism, multiple disabilities and other developmental disabilities. This support is meant for education, surgery, medicine, there are also assisted devices and livelihood promotion for the disabled children. Presently, over 160 disabled children are being assisted through this programme. Children are supported with periodic medical camps, medicines, corrective surgery, assistive/assisted devices, food supplement and counseling.

Care and Protection for Senior Citizens

VOSARD has initiated care and protection programme for senior citizens with the support of Misereor, Germany. Those elderly people who belong to the low strata of the society are given support services like awareness, counselling, and social activities to withstand health, economic, social and sustenance related problems. Now, 25 Elderly Self Help Groups (ESHGs) are functional to address the problems of the aged. Health problems of the elders are addressed by arranging medical camps and linking them with the local health service centres. A coordinator and two health workers are employed to implement these programmes effectively.

Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security

Over the years, farmers in the Western Ghats region of Idukki are mainly growing cash crops like pepper, cardamom, coffee and tea. These people depend on the neighbouring state (Tamil Nadu) for

cereals, pulses and vegetables which are costly and grown by using chemical pesticides and manures. Since the last three years VOSARD has been making an attempt to motivate the farmers to produce their traditional food crops consisting of vegetables, tapioca, yam, papaya, and banana along with the main cash crops. This way the farmers can produce food materials in addition to cash crops. We hope to achieve food security and nutritional security for the people by directing more and more farmers into mixed farming. Mixed farming method will be the solution for the small farmers to overcome low productivity and low agriculture income. As a opening step VOSARD has started forming farmer's clubs and clusters. At present 825 small and marginal farmers from Vandanmedu panchayat have been organised into 50 farmers groups and they have been federated into four cluster level associations and a federation. Training in organic farming and value addition and exposure visits to model farms are conducted periodically for enhancing the growth capacities of the farmers. Construction of biogas plants and vermin compost units is encouraged in the entire operational area for promoting organic farming. Fallow land cultivation, introducing modern technologies and methods in farming, conservation and propagation of traditional/ innate seeds/ plants, and developing local markets are promoted.

Promotion of Non Conventional Energy Source

Conservation of environment and nature is inevitable for reducing the negative effects of modernisation. In this context VOSARD makes an all round effort to familiarise and promote non-conventional energy sources like biogas and solar energy among the rural population. Sensitisation and training programmes are conducted across the villages for motivating the people to adopt environmental protection measures. Construction of biogas using ferro cement technology, which is cost effective and long lasting, is widely accepted by the people. As a model for others, VOSARD has installed a solar power system for their entire office to withstand prolonged power-cuts.

Drinking Water Supply and Management

Jalanidhi is a project of Kerala Rural Water supply and Sanitation Agency (KRWSA) of the Kerala government. It is a demand driven project. VOSARD is working as a support organisation to provide technical and social support to beneficiary groups. The main objective of this project is to give sustainable clean and safe drinking water to the rural people. The project is implemented in participatory way by forming Beneficiary Groups (BGs). Survey, source identification, construction and distribution are managed by the BGs. A total of 23 BGs are functioning in Chakkupallam panchayat of Idukki district to manage the supply of safe drinking water to 1,350 households.

Cultural Exchange Programmes

Bridge Builder Programme(BBP):The volunteer service "weltwarts" is a support programme of the German government, in which young people will gain international exposure in developing countries through volunteer work, and thereby increase their inter-cultural competence and knowledge regarding development cooperation. As per BBP programme two German students are doing voluntary service in VOSARD. This programme of the German government provides a cultural exchange between India and Germany.

Integrated Watershed Programme in Vathikudy Panchayat

It is project to improve the quality of life of the rural people through sustainable management of the natural resources, income and employment generation, capacity building and addressing the negative effects of environmental degradation in Vathikudy panchayat of Idukki district of Kerala. The major components are: enhancing capacities of the target people, promoting sustainable agriculture and livelihood opportunities, enabling to conserve soil and water and facilitating to mobilise local resources. Karl Kubel Stiftung, Germany, is supporting the implementation of the project during 2014-17.

VOSARD in the Role of a Mother NGO

Promotion of state level DPO network:Promotion and strengthening of a state level network of Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) is going on since 2012. Seven DPOs across the state are the active members of this network. Consultation meetings, leadership trainings, formation of a state level federation of the DPOs, and sensitisation of the members of Panchayati Raj Institutions are part of this programme.

Strengthening of other NGOs: VOSARD has emerged as a premier social service organisation in Idukki district. Many NGOs have visited this organisation to learn the CBR model of rehabilitation strategy. Eight NGOs from Kerala are partners of VOSARD for availing technical support and guidance in replicating CBR model, three-tier system of SHGs and resource mobilisation strategies in their area. We could send a team of trained masons to a NGO based project in West Bengal for constructing biogas plants using ferro-cement technology.

Exposure to Social Work for the Students: Students of various schools and colleges doing Social work are visiting the organisation for block placements and exposure to social work practices. Ample inputs are given for their career needs through experience sharing, field visits, case studies and surveys.

Awards and Recognitions

The Functioning of the institution in its hard work, commitment and long vision has brought in a number of honours and recognitions from various corners.

Appointments:

- NGO Member, Local Level Committee (LLC) of National Trust constituted at Idukki District under the chairmanship of District Collector.
- Member, Technical Advisory Committee of District Panchayat, Idukki.
- NGO member, District Disaster Management Committee
- NGO member, The Committee for up-gradation of institutional facilities constituted by Kerala State Social Justice Department.

Awards:

- Best Social Service Organisation Award -2007 by Consumer Federation of India
- Excellence in Social Work Award-2008 by YMCA Kumily.
- State Disability Award-2010 by the Government of Kerala for the commendable services rendered to the differently-abled persons.
- Pathfinder Award-2013 by CEVA, Kochi
- Fr. Jose Alex Award for Excellence in Social Work - 2014 by Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kochi.

Conclusion

VOSARD has an efficient and dedicated team of staff committed to the pursuit of its mission. The spirit of team work based on Christian values, following and practicing the principles of the heavenly patron of the agency, Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara is the reason behind its achievements. Having an integrated approach to take care of all the marginalised sections in the society is also making VOSARD a unique organisation in the field of social work.

Book Review

Society and Social Justice: A Nexus in Review. Brij Mohan, 2012, Bloomington, iUniverse. ISBN:978-1-4759—0796-4(sc)pp.xx+102, Price.$13.95

Brij Mohan is a versatile thinker who is popularly known as the Father of Indian Social Psychiatry and due to his attraction towards the philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre he is also known as Sartre of Social Work. The Book titled, *Society and Social Justice: A Nexus in Review* is a collection of thoughts, constructs and philosophical insights and deliberations of the author. The five sections of this book are: 1) The Human Condition, 2) Theorectico-Philosophical Streams, 3) Social Constructs and Interventions, 4) International Aspects and Issues, and 5) Science, Society and Values.

The human condition has been the general foundation of conceptual framework of Brij Mohan. He states thus, caste as a system of stratified inequality is the fundamental rhythm of Indian life, and has globally survived in different forms since times immemorial. Its functionality on the sub continent, however, is sustained by a mythologised social reality that runs contrary to the ideals of social democracy. Caste in India seems to be the essence of the social structure, its survivaland its all pervasive influence characterises theIndian way of life. To eradicate casteism and untouchability, a caste war has to be fought, no doubt but its ideology and programme of action should be objectively progressive. It would be self-defeating and nationally devastating to resort to reactionary methods and thinking.

The advancement of science and technology especially in fields that relate to human well-being has brought paradigmatic changes but the problem had been confounded by the politics of new fundamentalism. Terrorism and counter-terrorism continues to be a nexus of evil. Terrorism is one of the ugly faces of evil; counter-terrorism is a vile reaction to evil which sustains both evilness and its villainy. When state and its agents become instruments of terror, it leads to the moral dissolution of its legitimacy. Terrorism has its roots in annihilating suffocation, blind rage, unexamined faith, unkind beliefs and lack of both rationality and humanity. Counter-terrorism derives its strength from its own nefarious motives and tools. To distinguish between the two, one must critically analyse the dynamics that breed terror, arrogance, hopelessness and violence.

A new consciousness to deconstruct the existing culture of islands, alienation, and institutional-individual narcissism calls for a paradigm shift that essentially boils down to certain basic rules of civility. A responsible society must promote and sustain the elemental humanity of each individual and community. This seems to be better, perhaps the only, way to transform the world. The pain of hunger is no more a third world curse; scourges of poverty and authoritarianism are pervasive. Even the most advanced nations in the world are not immune to the rages of new poverty—a phenomenon that marks the failure of the post-industrial society in meeting common human needs. Scientism on the one hand and heuristic orientation on the other tend to distort free inquiry and its impact. The outcome is intellectual territoriality, social exclusion and cognitive dogmatism. Institutional-individual narcissism poisons academic climate and a sort of new fundamentalism tends to pervade the entire research culture. Behavioral sciences, in their reliance on quantification and mathematical rigour, represent a flight from (human) reality.

Mental illness and mental health are not an absolute condition; the former becomes distinguishable mental desired attributes of the latter which appear to be disappearing. While impairment affecting role and status calling for psychiatric attention helps us define mental illness, personal maturity marked by adequate socio-personal adjustment, integration, self-restraint, reality orientation and cultural adaptability enables the identification of positive attributes that characterise mental health. In social psychiatry both conditions needs to be studied in togetherness. This opens unlimited vistas of collaboration between the psychiatrist and the social scientist. Caring and sharing nurture a civil-responsible order. Modern social workers have scientific knowledge and tools to alleviate social problems. As specialists they perform complex functions offering problem/population-specific services in a host of settings, they seek to professionalise the whole problem-solving process.

In the section on theoretico-philosophical streams, the author is critical about the teaching-learning process in social work education**.** The entire teaching-learning spectrum of social work education is almost philosophically illiterate and as a consequence, anti-intellectual. A new text book

culture patronised by our leading professional organisations and commercial publishers has nearly killed the art of independent scholarship that sustained and promoted original works. The result is the models and recycled texts that have replaced intellectual habits that nourished creative minds.

The future of social development is discussed in the section on Human Society, Social Constructs and Interventions. Social development depends on the foundations of a civil society's stand on the twin pillars of global equality and social justice. Clientisation is not a humanistic approach and to emphasise "micro" at the expense of its "macro" dimension and their symbiosis is an intellectual impossibility. Social work as a profession is a 20th century American innovation. Its evolution is a mark of the rise of a welfare state. This state of welfare institutionalised residual functions and ensured people's security against the contingencies of modernity. The 21st century realities are starkly daunting and different. We notice meltdowns in our basic social, economic and political institutions and a devastating blow to the existing social contract. Physical fundamentalists have however conveniently asked for a law of the jungle in the market while commanding an authoritarian hand over other aspects of law and order. This paradoxical double behaviour has crossed a situation which calls for a revolution that is Social Contract II.

The troubled manifestations of these cultural crises are beyond the SW-EPR (Social Work Education, Practice and Research) purview competencies and even imagination. A truly post-modern approach to problem solving implies radical changes in programme and curricular structures, pedagogy, epistemologies of change. Social Workers are people who have studied and learnt the art and science of caring. This professional endeavour involves a litany of roles, goals and strategies as conceptualised by the skilled pioneers in the field.

Social work's epistemological foundations are based on academic parasitism, unreflective view of social reality and uncritical self awareness. It is common knowledge that social work faculty and students abhor deeper discussion on philosophical-critical issues. Without exaggeration, the social work culture is expediently anti-intellectual. Social work has become a faith based calling in its own perversed style. Administrators wallow in unabashed self promotion and careerism flourishes at the expense of professionalism and scholars write more text than they read. In short, academic social work has become practitioners' haven for faith based theodicy that is neither committed to knowledge building nor philosophically sound pedagogy. In the name of scientific research we have become apes of unfounded empirical logic which lacks both authenticity and legitimacy. Social work is not what we occupationally pursue as careerists; social work is what we do professionally and personally to change this world. Social work, a quintessentially human rights approach to most of the human made tragedies, may well reequip itself, both pragmatically and epistemologically. Theory and practice of social work warrant emphasis on inclusive citizenship, universal equality, freedom and justice. What we need is practice of hope rather than politics of expedience.

Social policy is quintessentially a democratic response to societal needs. Social policy must be conceptualised as a liberating mechanism directed towards social justice. There would be no need for any policy innovation if human society where an impeccable system. Since we live in a less than perfect world, intellectuals, especially policy thinkers and practitioners, must reflect on and build upon individual and collective experiences that will ensure a better world for our positivity. Social policy is a creative decision making process that involves a complex system of cognitive offshoots and politico-social-economic variables undergirding a unified whole of transcendental values and techno scientific advancements. Policy making is a tough value-oriented balancing of probabilities rather than hunt for convenient possibilities.

Social policy ought to be conceptualised as a possible theory and practice of the preferred societal values, goals and interventions. The range of social policy includes alternatives that economise resources and optimise human function without oppression, allocation that generate creative mechanism without ugly political maneuvers and strategies that promote conducive social arrangements without counterproductive results. A decolonised society with an aversion to progressive social change, rampant with political corruption, becomes a fertile field for the mushroom growth of divisive and disruptive forces. While stress, restlessness, anxiety and insecurity grow in general, disparity between haves and have-nots and the gap between principles and practices internally destroy/decompose the entire system.

Social interventions ought to design and implement mechanisms of change that maintain human equilibrium without oppressive hierarchies. All we need is a peaceful coexistence that promotes humankind's wellbeing.

The section on international aspects and issues deals with the multiple challenges of social work practice in the globalised world. An internationally accepted definition of social work is not necessarily international social work. It may be defined as a discursive discipline that employs the

knowledge and tenets of social practice in a diverse, dynamic and independent world. In reality, it is more of a field rather than discipline. International social work ethics and methodology are designed by contours of social reality that represent human life as an end (in itself) in an otherwise divided world.

Contemporary social developmentalism is fraught with the fallacies of growth. In a world plagued by paroxysm and global inequalities, universal needs-survival, violence, justice and human dignity call for new strategies for social transformation. International social work, especially with emphasis on comparative methodology, is human response to unraveling differential social issues, problems and approaches. Enhancement of the human condition-beyond territorial, ideological and socio-cultural barriers-is a global challenge. Scourges of governmentality perpetuating global oppression negate the essence of freedom that all people are entitled to enjoy. Social welfare offers no panacea; it represents a consciousness against cross-national dehumanisation that thwarts global welfare.

In the last section, the author discusses science, values and social reality of the modern world. A search for society that is free from violence, terror and dehumanisation is a continuous process. If scientific progress had followed, the ethics of development in harmony with universal values, the dawn of the 21st century should have been pregnant with equality and justice across nations. Instead, we have a world ravaged by horrors of new tribalism. Human rights are conceptualised as inalienable rights of all people required for the survival, security and dignity of each individual, group and community without prejudice or discrimination. Human commonalities, despite vast differences, constitute a system of unity that may be called `universal humanity.'

Society and Social Justice: A Nexus in Review is a collection of major themes that run across the deliberations and thoughts of the author. This book challenges the readers with radical interpretations of global issues and concerns in the light of contemporary social work practices. To follow the threads of thought of the author in this book, the reader needs to have a deeper reading of the other books authored by him from where these gems of thoughts have been incorporated.

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INSERT THE MATTER FOR: GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

RAJAGIRI COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSES OFFERED

- Doctorate (PhD) in Social Work, Management Studies and Social Sciences
- Master of Social Work (MSW)
- Master of Human Resource Management (MHRM)
- Master of Business Administration (MBA)
- Post Graduate Diploma in Management (PGDM)
- Master of Computer Applications (MCA)
- Bachelor of Social Work (BSW)
- Bachelor of Library and Information Sciences (BLISC)
- Post Graduate Diploma in Administration of Human Services (PGDAHS)

RESEARCH AND TRAINING DIVISIONS

- Research Institute
- Empanelled Training Institute (ETI) -NSS
- Middle Level Training Centre for functionaries of the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)

LIVE LABS OF FIELD ACTION

- State Adoption Resource Agency (SARA), Kerala
- Rajagiri Outreach Service Society
- Free Drug Cell
- Rajagiri Family Counselling Centre
- Childline-Rajagiri
- Aditya-Solar Shop
- Rajagiri Mediation Clinic