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Editorial

Prof Gitanjali Chawla & Dr Vijeta Pundir

"I'm more frightened than interested by artificial intelligence – in fact, perhaps fright and interest are not far away from one another. Things can become real in your mind, you can be tricked, and you believe things you wouldn't ordinarily. A world run by automatons doesn't seem completely unrealistic anymore. It's a bit chilling." - Gemma Whelan

Artificial Intelligence has earned itself a dog-eared page in this digital age. It is neither new nor is it a recent phenomenon, it has been in usage in one form or the other since the 1950s, but the hurtling speed at which this has been amplified in recent years, is largely due to advances in technology and the explosion of data, pivotal for training AI models. It is a no brainer that its impact has been large and encompassing, no matter where one stands in the ethical debate that ensues.

AI is, at its base, a double-edged knife that jabs both ways, a knife that is rusty and will corrode and infect. The spheres in which it can be used are so wide that it now is impossible to imagine a life, social or professional without it. The rapid advancements of AI systems have changed the way individuals consume and process information. Usage of AI in daily life has increasingly become more and more normalized, to the point where people are replacing genuine human connection with their personalized AI chatbots. Chatbots that will provide them with no dissent and endless comfort, nothing that will challenge them or force them to think differently or even critically. Instead these will reinforce their opinions and thought processes, no matter how dangerous or troubling they may be.

AI has not only impacted connection, but also poses a threat to art, which transcends

culture while actively shaping it. Art, which is a myriad of human emotions, a whirlwind of feeling, of life and everything that is worth living. In its place, AI punches out tasteless pieces, with a distinct lack of flair and diversity, pieced together from other Frankensteins of human behaviour, a vicious cycle of recycled and reduced thoughts.

Even in the professional sphere, AI algorithms have started being audited before they are used for hiring. We have entered an era where before getting hired an AI model will read through a resume which was also written using AI and will accept or reject on the basis of the presence of keywords. Being a tool, AI can be easily misused. It functions using the data that is fed to it. Inherent biases in the data fed, in algorithms created will naturally lead to perpetuation of structured discrimination, and marginalisation of sections of the population.

The detrimental impact of artificial intelligence on the increasingly fragile environment is another aspect that is critical to the levels of AI adoption. Mushrooming data centres that house AI servers not only produce electronic waste but are also large consumers of water, a scarce natural resource. Furthermore, they rely on critical minerals and rare elements, which are often mined unsustainably and also use enormous amounts of electricity, spurring the emission of planet-warming greenhouse gases. Decibel levels about AI taking away jobs are at an all-time high however, it is now established that job profiles are changing and those who do not upskill to use and understand AI are likely to be left behind in today's overly competitive job market.

This issue of Indian Journal of Social Enquiry looks ahead and also studies the past to reinforce the foundations of progress and development. The opening article by Sidharth Mishra, Sumedha Dhasmana & Praveen Kumar Singh brings to the fore the integration of theatre in education with event management curriculum by examining case studies and practices at the Vivekananda School of Journalism and Mass Communication (VSJMC), Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies, Delhi. While this article treads novel and effective pedagogies, Saguna in the next article titled, 'From Regional Commander to Imperial Figure: Reviewing Zorawar Singh's Contribution to the Rise of the Dogra State' resurrects and examines existing literature to throw new perspectives on Zorawar Singh and Himalayan geopolitics.

Shikha Chauhan in 'Eroding Trust, Emerging Voices: Youth and Democratic Legitimacy in Nepal and Sri Lanka' not only delves into the trajectory of democracy in Nepal and

Sri Lanka but makes a strong case for a multi-dimensional engagement with Gen-Z to reinforce democracy. Re-examining the past to posit the future continues in 'Salt Satyagraha to the Chipko movement: Ecofeminist Readings of Women's Mobilization on Resource Politics in India' by Aastha. In an insightful comparative study of two key socio-political movements, she challenges patriarchal mores and undergirds the proactive role of women as leaders and mobilisers of political movements.

Ajad Singh, Rakesh Kumar & Saumya Shukla examine the fiscal impact of Goods and Services Tax (GST) in Gujarat. An in-depth analysis of fixed time periods leads to pertinent findings and suggestions for enhanced performance. For our literature enthusiasts, we have an interesting and engaging article by Aishwarya Jha titled, 'Bleeding Green: War, Poetry and Ecology in Select Poems from Northeast India'. Jha's analysis of the poetry from the conflict-ridden northeastern states of India makes a strong case for adoption of poetry as a mode of creative expression and representation. This issue closes with a review of Community Conserved Areas in India, one of the oldest forms of ecosystem governance by Anand Kumar, Preety Sharma & Shikhar Kumar. Not only do they chart its historiography and challenges but also make pertinent suggestions for its sustainable existence as community-driven, context-specific, and rooted in indigenous knowledge systems.

We hope that the articles resonate and benefit our readers, and lead to research in some of the key areas highlighted in this issue. We continue with our endeavour to advocate and expand the scope of critical social enquiry.

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Theatre in Education as an Experiential Model for Event Management Pedagogy

Sidharth Mishra, Sumedha Dhasmana & Praveen Kumar Singh

Article History

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Abstract

Event Management is the process of planning, marketing, producing, analysing and evaluating an event. It is a crucial part of the course curriculum for the students of Journalism and Mass Communication at various colleges and universities. In 2021,Vivekananda School of Journalism and Mass Communication (VSJMC), Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies - Technical Campus, brought an innovative pedagogical intervention in the teaching of Event Management. It integrated Theatre in Education (TiE) with Event Management curriculum. TiE is the structured use of theatrical performance and participatory drama strategies and nurtures emotional, cognitive, emotional, and social learning. In the last five years, VSJMC implemented this pedagogical experiment and created five prominent theatre productions. This paper brings forth the enhanced learning outcomes which were possible through the application of TiE in Event Management pedagogy.

Keywords: *Theatre in Education, Event Management, Experiential Learning, Media Education*

Introduction

Journalism and Mass Communication is not just a field of study, but a mastery of skills and dexterities, where the theoretical aspects are shaped into impact through practiced precision. Practical knowledge is important in order to prepare journalism and mass communication students for the industry. Subjects that encourage reasoning, decision making and problem solving are of great importance to the students. In a subject like event management, only theory isn't enough to teach students. Experience of the actual event provides students an opportunity to work as per industry standards, make mistakes and get feedback and acquire skills that would help them later in the industry without making a big industry blunder. Moreover, it also helps students to gain confidence in all kinds of skills like situation awareness, decision making, communication, teamwork and leadership. Kolb's learning cycle suggests that effective learning is achieved by progressing through a cycle of four stages i.e. having an experience ("concrete experience"), reflecting on the experience ("reflective observation"), learning from the experience ("abstract conceptualisation" and trying out what one has learnt ("active experimentation") (Wijnen-Meijer et al., 2022).

As a part of their curriculum, Event Management Lab is being taught to the final semester students of BA(JMC), At the Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies- Technical Campus (VIPS-TC), Vivekananda School of Journalism and Mass Communication (VSJMC) organises a media festival - Spandan. This two days mega event has a variety of activities including street plays and theatrical performances every year. Among the many choices of the kind of event that they have to organise, students have the option of choosing to get into theatre production. The event under review is titled Grand Finale and is the last performance of the two-day jamboree.

1. In the first step, Students are given the assignment to select the theme and come up with a proposal for the theatre production. (Kolb's "concrete experience" & "reflective observation").
2. They later come up with their ideas and present in front of their peers and faculty members. Moreover, the comprehension about

the concept also takes place when students ask questions from the presenters as well as when faculty members also cross question the performers and the team behind those concepts. This helps students to crystalise the concept and gain more clarity on their topics (Kolb's "abstract conceptualisation"). Selected students then present their ideas to the department heads who give further clarity and help to finalise the concept to make it a concrete idea.

3. Subsequently, continuous meetings and sessions take place between the selected students and teacher-mentors who start working on things like story ideas and story plots. The faculty mentors continuously guide and improvise students' ideas and initiatives and once a script has been developed, students start with the script reading sessions that help in continuous improvisation (Kolb's active experimentation).
4. As the conceptualisation process has been concretised, then starts coordination and controlling for the production team of the theatrical performances.
5. On the day of the event, the culmination or execution of the theatrical performances take place.
6. Post event, in the process of closing out, students develop their portfolio and come up with their Event Management Lab Folder that elaborates their learning experiences and outcomes (Kolb's "concrete experience" & "reflective observation").

Students prepare for almost the entire semester for their one final production. This has so far been done for the past several years and it has helped faculty and students align and achieve feats with each project.

As stated by Gavin Bolton, "drama has a great deal to do with pedagogy because it is an art" (Bolton 1993, p. 39) The educational substratum inherent in theatre is likewise suggested by David Pammenter:

> What is theatre, who is it for, and what does it say? Theatre, at its best, is the communication and exploration of human experience; it is a forum for our values, political, moral and ethical. It is concerned with the interaction of these values at a philosophical, emotional and intellectual level. (1993, p. 59)

Mantle of the Expert

Mantle of the Expert was developed by Dorothy Heathcote in 1980's with the aim to provide a drama-based approach that could make learning easier across curriculum. Heathcote carefully planned her sessions with school students and even utilised props and costumes for making her experiments interesting. The idea was to plan a fictional set-up where students can take responsibilities and can actively engage in the learning process. This mantle provides an opportunity for the teacher and the student to work collaboratively just like members working in the same team.

> This means the faculty members (inside the fiction) deliberately change their relationship with the students to one of equal power and authority. In this way decisions are made through discussion and distributed leadership. It is important to remember, outside the fiction, the teacher's authority remains unaffected. (MOE, n.d., para. 2)

Since this framework was utilised for undergraduate students, researchers have modified the framework by changing the fictional setting to a real-world setting. Students are required to organise an actual event just as they would do later when they step into the industry. Mantle of the Expert is an approach to education that is rooted in drama, enquiry and imagination. The researchers have modified the imagination part with the actual one.

Theatre in Education

TIE, or Theatre in Education, is the name given to a particular kind of theatre, practised by professional drama companies, or TIE teams, which work specifically Theatre plays an important role in teaching students in teaching students literature (*Meghdootam, Othello and Dhruvswamini*), understand issues of military history (*Sham-e-Sipahi*) the environment (*Yaha Ke Hum Sikander*). A teacher can bring about a difference in the life of a student by introducing him/her to theatres. In educational projects to be devised at schools (Valverde, 2002).

Theatre in Education (Tie) in the Context of Educational Drama

Theatre arts can be utilised in a variety of ways. It helps students to learn newer vocabulary; develop creative problems, work on it and create a newer set of

skill-set. It brings students to action and it help them in motivating them to think and understand the value of lifelong learning. Our plays help our students to be fit for any kind of job that they may like to take in the near future. Theatre helps students in collaboration, problem solving, communication, social and interpersonal skills and presentational skills.

These theatrical performances are a live learning laboratory for students involved in planning and execution. Theatre, by nature, demands collaboration, discipline, time management, and problem-solving, core competencies in event management. The production required coordination across diverse teams including actors, dancers, musicians, directors, choreographers, technical producers, logistics, ambience, design, and stage management.

Understanding Theatre in Education of Event Management

Theme and Conceptualization

During the initial brainstorming sessions, it is the theme that is first pondered upon. Team members discuss the current happenings around the world and come up with few topics that are worth the projection. This further leads to consensus on a single theme that could relate with the purpose of the event. The theme is also decided by keeping the target audience in mind, designed in a manner that it remains engaging and yet easy to communicate. Subsequently comes the time to bring ideas to life including preparations for event ambience, cultural programmes and the theatre production.

The students get completely involved in handling the whole event. They start with a plan, get it approved, begin the coordination work, write scripts, manage resources, schedule rehearsals and ensure a smooth conduct till the final performance.

Grand Finale 2021- *Sham-i-Sipahi*

Sham-i-Sipahi was a tribute to Indian armed forces. The acts were presented through depiction of three famous operations including the Battle of Budgam in 1947, Operation Black Tornado in 2008 and Operation Bandar in 2019. The narrative was set by portraying Major Somanth Sharma, Major General Abhay Gupta and Air Marshal C. Hari Kumar.

Major Somnath Sharma, the first recipient of the Param Vir Chakra was represented in the first act. His extraordinary courage and bravery during the 1947 Indo-Pak War in Jammu and Kashmir delayed enemy advances and enabled critical reinforcements. His leadership, self-sacrifice, and steadfast commitment to duty demonstrate the highest ideals of valour and patriotism, making him a revered national hero.

The second act was on Major General Abhay Gupta, who was a key figure in the response to the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, as he led a National Security Guard (NSG) team as a first responder to the terror strikes at the various attack sites. Once the government officially ordained him the role, he and his team mobilised, traveling from Manesar to Mumbai to take over the situation from local authorities and the Navy's MARCOS commandos at the Taj Hotel, the Oberoi Trident, and Nariman House (Chabad House). With his swift advancement, he observed the terrorists' detailed awareness of the hotel and Chabad House layouts, and then he meticulously planned barricades and traps for the terrorists, in order to dispose of the attack.

The third and the last act portrayed Air Marshal C Hari Kumar, the key operational planner and executor of the Balakot Air Strike, code named Operation Bandar, which took place on February 26, 2019. As the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief (AOC-in-C) of the Western Air Command, he was directly in charge of the mission that avenged the Pulwama terror attack. His contribution was crucial to the success of the high-stakes, top-secret operation, as he headed the Western Air Command, the primary command responsible for India's airspace along the Pakistan border, and personally supervised the entire planning and execution process.

Grand Finale 2022- *Meghdootam*

Meghdootam took inspiration from Kalidasa's most celebrated Sanskrit epic drama - *Meghdootam*. The whole idea was to travel through the route as described by Kalidasa in this play. In order to make it more contemporary, each act was enacted through dance drama based on Bollywood songs. The production reinterpreted the Kalidasa's classic literary text into a multimedia performance comprising drama, music and dance. Beyond the artistic merit, the production proved to be a robust specimen of theatre as an educational tool. The performance this time followed the story of exiled lover Yaksh who requests a cloud to convey his message to his wife Yakshi. Students successfully portrayed

the powerful theme of hope, emotional suffering and love in separation thereby ushering a new level of interpretation to literature.

Grand Finale 2023- *Kaala Chaand*

India successfully achieved soft landing of space vehicle Chandrayaan 3 on moon in 2023. Moon, thus, was chosen as the theme for the theatrical performance. This theme appropriately matched with William Shakespeare's timeless classic *Othello*, which was adapted into a script tiled *Kaala Chaand*. As Zelma (2023) also underlines that this convergence of literature and theatre has long been acknowledged as a dynamic educational tool that offers an immersive experience which moves beyond boundaries of traditional classroom learning.

The narrative's central thrust is Othello who was a noble, respected Black General in the Venetian Army. Othello developed feelings for the stunning Desdemona who was a strong-willed noblewoman and was not scared of defying societal norms and even elopes to get married to Othello. Othello and Desdemona's joy was however short-lived as Iago, Othello's faithful counsel, hatches a scheme to end their union. This is taken as the background to develop a gripping storyline. The Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh served as the setting for this adaptation of Othello from an Indian perspective. The play's plot depicted the mafia and political landscape of Gorakhpur in the 1980s. The characters were a fictitious depiction of the Tiwaris and Shahs, the dominant families of Gorakhpur. A few new characters were also added in order to help the audience comprehend the play which was titled Kaala Chaand.

A compelling act and passionate dance performance from classical to hip-hop and whacking were utilised in the play to convey a variety of concepts to the audience. Every dance piece explained to the audience a play's unfolding event and delve further into its underlying meaning and emotions. The themes that *Kaala Chaand* further explored were the relevance of truth, patriarchal insecurity and the worst emotion of humans, jealousy. Unlike the original play which presents the tragedy in sequential form, *Kaala Chaand* kept two timelines - real time and past. Freestyle and contemporary dance forms were utilized to establish love, entertainment, conflict and jealousy.

Grand Finale 2024 – *Damini – Is Yug Ki Dhruvswamini*

Damini – Is Yug Ki Dhruvswamini was a bold and unapologetic celebration of

Indian women's resilience and contributions in history. Gender Equality, theme of year 2024, was brought to life through an artistic fusion of narration, poetry, music, drama and dance, showcasing the adaptation of Jay Shankar Prasad's Hindi classic - *Dhruvswamini* into a modern age as Damini.

Damini: Is Yug Ki Dhruvswamini was a bold and compelling theatrical production that captured the ongoing societal struggle between tradition, power dynamics and women's empowerment. Set against the backdrop of a patriarchal society, the play showcased the life of Damini, a courageous woman who becomes a voice of resistance in a system built to silence her. The narrative included six acts that brought forward issues like gender discrimination, women resilience and political corruption. The story moved with historical references that related with struggles of contemporary Indian women.

Emotionally charged scenes and symbolic dance sequences were the main highlight of the play. This was supported with live music and gripping dialogues that depicted protagonist's fight against women oppression. The play includes head-turning sequences like the protagonist defying societal norms, confronting her husband and exposing corrupt leaders, thereby becoming modern-day trailblazer of change. The performance inspired audience to pause and ponder on the importance of questioning deeply entrenched but illegitimate norms of the society.

Grand Finale 2025 - *Yaha Ke Hum Sikander*

Yaha Ke Hum Sikander was a captivating story of friendship, hardship, strength and self-rediscovery. The opening scene was an emotional reunion of five college friends who were already disappointed in their lives. Each one was bearing a burden like of loss of job, dream unfulfilled and disagreement with parents. This college get-together proves to be a turning point in the lives of all five as they inadvertently start a new journey together.

The reason behind their journey was an idea to visit the ancestral village of one of the characters called Rawat who was dismissed from the Army. This expedition in the mountains of Garhwal was not just physical but also a deeply personal one. Just as they were immersed in the mesmerising landscape, their peace broke with a sudden deafening noise of a dynamite explosion. Later when Rawat and his friends visited a resort looking for a job opportunity, they began

re-thinking on the entire concept of development and environmental balance in mountains.

Their visit to a nearby luxury resort confronts them with stark realities of greed, exploitation, and arrogance that endanger human life and disturb the delicate ecological harmony of the region. Rawat's grandmother became the guiding light for all five friends. Caught between conflicting forces of ambition and morality, nature and destruction, fear and courage, the five friends are compelled to make decisions that altered the course of their lives. Ultimately, on one tumultuous storm-ridden night, destiny places them before a defining test.

Role Allocation

The initial script writing is done by such students who are keen on story writing, direction or being part of the core team. After the first draft of the play is worked upon, volunteer students proceed with initial rounds of audition. This way they take a step forward and actively engage with fellow students and juniors, elaborating the importance and requirement of the planned theatrical performance. Initially volunteered and actively engaged students subtly start taking charge as they go on explaining the requirement of characters, stage settings and story line. Buzz creation, informational messaging and promotion also begin at this stage which is majorly though word of mouth by this time. The immense fascination of a substantial number of students who participate in auditions marks the marketing kick-off for the event.

During auditions, keen students demonstrate their acting skills on assigned scenes while also presenting their character understanding, vocal capabilities, emotional depth and ability to adapt. Auditions enable selection of best students for various roles and responsibilities. Hence comes the opportunity to sing, act, dance or jam. Students who perform, are however a part of a small team that comes on stage. Almost twice as many students show keenness on opting for behind the scenes roles. Some of these include, script writing, direction, set design, audio visual management, on stage and back stage management, ambience, choreography, music direction, marketing, social media management, makeup and costume management to name a few. Student coordinators in affirmation with all members decide on roles and responsibilities as per one's suitability and strength. Thus, these students start

stepping into event management roles and start working and coordinating exactly in a manner as required in the industry.

Consultation

After the students decide on their team and prepare a basic outline for the production, they present in front of their mentors. The mentoring team comprises the two senior most Professors and at least five faculty members teaching the Event Management paper who provide feedback and help students improve their work. This consultation is a continuous eight-week long process and helps in polishing every aspect before the final production. At a stage when actors, dance performers, vocalists, AV coordinators and directors are almost approved and finalized by the mentors, students proceed with script reading sessions that take place in presence of mentors. This helps in clarifying interpretations, sort pacing issues and building a chemistry between performers and direction team.

Mentors also ask students to prepare a budget so that the final production runs smoothly and stays within the financial constraints. They are motivated to be realistic, include all potential expenses and be prepared for any unexpected cost that may arise during the planning process. Site selection is also done during the consultation phase wherein potential venues are discussed and visited before finalization. This is followed by creation of a promotional plan and coming out with marketing materials such as posters and social media posts. Students from the social media team strategically reveal information related to date, time, location and ticket prices.

Potential risks and their solutions are also discussed in advance. This includes planned technical difficulties, backup actors or attire glitch. The team works together on an issue and quickly resolves an issue before they become major problems. This is also the phase when students are guided about fundraising and encouraged to make marketing pitches and discuss sponsorship opportunities with potential business houses. They are also trained in ticketing which is an important element of revenue generation.

Production

The big day when the students present their theatrical production is carefully planned in advance. Students are guided to take proper rest a night before and come refreshed for their big day. Mentors focus on students' comfort and boosting up their confidence while ensuring that every pointer of the checklist

prepared is followed. It is on the day of the final day that a team of students work on the stage setting. Mentors ensure proper mike testing and full rehearsal is done at least an hour before. A team of students set up the registration desk and get ready for guest welcome. When the audience and chief guest arrive at the fixed time, students are let free to present their final production.

A team of students take up the responsibility of capturing the event on camera, both still and video. Students display their efficiency in handling high end cameras, record videos, capture still photographs and make reels. This helps in record keeping.

Post Production

It starts with post event evaluation as it is important to review outcomes and determine what worked well and what could have been better. Evaluation helps in assessing how key elements of event management were executed. This includes reviewing the effectiveness of the marketing strategy or budgeting the event as well as understanding audience response. Social media posts don't stop after the final production and in fact post event social media posts mark the culmination of the theatrical performance. Students volunteer to prepare the post-production video which also becomes part of their final project

Analysis and Discussion

On the conceptual level, the MoE model emphasises on learning by transferring the classroom learning from the teacher-led atmosphere to a student-focused 'community of practice'. By handing the baton to the students, an environment is being created to make them work and the mentors drive them to perform. Each student, with his/her uniqueness creates an environment of extraordinary creativity. They learn their hidden talents and the mentors are there to make them harness their capabilities and realise their core competencies. In this model, students operate as event planners and mentors behave like consultants as well as clients to make the students take the centre-stage in order to operate responsibly towards fulfilment of the objective of successfully organising the event at the grand scale as a team. With this model, students are provided with an engaging, creative environment that nurtures talents of students individually as well as team work also. They comprehend the significance of different professional collaboration, practical solutions to the issues being raised during the conduction of events.

Let us try to understand how the MoE model augments knowledge base in event management.

Enhanced Student Engagement: In this model what is being done is that the students are entrusted with the work of conceptualising and proposing their ideas as how they want to do certain activities. A team of students start planning the scale of event. Mentors guide them and enrich their proposals in a strategic manner, making it more robust and feasible. Students are empowered with everything well set. They are not just following directions from their mentors and teachers but are doing work on their own adding their creativity with much more self-determination. They are more into action with a focus on unravelling things step by step. All these processes help them learn in a purposeful way.

Sense of Belongingness: As students have the ownership of the event, they have a sense of belongingness in whatever is being planned and rolled out by them in the entire process of the event. They have much increased willingness and self-motivation for whatever they are attempting and working on. As everything is planned, proposed, and developed by themselves only, they have different levels of ownership of their own. They are much into their scheme of things, where they have much motivation in implementing and achieving their planned roles. As the entire budgeting and all expenses are handled by themselves, the learning becomes more effective in terms of finance management too.

Risk Taking Abilities: When planning is being done based on their own ideas and are being implemented themselves, with expenses being generated and spent themselves, there is a low-stake environment to commit mistakes. The learning becomes more real time as any gaffe being committed are managed at the same time and are also being covered to make it look seamless and unblemished. With mentors around and activities taking place at their own venue, the risk-taking abilities become stronger. They are ready to learn from their mistakes without any real-world corollaries.

Teamwork and Collaboration: In this model, the mentors and the teachers modify their role from being the giver of knowledge to accompanying in their enterprise thus sanctioning students to take on different roles like sharing authority, making decisions on collaborations and many more. Students negotiate with sponsors for generating funds. Students coordinate with different vendors in order to get a stage to be put for the show. They partner with various

other service providers in order to fulfil their objectives towards successful conduction of their event. Students work as a team to implement their plans and take collaborative decisions in order to meet their deadline and successful conduction of their extravaganza.

Communication Skills: This model also helps students in enhancing their communication skills in a much more advanced way. Starting from conceptualizing and then developing the proposal and then presenting it to their mentors. Also, while developing the storyline, the scripts are developed. The different acts are developed; role allocation is being done. The dialogues are written according to various roles and characters.

For the marketing of the event, proposals are developed in order to reach out different types of clients for sponsorship of the event and other collaborations. On a regular basis, social media creatives are being generated in order to create an engagement with the audience and other stakeholders. There is a requirement to create a buzz among the fellow students as well as the prospective clients and the audience at the large. The shared communication both in the form of written communication as well the presentations are made in order to effectively implement the plans and executive the event successfully. A high level of professional attempts is being made and a lot of new learnings are gained in the entire process.

Experiential Learning: This model also helps students to go much beyond the theoretical aspects of things and practically attempt things in a proficient way. They not just draw and learn the Gantt Chart , but also implement it in order to meet the timeline they create in the run up to the event. This gives students a different experience where each theoretical model is implemented in actions and thus helps in successful execution of the event.

Contextualised Learning: The entire practice of events, not just gives them contextualized learning, but also links them to various aspects of event management. Right from concept planning to marketing, from venue management to logistics, from stage management to vendor management, from crowd management to complete security and many more. Students learn how in well-coordinated ways things can be implemented and a new milestone created every year.

This model transforms the classroom learning into an event-centered action plan. Students implement their knowledge, guided by their mentors, into action to fulfill their collective objective. This enhances their critical thinking abilities as well as problem solving capabilities. Students are compelled to confront challenges at various stages of pre-event, during the event and post event. The various inevitable circumstances produce new set of challenges to be tackled, leading to learn the realities of event management, further making them confident and competent.

The MoE model adds to the expertise of students by enhancing their learning by positioning them as skilled professionals handling the entire process of the event management from the beginning till end as the proprietor of the event they are handling. By indulging into the process, these students team up to unscramble the real-time challenges of the event management. In the process, they develop certain skillsets which complete their professional proficiency and foster critical thinking and teamwork skills in them. They acquire the prerequisite skills of handling events of any scale from planning to rolling it out and then complete execution and the closing out process in the post event scenario.

Conclusion

Event Management as a subject provides a powerful platform to students that enables learning through active class participation. Moreover, including Theatre in Education as an essential component of events engage students both emotionally and cognitively, they get involved in planning, organizing and delivering real events instead of just attending theory classes. This helps them to understand the event cycle, from planning to implementation and evaluation, and they grasp through actual world experience. Students develop skills like effective communication, teamwork, problem-solving, time management and strategic planning and on the same hand also build confidence, resilience and adaptability, which become difficult to learn from lectures alone. This also helps in diminishing the gap between academic learning and industry needs as it exposes learners to real stakeholders and also brings forward genuine risks and responsibilities involved in an event. Overall, students become more work-ready and better prepared for future careers in events and related fields.

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i A Gantt chart is a bar chart that can be prepared on excel. It demonstrates the schedule of the event and outlines event team members' work responsibilities and deadlines.

Ethical Considerations

Plagiarism and AI usage declaration: The author/s declared that this article is an original work and has not been previously published elsewhere. No parts of it have been plagiarised and it falls well within the prescribed limits of less than 10% plagiarism. Furthermore, AI has not been used for analysis and use if any, has been restricted to language support.

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From Regional Commander to Imperial Figure: Reviewing Zorawar Singh's Contribution to the Rise of the Dogra State

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Abstract

This review article summarises the literature on the role of Zorawar Singh in the development of the Dogra State in its military strategies, political influence, historical impact, and regional politics in order to fill gaps in the context of his multifaceted contribution to state formation in the Himalayas of the 19th century. The purpose of the review was to examine the knowledge of his military strategies, political impact, historical impacts, regional politics, and social-political changes. The interdisciplinary studies that used archival research and historiographical critique were systematically analysed to incorporate the military, political, and socio-cultural viewpoints. Results have shown that the novel high-altitude military operations of Zorawar Singh played a central role in the expansion of the territory despite logistics problems; his political destiny, which was mainly military, helped him internalize Dogra and define its relationship with the neighbouring states and Britain. This review highlights

the importance of military, political, and social analysis to understand the influence of Zorawar Singh on Himalayan geopolitics and contributes to modern discussions about state formation in the region and the politics of the border.

Keywords: *Zorawar Singh, Dogra State Formation, Himalayan Military Campaigns, Frontier Expansion, 19th-Century Jammu and Kashmir History*

Introduction

The contribution of Zorawar Singh to the development of the Dogra State has become a challenging topic to research because of its significant impact on the political and military situation in the northern Indian subcontinent at the beginning of the 19th century (Crowden, 2023; Huttenback, 1961). This historical development is associated with the unification of the Sikh Empire under Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the ensuing rise of the Dogra dynasty characterized by martial expeditions of Zorawar Singh in Ladakh and western Tibet (Prinsep, 2017; Tu et al., 2022). The study has a significant practical and theoretical value, given that it sheds light on the establishment of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, which is an area of long-standing geopolitical complexity and cultural heterogeneity (Bhutani, 2000; Pir & Sheikh, 2016). Interestingly, the military campaigns of Zorawar Singh expanded the Dogra influence into the difficult conditions of the Himalayan regions and predetermined the formation of the regional politics and state borders that remain in the modern world (Hutchison & Vogel, 2008; Sa & Bg, 2016).

Although a lot has been documented in history, there is one particular issue that has remained unresolved in the full development of the history of Zorawar Singh, especially his military tactics, political influence and historical impact when compared with the overall development of the Dogra state (Puri, 1982; Singh, 1971). The literature gap currently observed is the lack of understanding of how his military adventures were combined with the political process of uniting, as accomplished by his successors, in particular, Maharaja Gulab Singh (Huttenback, 1961; Singh, 2022). There are also controversies over the connotation of the campaigns of Zorawar Singh, whether it was a strategic build-up or an overambitious attempt that resulted in expensive losses (Crowden, 2023; Singh, 1971). The consequences of this gap are serious, as they influence the understanding of Dogra legitimacy and historical accounts of power relations in the region (Pye & Schofield, 2000; Sinha, 2024).

The three main constructs that this review conceptualizes include military strategy as the tactical and logistical choices used by Zorawar Singh (Crowden, 2023; Huttenback, 1961); political influence as the ability to influence governance and territorial control in the Dogra polity (Bhat & Chowdhary, 2020; Pir & Sheikh, 2016); and historical impact as how these measures continue to shape the politics of the region and state-building (Bhutani, 2000). The two notions are connected, where the success of military supports the political power, which also determine historical trends (Moran, 2019; Wang, 2023). This is how the comprehensive analysis of the contributions of Zorawar Singh to the rise of the Dogra State will be conducted.

This systematic review aims to critically review the existing literature on the topic of the military and political contributions by Zorawar Singh to seal the gaps in existing knowledge by combining the different opinions and historical evidence (Andrabi, 2017; Crowden, 2023). This review is valuable because it helps clear up disputed meanings and puts the legacy of Zorawar Singh in the context of the geopolitical and cultural context of the formation of the Dogra State (Bhat, 2020, 2024). It seeks to offer a subtle insight that enlightens historical knowledge as well as regional studies today.

This review has used an inclusive approach that includes a critical review of primary and secondary materials, with the inclusion criteria being that of materials that cover military aspects, political aspects, and historical aspects of the role of Zorawar Singh (Bray, 2008; Rai, 2009). The results are arranged in the form of thematic discussions, which go through the military approach to the political unification of the country, and historical implications, making it easier to develop a consistent historiography that indicates the intricacy of the topic discussed (Dar & Negaroo, 2015; Jahangir & Shah, 2022).

Purpose and Scope of the Review

Statement of Purpose

This report aims to review the available literature on the topic of the role of Zorawar Singh in the emergence of the Dogra State, the military policies, political influence, historical contribution, and local politics. To bring together a comprehensive comprehension of how his military conquests and political intrigues helped to ascertain and cement the Dogra authority in the Himalayan

region. One of the advantages of this review is that it puts the strategic innovations and leadership of Zorawar Singh into a broader context of geopolitical developments in the 19th century South Asia. It will attempt to describe his role in the politics of the area, how the Dogra State was established, and what socio-political outcomes ensued, thereby bridging gaps in the historiography and clarifying the existing perception of the establishment of the Himalayan states and border politics.

Objectives

- To evaluate current knowledge on Zorawar Singh's military strategies and their effectiveness in territorial expansion.
- Benchmarking of political influence exerted by Zorawar Singh within the Dogra dynasty and neighbouring powers.
- Identification and synthesis of historical impacts resulting from Zorawar Singh's campaigns on regional politics.
- To deconstruct the role of Zorawar Singh in shaping the geopolitical landscape of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh.
- To compare socio-political and administrative actions during Dogra rule influenced by Zorawar Singh's military and administrative actions.

Methodology of Literature Selection

Transformation of Query

The first research question, which is the significance of Zorawar Singh in the rise of the Dogra State with the focus on his military strategies, political influence, historical impact and local politics, was logically divided into the series of more specific search statements that enhanced the efficiency and scope of the literature review process. By converting an overarching question to several specific questions, it is possible to cover a wide area of the topic as well as find the necessary scholarship effectively. This is a systematic process that makes it less likely to miss specialised or terminology-based study, besides making sure that every search string corresponds to a different thematic aspect of the research problem.

Based on the main research question, the thematic search queries were the following:

1. The role of Zorawar Singh in the development of the Dogra State with specific reference to the military strategies and the practices of the frontier warfare.
2. The political power, historical effect, and the political climate of the region of Zorawar Singh and the Dogra power solidification.
3. Other socio-economic effects of the Dogra rule in Jammu and Kashmir, such as the regional interactions influenced by military build-up, under the leadership of leaders like Zorawar Singh.

The socio-political changes and the reform movements witnessed under Dogra rule (Jammu and Kashmir) are studied concerning the military policies of Zorawar Singh and their ramifications for the political organisation of the region.

It is a multi-query approach, which contributes to the orderly and thematic organisation of the literature review, including military history, political consolidation, socio-economic change, and regional geopolitics in a single analytical framework.

Screening Papers

The transformed search queries were then applied in each case with the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria to be used in order to retrieve a narrow and relevant body of literature. This methodical screening exercise was done on a large academic database, which facilitated comprehensive coverage of the scholarly outputs. The use of the criteria led to the selection of four primary studies that were closely related to the thematic focus of the review. In order to make the literature base more complete and thorough, a citation chaining strategy was used to find more related works.

Backward Citation Chaining: In case of each core study, the reference list was carefully reviewed to determine previous underlining research that influenced the theoretical framework, research methodology, or historical interpretation of the study. This backward tracing made sure that the seminal and background works were not forgotten and this placed the review in the greater scholarly lineage of the subject matter.

Forward Citation Chaining: In addition, forward citation tracking was conducted to identify more recent publications that have cited each core study.

This approach facilitated the identification of emerging debates, subsequent empirical validations, critical reinterpretations, and methodological developments, thereby capturing the evolving trajectory of scholarship related to Zorawar Singh, Dogra state formation, and Himalayan regional politics.

Together, these procedures enhanced the rigour, breadth, and temporal depth of the literature selection process and identified 29 more papers.

Relevance scoring and sorting

After the database search and citation chaining processes, 33 candidate studies were assembled, among which 4 papers were found using structured search queries and 29 papers were found using backward and forward citation chaining. Relevance-ranking process was then undertaken to narrow down on studies that will best fit the research objectives. All the papers were measured in the context of the central analytical aspects of the review: military policies, political influence, historical effects, and regional political processes related to Zorawar Singh and the formation of the Dogra State. Thematic relevance, analytical depth, historical rigour, and contribution to the understanding of state formation in the Himalayan setting were used as criteria to rank. The evaluation concluded that each of the 33 studies was very relevant to the research question. Based on this, the ultimate set of works to be revised included 33 very relevant academic articles, which were the basis of evidence of thematic synthesis and interpretation.

Results

Summary of the Studies

This part charts out the research territory of the literature on the role of Zorawar Singh in the development of the Dogra State, with respect to military policies, political influence, historical effects, and local politics. The studies reviewed can be divided into historical studies, political evaluations, and socio-cultural research, which are mainly concentrated on the 19th-century Himalayan region, focusing on Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh. Interdisciplinary approaches exist in the form of methodologies, which include the archival research and historiographical critique, and socio-political narrative analyses. This comparative synthesis will answer the research questions by outlining the military innovations of Zorawar Singh and his political manoeuvres, and their long-term impact on the territorial state building and socio-political evolution.

Table 1 *Summary of the Studies*

Study	Military Strategy Effectiveness	Political Influence Scope	Historical Impact Assessment	Regional Political Dynamics	Socio-Political Transformation
(Crowden, 2023)	Challenged by harsh terrain and logistics, innovative supply forts used	Limited direct political nfluence; military focus predominant	Defeat at Taklakot but strategic territorial gains in Ladakh	The campaign altered border control and the regional power balance	Campaign hardships affected local populations and military morale
(Puri, 1982)	Military conquest pivotal in Ladakh annexation	Significant role in Dogra expansion into Ladakh	Annexation led to uneasy integration of Ladakh	Regional alliances, integrating ethnic tensions, persisted post-conquest	Cultural and ethnic tensions persisted post-conquest
(Pir & Shiekh, 2016)	Military and diplomatic successes foundational for state formation	Influential in the Dogra dynasty's consolidation and British relations	Established Jammu and Kashmir's territorial boundaries	Geopolitical restructuring under Dogra and British influence	Created a heterogeneous state with complex administrative challenges

(Singh, 2022)	Military campaigns instrumental in territorial acquisition	Manoeuvring facilitated British support for the Dogra state	The transfer of territories shaped the independent Dogra state	British-Dogra relations redefined governance	Socio-political conditions influenced by British policies
(Hutten-back, 1961)	Military actions in Ladakh are critical amid regional instability	Limited direct political role; focus on military frontier control	Campaigns influenced Ladakh's precarious political status	Conflict with Tibet and neighbouring powers intensified	Military presence affected local governance and stability
(Bhat & Chowdhary, 2020)	Military legacy under-pinned Dogra political dominance	Zorawar Singh's role is recognised in the early Dogra political structures	Campaigns had a lasting impact on the Dogra state's political evolution	Regional politics shaped by Dogra-British interactions	Political institutions evolved under Dogra rule
(Andrabi, 2017)	Military conquest initiated Dogra rule, but	Political influence extended to socio-economic exploitation	Long-term socio-economic exploitation	Regional dissent and unrest emerged	Harsh taxation and policies led to social decline

(Sa & Bg, 2016)	Military consolidation preceded adminis-trative reforms	Influence expanded through governance reforms	Established adminis-trative revenue systems	Regional governance is structured under the Dogra authority	Socio-economic reforms aimed at stabilising the peasantry
(Jahangir & Shah, 2022)	Military dominance enforced Dogra control in Pooch	Political repression sparked social and political movements	Resistance movements shaped the regional political landscape	Conflicts between Dogra rulers and Muslim subjects intensified	Social movements reflected political grievances
(Bhat, 2020)	Military campaigns set the stage for political repression	Marginalisation of Muslims under Dogra rule	Campaigns contribu-ted to Muslim political awakening	Regional politics marked by communal tensions	Emergence of Muslim political identity during the Dogra era
(Bhat, 2024)	The military foundation enabled feudal Dogra dominance	Political opposition grew against the Dogra autocracy	Campaigns indirectly led to reform efforts and unrest	Regional politics evolved with the rising political consciousness	Socio-political reforms emerged from popular resistance

(Bhutani, 2000)	Military conquests integrated Kashmir into Dogra domain	Subordination to British limited Dogra autonomy	Campaigns redefined Kashmir's political affiliations	Regional alliances shifted under British-Dogra dynamics	Socio-political structures reflected colonial influence
(Rai, 2009)	Military history intertwined with colonial archaeology to legitimize Dogra rule	Political use of archaeology influenced cultural-political narratives	Campaigns influenced historical interpr-eations	Regional identity contested through historical narratives	Socio-political identity shaped by colonial and Dogra agendas
(Bray, 2008)	Military-imposed labor systems persisted under Dogra rule	Political control maintained through forced labor policies	Campaigns reinforced Dogra authority over Ladakh	Regional governance included coercive labor practices	Socio-economic conditions marked by exploitation and resistance
(Schofield, 1996)	Military conquest pivotal in Kashmir's transition	Political shifts from Sikh to Dogra rule analyzed	Campaigns set stage for prolonged conflict	Regional politics influenced by successive regimes	Socio-political instability rooted in military-political changes

(Dar & Negaroo, 2015)	Military dominance met with silent peasant resistance	Political repression led to covert social protests	Campaigns provoked non-violent resistance forms	Regional governance challenged by grassroots movements	Socio-political transformation through everyday resistance
(Wang, 2023)	Military campaigns part of broader state formation processes	Political consolidation linked to institutional development	Campaigns contributed to Himalayan state transition	Regional politics shaped by religious and economic factors	Socio-political structures evolved with state consolidation
(Moran, 2019)	Military actions influenced borderland state sformations	Political roles included familial and regent influences	Campaigns affected communal identities and border politics	Regional dynamics shaped by border-making practices	Socio-political identities formed through state and family ties
(Sminova, 2024)	Military history contextual-lized within broader historio-graphy	Political narratives evolved through historical source analysis	Campaigns reinter-preted in changing historical perspectives	Regional politics understood through multi-source	Socio-political identity linked to historiographical shifts

(Bhat et al., 2023)	Military imposed Sikh power shaped Empire dynamics	Political use of campaigns indirectly influenced territorial gains	Campaigns of Sikh Empire impacted Dogra relations	Regional politics intertwined with Sikh and Dogra interactions	Socio-political transformation through religious-economic institutions
(MGreger, 2010)	Military history of Sikhs contextual-lized Dogra emergence	Political developments in Punjab affected Dogra state	Campaigns linked to broader Sikh political history	Regional alliances influenced by Sikh-Dogra interactions	Socio-political culture reflected Sikh and Dogra influences
(Prinsep, 2017)	Military operations under Ranjit Singh set Dogra stage	Political life of Sikh ruler impacted Dogra ascendancy	Campaigns contri-buted to territorial and political shifts	Regional politics shaped by Sikh military campaigns	Socio-political conditions influenced by Sikh governance
(Parah & Malviya, 2024)	Military governance under Sikh rule preceded Dogra	Political conditions under Sikh rule influenced Dogra policies	Campaigns under Sikh rule affected Kashmir's political fabric	Regional transition from Sikh to Dogra control	Socio-political impact of Sikh administration on Kashmir

(Singh, 1971)	Military role in Anglo-Sikh War critical for Dogra rise	Political manoeuvring during war shaped Dogra state creation	Campaigns influenced territorial dismemberment and state formation	Regional politics marked by wartime alliances and betrayals	Socio-political consequences of war on Dogra legitimacy
(Pye & Schofield, 2000)	Military conflicts central to Kashmir's contested status	Political history traced through successive military struggles	Campaigns contributed to enduring regional conflict	Regional politics shaped by India-Pakistan rivalry	Socio-political instability linked to military confrontations
(Gul & Khan, 2023)	Military patronage supported religious institutional growth	Political use of trusts reinforced Dogra authority	Campaigns indirectly influenced socio-religious structures	Regional politics intertwined with religious administration	Socio-political transformation through religious-economic institutions
(Kaur & Sharma, 2018)	Military and cultural influences merged in Dogra art	Political identity shaped by Sikh and Dogra cultural exchange	Campaigns reflected in artistic and cultural transformations	Regional interactions	Socio-political identity expressed through visual culture

(Hutchison & Vogel, 2008)	Military history of hill states contextual-lized Dogra expansion	Political relations among hill states affected Dogra rise	Campaigns influenced regional state formation and alliances	Regional politics marked by treaties and conflicts	Socio-political structures evolved with Dogra dominance
(Hutten-back, 1975)	Military biography of Gulab Singh highlights strategic acumen	Political career traced from soldier to ruler	Campaigns pivotal in Dogra state establish-ment	Regional politics shaped by Gulab Singh's leadership	Socio-political transformation linked to Gulab's rule
(Sinha, 2024)	Military and political rebellions shaped frontier relations	Political collabora-tion and resistance influenced Dogra state	Campaigns affected integration into Indian Union	Regional politics marked by rebellion and alliance shifts	Socio-political consequences of insurgencies

Military Strategy Effectiveness

An overview of the literature reviewed has shown that there is a considerable amount of scholarship that points to the tactical innovation as well as the limitations defining the military leadership of Zorawar Singh. One of the ten reports that his campaigns were characterized by innovative and adjustive tactics that would fit a mountainous terrain, at the same time, had to face serious logistical and environmental obstacles, especially in a high-altitude warfare (Bray, 2008; Crowden, 2023; Huttenback, 1961). Moreover, seven of the studies highlight the strategic value of these campaigns in supporting the expansion of the territory, particularly in Ladakh and western Tibet, saying that the value in terms of geopolitics in the long run did not decrease despite some military losses (Bhat & Chowdhary, 2020; Pir & Sheikh, 2016; Puri, 1982).

Scope of Political Influence

Examination of existing literature also brings out the political aspect of the contribution of Zorawar Singh in the formation of Dogra state. His political power is described in nine works as mostly military based, but even though he did not have a direct impact on the court politics, the campaigns he participated in were decisive in terms of consolidating the territory and expanding the Dogra authority (Bhat & Chowdhary, 2020; Crowden, 2023; Huttenback, 1961). Moreover, six of them highlight his contribution to the development of relations with the neighboring states and the British, indicating that due to his diplomatic activity and military intervention, the further processes of the Dogra state formation and political stabilization in the region became possible (Pir & Sheikh, 2016).

Assessment of Historical Impact

A large part of the literature focuses on the long-term historical implications of the military campaigns of Zorawar Singh. Eleven studies agree on the fact that his expeditions contributed significantly to the territorial formation of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh, thus forming a structural basis of the formation of the Dogra State (Bhat & Chowdhary, 2020; Pir & Sheikh, 2016; Puri, 1982). Simultaneously, six articles also indicate that, despite the fact that his military actions had been used in the process of the territorial growth and the political unification, they also led to the instability of the regional situation and the appearance of the long-term contradictions (Andrabi, 2017; Crowden, 2023).

Dynamics of Regional Political

The literature also highlights the overall regional politics of the campaigns by Zorawar Singh. Eight books show that his military operations drastically transformed the regional alliance and governing systems which helped in integrating different territories under Dogra rule (Bhutani, 2000; Pir & Sheikh, 2016; Puri, 1982). Furthermore, five sources highlight the issue of intricate interaction of Dogra, British, and Sikh, as well as neighboring forces and state that changing alliances and decrees affected the results of his campaigns (Moran, 2019; Pye & Schofield, 2000).

Socio-Political Transformation

Another aspect of the reviewed literature is the socio-political changes that were related to Dogra rule in the context of military expansion. According to ten studies, significant administrative and economic reforms were the consequences of military conquest and reshaped the structure of governance and revenue collection throughout the region (Andrabi, 2017; Bhat, 2020; Sa & Bg, 2016). Moreover, seven articles underline the rise of political awareness and the rise of social movements among suppressed groups, especially Muslim ones, under Dogra rule, and associate these changes with the processes of socio-political transformation and opposition (Bhat, 2020, 2024; Jahangir & Shah, 2022).

Critical Analysis and Synthesis

The review of the literature on the contribution of Zorawar Singh to the emergence of the Dogra State gives a complex picture of his military policies, political sphere and influence in the historical context of 19th century geopolitics of the Himalayas. Although some studies praise his strategic novelty and conquest conquests, a certain variety of interpretations exists in the ways and extents to which his campaigns worked. The political aspects of his power are usually coupled with the further integration of the Dogra dynasty, but even literature can identify deficiencies in the incorporation of socio-political implications in the lives of the various communities residing in the area. Moreover, there are differences in the methodological approaches, as some of them focus on the archive materials, and the other ones are based on the narrative studies, which provides a restricted comprehension of the legacy of Zorawar Singh. This is a critical synthesis that assesses these themes based on the strengths and weaknesses of the major aspects of the available research.

Table 2 *Critical Analysis*

Aspect	Strengths in Literature	Gaps / Weaknesses Identified
Military Strategies & Campaigns	Studies detail Zorawar Singh's bold Himalayan campaigns, strong logistics (supply forts), and adaptability to extreme terrain and climate.	Mostly narrative; limited analysis using military strategy frameworks. The Taklakot defeat is discussed descriptively, with little evaluation of alternative strategies or internal command issues.
Political Role in Dogra Expansion	Recognized as a key military force behind Dogra territorial consolidation and Gulab Singh's rise. Linked to wider diplomatic and administrative expansion.	His individual political agency is underplayed. Limited discussion on his dealings with neighbouring powers and Dogra–British political complexities.
Impact on Regional State Formation	His conquests are seen as shaping the territorial structure of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh, influencing later administration and governance.	Focus remains state-centric; insufficient attention to local resistance, ethnic diversity, and long-term socio-political tensions in annexed regions.
British Imperial Context	Literature connects Dogra expansion with British strategic interests in the Himalayas, situating campaigns in imperial geopolitics.	Weak engagement with contested territorial transfers and military diplomacy during Anglo-Sikh conflicts; negotiation processes underexplored.
Socio-Political Trans-formations	Some works link his campaigns to later Dogra administrative reforms and state-building processes.	Adverse socio-cultural and economic effects on local populations receive limited multi-ethnic perspective and critical analysis.

Methodology & Sources	Uses archival records, regional histories, and geopolitical perspectives, offering a strong empirical base.	Heavy reliance on colonial sources; limited critical historiography and source bias evaluation.
Legacy & Historiography	Acknowledges his dual legacy — celebrated military hero and symbol of Dogra expansionism; placed within Himalayan border politics.	Interpretations often polarized by nationalist or regional bias; lack of balanced reassessment of his long-term historical role.

Thematic Review of Literature

The available literature on Zorawar Singh and his contribution towards the establishment of Dogra State widely centre on his military policies, political role and the historical and geographical effects of his campaigns. The focus has been on such central themes as the examination of his original military strategies in rugged Himalayan conditions, his political gambles with the Dogra dynasty as well as the neighboring powers and the resultant development of the socio-political landscape of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. Researchers also highlight socio-political changes during the Dogra rule, which was pre-conditioned by the Sikh rule and the British colonial policy. Further, overlapping themes are the memory of the Dogra rule and how the regional identities were integrated into it by conflict, negotiation and cultural assimilation.

Table 3 *Thematic Review of Literature*

Theme	Frequency	Brief Description
Military Strategies and Campaigns of Zorawar Singh	7/33 Papers	AHighlights his innovative mountain warfare, use of supply forts, and high-altitude tactics. His 1841 Tibet campaign ended in defeat at Taklakot, but later Dogra victories sustained the military relevance of his campaigns.

Political Influence and Dogra Power Consolidation	7/33 Papers	His campaigns enabled Ladakh's annexation and supported Gulab Singh's rise, contributing to Dogra state formation amid Sikh decline and British involvement.
Geopolitical Impact on the Himalayan Region	7/33 Papers	His expeditions reshaped Himalayan geopolitics, border dynamics, and regional power balances, influencing the later structure of Jammu and Kashmir as a princely state.
Socio-Political Changes under Dogra Rule	6/33 Papers	Dogra expansion led to administrative reforms but also social inequalities, taxation pressures, and resistance movements that shaped later political consciousness.
Interaction with Sikh Empire and British Powers	5/33 Papers	Dogra rise occurred amid Sikh–British power struggles, with territorial transfers and shifting alliances shaping regional politics.
Regional Identity and Cultural Integration	4/33 Papers	Integration of diverse regions like Ladakh created cultural and religious tensions, influencing identity politics and governance patterns.
Legacy and Historical Memory of Zorawar Singh	3/33 Papers	Portrayed as both a heroic military leader and a controversial expansionist, with interpretations shaped by regional memory and border politics.

Chronological Review of Literature

The literature on Zorawar Singh and the rise of the Dogra State spans from detailed historical accounts of early Himalayan politics to contemporary analyses of geopolitical and social-cultural impacts. Early works focus on the military and political exploits of Dogra leaders, especially the consolidation of power under Gulab Singh and the aftermath of Sikh and British influence.

Mid to late 20th-century studies delve into the socio-political dynamics under Dogra rule, including resistance movements and administrative reforms. Recent scholarship examines the legacy of Dogra military and administrative structures in frontier regions, advocating for balanced civil-military relations and investment in local governance capacity.

Table 4 *Chronological Review of Literature*

Year Range	Research Focus	Brief Description
1960–1982	Foundational Historical Narratives	Early works provided biographical and military accounts of Gulab Singh and Zorawar Singh, explaining Dogra expansion and state formation within Himalayan geopolitics.
1996–2009	Political History & Colonial Context	Studies examined Dogra rule in relation to British colonial policies, socio-religious changes, regional integration, and emerging political identities.
2010–2017	Socio-Political Conditions & Resistance	Dogra rise occurred amid Sikh–British power struggles, with territorial transfers and shifting alliances shaping regional politics.
2018–2020	Political Administration & Regional Governance	Scholarship analyzed governance structures, British influence, and socio-cultural changes shaping Jammu and Kashmir's political evolution.
2022–2024	Geopolitics & Borderland Studies	Recent studies link Dogra military campaigns with Himalayan border politics, territorial transfers, and their long-term impact on regional identity and power dynamics.

Agreement and Divergence Across Studies

There is broad consensus across studies that Zorawar Singh was a pivotal military leader whose campaigns significantly contributed to the territorial expansion and political consolidation of the Dogra State, especially in the Himalayan region. Researchers generally agree on the challenges faced in his military expeditions, including logistical difficulties and harsh climatic conditions. However, divergence arises in the assessment of his long-term political influence and the socio-political transformations under Dogra rule, with

some emphasizing his foundational role and others highlighting subsequent developments beyond his era. The complexity of Dogra state formation is reflected in the varied interpretations, influenced by different historical foci, temporal scopes, and disciplinary approaches.

Table 5 *Agreement and Divergence Across Studies*

Criterion	Agreement	Divergence	Reason for Difference
Military Strategy Effectiveness	Recognized for bold campaigns, logistical skill, and early successes in Ladakh and Tibet despite harsh terrain.	Some stress his final defeat and death; others emphasize long-term territorial gains and Dogra consolidation.	Focus on short-term military outcome vs. long-term strategic impact.
Political Influence	Seen as a key military figure enabling Gulab Singh's rise and Dogra state formation.	Debate on whether his political role was secondary to Gulab Singh and British influence.	Individual military leadership vs. broader structural and diplomatic factors.
Historical Impact	Agreed that his campaigns shaped Dogra territorial boundaries in Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh.	Differences over his legacy beyond conquest—administrative and socio-political consequences debated.	Emphasis on military history vs. long-term socio-political analysis.
Regional Political Dynamics	Linked to Himalayan power struggles involving British, Sikh, and regional forces.	Some view him as central; others see him as one actor among many.	Multi-actor geopolitical context leads to varied interpretations.

Socio-Political Transfor-mations	Acknowledged role in laying foundations for Dogra administration and reforms.	Views differ: oppressive rule and resistance vs. administrative development and stability.	Differences in disciplinary approach, regional focus, and ideological perspectives.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretical Implications

The developed results support the importance of military policy and logistical creativity in the formation of states in harsh landscapes, and the case of Zorawar Singh campaigns in the Himalayas is supportive. His attempts to use supply forts and to adapt to the high-altitude warfare also add to the military historiography of mountain warfare and expansion of frontiers (Crowden, 2023; Sa and Bg, 2016).

1. The review criticizes dichotomous accounts of Dogra state-building by emphasizing the multifaceted interaction between military power, political relations, and British rule, not by explaining Dogra dominance with references to military skills or British support (Pir & Sheikh, 2016; Singh, 1971).
2. The political impact of the Zorawar Singh and his successors is theorized as an experienced driver to integrate the ethnically and culturally diverse areas within a heterogeneous princely state, making theories of homogeneous nation-state formation complex and highlighting the importance of coercion and negotiating forces behind the politics of the borderlands (Bhat, 2020; Pir & Sheikh, 2016; Puri, 1982).
3. Theoretical frameworks are informed by the historical contribution of the Dogra rule, such as socio-political changes, and resistance movements, as well as the heritage of resistance in Muslim-majority states (Andrabi, 2017; Bhat, 2024; Dar & Negaroo, 2015). The literature enhances the knowledge about regional geopolitics by placing Dogra expansion in a broader context of Himalayan relations, such as Sikh demise and British imperial policies, thus broadening

theoretical approaches to imperial borderland statecraft (Parah & Malviya, 2024; Tu et al., 2022).

4. Historical military operations of Zorawar Singh, particularly their impact on the formation of future regional wars and territorial conflicts with Tibet and China, offer empirical support to the hypothesis of historiography of military behavior with regard to the contemporary geopolitical tensions of the Himalayas (Crowden, 2023; Huttenback, 1961; Pye & Schofield, 2000).

Practical Implications

1. The experiences of the military logistics and frontier strategies of Zorawar Singh have a great impact on modern military planning and border security in mountainous areas and these aspects can be effectively learned through the experiences of supply chain resilience and acclimatization to harsh environments (Crowden, 2023; Sa & Bg, 2016).
2. The attested socio-economic effects of the Dogra rule, such as taxation policies and opposition movements, highlight the significance of the fair governance and culturally oriented development policies to avoid marginalization and unrest in multi-ethnic enclaves (Andrabi, 2017; Dar & Negaroo, 2015; Jahangir & Shah, 2022).
3. The historical discussion of the British-Dogra relations and territorial transfers is a critical background of the modern-day diplomatic negotiation and conflict resolution in Jammu and Kashmir, which focuses on the long-term implications of the decisions of the colonial era on the stability of the region (Bhat & Chowdhary, 2020; Pir & Sheikh, 2016).
4. These results can guide existing policy discussions on governance and integration in ethnically diverse and geopolitically sensitive border regions, which means the inclination to include administrative frames (Bhat & Chowdhary, 2020; Moran, 2019: Pir & Sheikh, 2016).
5. The Dogra military and administrative system legacy provides a model of the contemporary state-building efforts in frontier areas, which promotes equal civil-military relationships and commitment into the local governance capacity (Moran, 2019; Sa & Bg, 2016).

Table 6 *Limitations of the Studies*

Areas	Description	Papers having limitations
Geographic Bias	Number of studies on Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh, often neglecting peripheral regions such as Poonch or Gilgit. This geographic concentration limits the external validity of findings, potentially overlooking diverse regional dynamics.	(Puri, 1982; Jahangir & Shah, 2022; Bray, 2008)
Historical Source Limitations	Several works rely heavily on colonial or early historical accounts, which may carry inherent biases or incomplete perspectives. This reliance constrains the methodological robustness and may skew interpretations of Zorawar Singh's role and Dogra state formation.	(Bhutani, 2000 Rai, 2009; Huttenback, 1975)
Political Bias and Interpre-tation	Interpretations of key figures like Gulab Singh and Zorawar Singh are often polarized, reflecting regional or political biases. Such partiality undermines balanced historiography and complicates objective assessment of their military and political influence.	(Singh, 1971; Singh, 2022)
Limited Focus on Military Strategies	Few studies provide detailed analysis of Zorawar Singh's military tactics and campaign logistics, restricting comprehensive understanding of his strategic innovations and their effectiveness in territorial expansion. This gap affects the completeness of military historiography.	(Crowden, 2023; Sa & Bg, 2016)
Insufficient Socio-Political Context	Some literature emphasizes political events or military transformations or the perspectives of local populations, limiting the depth of analysis regarding Dogra rule's broader impact.	(Andrabi, 2017; Bhat, 2020; Dar & Negaroo, 2015)

Temporal Scope Constraints	Several studies concentrate on specific periods (e.g., Dogra rule post-1846 or Sikh rule pre-1846) without bridging transitions or long-term impacts, which restricts understanding of continuity and change in regional politics and state formation.	(Pir & Shiekh, 2016; Parah & Malviya, 2024; Bhat & Chowdhary, 2020)
Overreliance on Secondary Sources	A number of papers synthesize existing secondary literature without incorporating new primary archival research, which may perpetuate existing gaps and limit novel insights into Zorawar Singh's historical impact.	(Sminova, 2024; Tu et al., 2022; MGreger, 2010)

Table 7 *Gaps in the Studies and Future Directions*

Areas	Description	Future Directions	Justification of the study	Priority of Research
Critical Analysis of Zorawar Singh's military tactics	Existing studies describe his campaigns but lack comparative analysis with contemporary military doctrines and alternative strategies.	Conduct detailed comparative military analyses of Zorawar Singh's tactics against 19th-century warfare doctrines; explore alternative strategic options and internal dissent during campaigns.	Understanding tactical effectiveness beyond narrative accounts will clarify his military innovation and failures, especially in the Tibet campaign (Crowden, 2023).	High

Direct political agency of Zorawar Singh	Research often subsumes his role under broader Gulab Singh's narrative, underre-presenting his individual political influence.	Investigate archival and regional sources to delineate Zorawar Singh's direct political actions and influence within Dogra court and diplomacy.	Clarifying his nuanced role in Dogra state formation will provide a more balanced understanding of his contribut-ions(Pir & Shiekh, 2016; Singh, 2022).	High
Socio-political impact on subjug-ated commu-nities	Limited focus on the experiences and resistance of ethnic and religious groups affected by Dogra military conquests.	Employ ethnographic and social history methods to document the socio-political consequences of Dogra rule on Ladakhi Buddhists, Kashmiri Muslims, and other marginalized groups.	Addressing this gap will balance state-centric narratives and highlight local resistance and identity formation under Dogra rule (Andrabi, 2017; Bhat, 2020).	High
Integra-tion challenges of annexed territories	Insufficient exploration of the long-term integration and governance challenges in culturally distinct regions.	Analyze administ-rative records and local histories to explore integration strategies, resistance, and human cost of military expansion.	Understanding dynamics key to explaining regional stability and coherence post-Dogra state formation (Bhutani, 2000).	Medium

Socio-economic conse-quences of military-imposed labor systems	Insufficient analysis of the continuity and change in forced labor (begar) systems under Dogra military administration	Investigate archival trace the evolution of corvée labor and its socio-economic impact on local populations.	Understanding exploitation reveals the human cost of military expansion and governance (Bray, 2008).	Low
Comparative study of Dogra	Lack of comprehensive comparative studies	Analyze Sikh and Dogra military records to compare	This contextu-alization will clarify the	Low
and Sikh military-political strategies	analyzing Dogra strategies in relation to Sikh or British influences.	this will deepen understanding of interplay between military power and socio-political stability(Gull & Khan, 2023).	This contextu-alization will clarify the	Low
Role in British-Dogra relations and diplomacy	Under-explored complexities of Zorawar Singh's involvement in negotiations with the British and neighboring powers.	Examine British colonial archives and Dogra correspondence to reconstruct Zorawar Singh's diplomatic role during transfers and Anglo-Sikh conflicts.	This will clarify his contribution to state legitimacy and territorial acquisitions under British suzerainty(Pir & Shiekh, 2016; c, 2022; Singh, 1971).	Medium

Historio-graphical biases and narrative fragmen-tation	Existing literature shows polarized portrayals influenced by nationalist or regional biases, lacking integrated frameworks.	Develop interdisciplinary historical studies that critically assess biases and synthesize diverse narratives on Zorawar Singh.	A balanced historiographical essential for objective understanding and reconciling conflicting narratives (Singh, 1971; Pye & Schofield, 2000).	Medium
Military and political interplay in frontier regions	Limited research on how military campaigns influenced frontier political dynamics and local governance.	Conduct case studies on frontier regions like Poonch and Gilgit to explore military-political interactions and their effects on local governance.	Understanding labour, labour mobilization	Medium
Cultural and religious institutional impacts of military conquests and Sikh military-political strategies	Limited exploration of how military campaigns influenced religious institutions and cultural identity under Dogra rule. Situating Zorawar strategies, political maneuvers, and their influence on regional power shifts.	Study the role of military patronage in religious trusts and cultural production to assess their impact on political and social functions. and regional accommoda-tions in annexed regions.	This will deepen understanding of the interplay between military power and socio-religious structures(Gull & Khan, 2023) (Kaur & Sharma, 2018).	Low

Overall Synthesis and Conclusion

A general literature on the role of Zorawar Singh in the establishment of the Dogra State demonstrates an intricate interaction of innovations in militarism, political unification, and regional change on the unstable Himalayan landscape of the nineteenth century. Zorawar Singh stands out as a first of its kind military leader whose war efforts, which were defined by bold logistical preparations and acclimatization with the harsh Himalayan landscape, played a major role in extending Dogra control over territories, specifically, the annexation of Ladakh and the campaigns into western Tibet. His tactical resourcefulness is evident in his ability to strategically use supply forts and one-on-one high altitude warfare, but the campaigns were not without hardships, as crippling environmental factors were also a major setback especially to his health and his military formations. In spite of them, the Dogra dynasty territorial unification was established through the critical basis of his military activity, which predetermined the appearance of the princely state.

Most of the political influence of Zorawar Singh is framed in the context of the military sphere, and little evidence shows that he was directly engaged in the politics of the court. However, his military achievements indirectly strengthened the political prominence of the Dogra rulers specifically Gulab Singh, which helped in the negotiations of diplomatic nature that aligned Dogra interests with British colonial interests. The alliance played an important role in demarcating the borders of Jammu and Kashmir and in legitimizing the Dogra sovereignty in British suzerainty. Nevertheless, there is also a relatively underdeveloped literature on the sophisticated political agency in Zorawar Singh and his direct relations with the surrounding powers, which makes it possible to utilize more research.

In the past, the campaigns transformed the geopolitical formations of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, unifying diverse and mostly resistant populations into the Dogra and Dogra fold. Although this state-centered form of framing focuses on the territorial benefits, it often ignores the socio-cultural instability and the socio-political expenses, including ethnic animosity, opposition campaigns, and marginalization of Muslim majority areas. The politicization of the local identities, especially among the Muslims, was caused by the socio-cultural heritage that caused resistance. Beyond this, the larger regional politics can be

seen to be involving entangled interdependences between Dogra, British, Sikh, and adjacent imperial and regional power politics, and campaigns of Zorawar Singh as part of larger imperial and regional imperial politics.

The current body of scholarship can be methodologically characterized by the presence of wealth of material, including archival and historical data, but the general tendency to be constrained by colonialists and be mainly military-political in orientation, with less absorption of social-economic and interdisciplinary approaches. Such polarized discussion highlights the necessity of more balanced and interdisciplinary methods that would mediate such positions to make more sense of his long-term contribution to the formation of the Himalayan states and regional politics.

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Ethical Considerations

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Eroding Trust, Emerging Voices: Youth and Democratic Legitimacy in Nepal and Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This paper delves into the trajectory of democracy in Nepal and Sri Lanka which represent two distinct yet converging stories of political transformation in South Asia. While Nepal's journey has been defined by a transition from monarchy to a federal democratic republic, Sri Lanka's post-independence experience reflects a long-standing electoral democracy grappling with majoritarian politics, economic crises, and institutional stress. Despite their differing historical paths, both countries today face a common challenge: the erosion of democratic trust, particularly among younger citizens. Increasing corruption and mismanagement of public funds, the wide age gap between the rising Gen Z and ageing political leaders and the ensuing gap in aspirations, amongst other glaring problems has led to a trust deficit. The paper posits a multi-dimensional approach through civic and democratic engagement with Gen Z in both countries for a synergic renewal.

Keywords: *Democracy, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Gen Z, Digital activism*

Maitighar, the public square in Kathmandu, Nepal, situated in the vicinity of the Parliament Building, Supreme court and the Government Secretariat, has served as a platform for expressions of dissent, discontentment and protest. However, what appeared to be a youth led scattered protest on September 8 last year turned out to be a volcano of frustration accumulated across generations. While youth demonstrated, the public felt represented despite the absence of a recognizable leadership, agenda or structure. 77 people lost their lives in this chaotic uprising resulting in the toppling of K P Sharma Oli government.[i] It triggered the March 5 elections, emergence of Mr. Balendra Shah, (former Mayor, Kathmandu) as the undeclared leader of the protests and the participation of a new political group the Rashtriya Swatantrata Party which formed a majority government post a landslide victory. Thus, the movement culminated with the rejection of the old guard and establishment of a decisive alternative, a stable government while the expectations still remain very high.

Similarly, Sri Lanka's Argalaya movement, which means 'The Struggle' in Sinhala took off with a protest camp called 'GotaGoGama' meaning Gotta Go Village, in front of the Presidential Secretariat, a signal to the Gotabaya Rajapaksha Family which had been in power for 15 years. The reasons were Srilankan Debt, long power cuts (12 hours at a stretch), hyperinflation and miles long queues for food and fuel. The President fled the country and in the subsequent elections, National People's Power Party (NPP) led by Anura Kumara Dissanayake came to power, a party that had little ground, a left leaning party which came up as an alternative owing to its anti-establishment reflection.

The trajectory of democracy in Nepal and Sri Lanka represents two distinct yet converging stories of political transformation in South Asia. While Nepal's journey has been defined by a transition from monarchy to a federal democratic republic, Sri Lanka's post-independence experience reflects a long-standing electoral democracy grappling with majoritarian politics, economic crises, and institutional stress. Despite their differing historical paths, both countries today face a common challenge: the erosion of democratic trust, particularly among younger citizens.[ii]

In Nepal, the modern democratic process began with the People's Movement of 1990 (Jana Andolan I), which curtailed absolute monarchy and introduced

multiparty constitutional governance. However, this transition remained fragile due to political instability and structural inequalities. The Maoist insurgency (1996–2006) further exposed the limits of the democratic framework, culminating in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the eventual abolition of monarchy in 2008. The promulgation of the Constitution in 2015 institutionalized federalism and republicanism, marking a significant milestone in democratic restructuring.

In contrast, Sri Lanka has functioned as an electoral democracy since independence in 1948, but its democratic trajectory has been shaped by ethnic conflict, executive centralization, and periodic authoritarian tendencies. The end of the civil war in 2009 created expectations of democratic deepening, yet governance challenges, corruption, and increasing concentration of power particularly under dynastic political leadership undermined institutional credibility. These tensions came to a head during the economic crisis of 2022, which triggered widespread protests and exposed deep fractures in state legitimacy.

Despite these different trajectories, both Nepal and Sri Lanka share a contemporary reality marked by institutional fragility, governance deficits, and declining public trust.[iii] The trend in the two countries highlights a broader South Asian characteristic: while democratic forms persist, public confidence in institutions is weakening, particularly among younger, more informed, and digitally connected citizens. Issues such as corruption, economic mismanagement, political centralization, and lack of accountability have time and again jolted public perception of the respective state institutions.[iv]

Unlike earlier generations, Gen Z has grown up in an era of formal democracy, digital connectivity, and global political awareness. They have survived major global recessions, a global pandemic and an increasingly competitive world economy. They have survived years of isolation marked with an amplified digital exposure. At the same time, in both the countries, they were being governed by leaders of their grandfathers age (Nepal's Oli was 73 while Sri Lanka's Rajapaksha was 74) and they were not able to just connect with them. These differences between their ages, exposure, aspirations and actual lives was too high. In Nepal, this generation has no lived memory of monarchy or armed conflict, while in Sri Lanka, many came of age in the post-war period.

Yet, despite these differences, Gen Z in both countries exhibits a similar pattern of political skepticism, declining trust in institutions, and disillusionment with traditional political actors.

This paradox of growing political awareness alongside declining institutional trust has been widely noted in contemporary public discourse. The youth are not disengaged but rather critically engaged: they question authority, demand accountability, and are less willing to accept institutional failures. However, persistent governance deficits, limited economic opportunities, and perceived elite dominance have contributed to a widening gap between democratic expectations and lived realities.

The problem of declining democratic trust among Gen Z is not merely attitudinal; it has profound implications for democratic sustainability. Political trust underpins the legitimacy of institutions, influences civic participation, and shapes the stability of democratic systems. In both Nepal and Sri Lanka, where democratic consolidation remains incomplete, the erosion of trust among youth raises concerns about long-term institutional resilience. A generation that lacks confidence in democratic structures may either disengage from formal politics or seek alternative, and sometimes disruptive, forms of political expression.[v]

The role of the digital environment further complicates this dynamic. Social media platforms have transformed political engagement by providing spaces for expression, mobilization, and critique. In Sri Lanka, digital networks played a crucial role in organizing the 2022 protest movement, while in Nepal, they have become key arenas for political discourse and dissent. At the same time, these platforms amplify negative information, facilitate misinformation, and create echo chambers that reinforce distrust. The digital public sphere often intensifies dissatisfaction without necessarily offering pathways for constructive institutional engagement.

Evolution of Democratic Deficit

Beneath the discrediting of existing party system, physical assaults on senior leaders, destruction of government offices, ministry buildings and police stations, lies a history of revolutions that have rocked Nepal time and again. Traditionally the party based democratic system in Nepal has been closely woven around political ideologies that ranged from social democracy to degrees

of communist leanings.[vi] Balendra Shah emerged as the new avatar of the democratic spirit through his raps which highlighted issues of concern to the digitally active netizens like political corruption, nepotism and party politics.

Nepal has been a feudal state since 1950, an absolute monarchy and a republic riddled with episodes of civil war. Since 1990's, the government has been replaced almost 30 times with none of the prime ministers completing a full term. The abolition of monarchy in 2008 and the promulgation of the 2015 Constitution marked a transformative phase, institutionalizing federalism, secularism, and inclusion. The creation of a three-tier federal system aimed to decentralize power and address long-standing grievances. Yet, as highlighted in contemporary analyses, the implementation gap rather than the constitutional design itself has emerged as a major constraint on democratic consolidation.

In contrast, Sri Lanka's democratic trajectory has been more continuous but equally fraught. Since independence in 1948, the country has maintained electoral democracy, yet its institutions have been shaped by ethnic conflict, executive centralization, and majoritarian politics. The introduction of the executive presidency in 1978 concentrated power significantly, often at the expense of institutional checks and balances. The end of the civil war in 2009 created expectations of democratic deepening, but these were tempered by increasing centralization and concerns over governance quality. The economic crisis of 2022, exposed the fragility of institutional arrangements, highlighting how fiscal mismanagement and political concentration can undermine democratic legitimacy. Thus, while Nepal's challenge lies in institutional consolidation, Sri Lanka's lies in institutional credibility and resilience under stress.

Despite their differing trajectories, Nepal and Sri Lanka face a set of overlapping challenges that directly shape youth perceptions of democracy. One major issue is weak party accountability. In Nepal, political parties are often characterized by factionalism, centralized leadership, and limited internal democracy. Similarly, in Sri Lanka, political parties have been criticized for elite dominance and lack of transparency, particularly in the context of dynastic leadership. In both cases, electoral competition has not consistently translated into accountable governance, reinforcing public disillusionment. Closely linked is the persistence of patronage politics. In Nepal, access to state resources is frequently mediated

through political networks, undermining meritocratic governance. Sri Lanka exhibits similar patterns, where political loyalty and elite connections shape access to opportunities. Such systems erode institutional trust by privileging personal networks over formal rules.

Another critical challenge is the gap between institutional design and implementation. In Nepal, the slow and uneven implementation of federalism due to administrative constraints, fiscal ambiguities, and political contestation has limited its transformative potential. In Sri Lanka, institutional challenges manifest differently, particularly in the concentration of executive power and the difficulty of sustaining reforms that ensure accountability and transparency.[vii]

Governance deficits, corruption, bureaucratic red tapism and policy inconsistency, further exacerbate these challenges. Corruption has been a central driver of declining public trust. In Sri Lanka, the 2022 crisis underscored how governance failures can escalate into systemic breakdowns, while in Nepal, persistent inefficiencies continue to undermine confidence in democratic institutions. Thus, frequent political instability manifested in coalition shifts in Nepal and policy volatility in Sri Lanka create an environment of uncertainty. This limits long-term planning and weakens the state's ability to deliver public goods effectively, thereby reinforcing perceptions of institutional inadequacy among younger citizens.[viii]

The democratic trajectories of Nepal and Sri Lanka reveal both significant achievements and enduring structural constraints. Nepal's transition from monarchy to a federal republic and Sri Lanka's long-standing electoral democracy underscore the resilience of democratic forms in the region. In both contexts, youth have played a pivotal role in shaping political change, from mass movements to contemporary digital activism. However, the gap between democratic ideals and institutional performance remains a defining challenge. Weak accountability, patronage politics, governance deficits, and implementation gaps have constrained the effectiveness of democratic systems. These structural issues are central to understanding the erosion of trust among Generation Z. For contemporary youth in both countries, democracy is not judged solely by its formal existence but by its capacity to deliver accountability, inclusion, and tangible outcomes.

The judiciary occupies an ambivalent position in both contexts. In Nepal,

concerns about judicial independence and delays in justice have tempered public trust. In Sri Lanka, while the judiciary has occasionally acted as a check on executive power, it has not been immune to politicization. The media ecosystem reflects a dual dynamic. Traditional media in both countries is often criticized for political bias or elite influence. Meanwhile, digital platforms have become primary sources of information for youth. However, this shift has also intensified exposure to misinformation, sensationalism, and polarized narratives, further complicating the scenario.

Both Nepal and Sri Lanka show signs of declining enthusiasm for conventional political engagement, such as party membership and long-term political affiliation among youth. While voter turnout may remain episodically high particularly during moments of crisis or change, a sustained commitment to institutional politics appears to be weakening. This suggests a broader reconfiguration of political trust, where Gen Z is not apolitical but selectively disengaged from formal structures.

Rise of 'Leaderless' Movements

Protests in both the countries have been leaderless and decentralized, challenging conventional, hierarchical political structures. Youth have been central to democratic transformations in both countries, though their modes of engagement have evolved over time. The erosion of trust among Gen Z in Nepal and Sri Lanka is rooted in a set of overlapping structural and contextual factors. Corruption and governance inefficiencies are central to youth disillusionment in both countries. Economic precarity and unemployment further deepen distrust. Nepal faces chronic challenges related to youth unemployment, underemployment, and labor migration.[ix] Similarly, Sri Lanka's economic crisis has disproportionately affected young people, limiting job opportunities and economic security. For Gen Z in both countries, democracy is increasingly evaluated through its ability to deliver economic stability and opportunity; failure to do so directly erodes trust.

A particularly salient factor in both contexts is the persistence of dynastic and elite-driven politics. This continuity of leadership fosters perceptions of exclusion and stagnation among young citizens. Furthermore, the influence of social media and digital environments is another critical driver. In both Nepal and Sri Lanka, Gen Z relies heavily on digital platforms for political information

and expression. These platforms amplify dissatisfaction by circulating content related to corruption, crises, and governance failures. At the same time, echo chambers and algorithm-driven content reinforce negative perceptions, often intensifying distrust. The rapid spread of misinformation further complicates the formation of informed political opinions.

Finally, a shared driver is the lack of visible and effective reform outcomes. In Nepal, despite the transition to federalism and constitutional reforms, many young citizens perceive limited improvements in governance and service delivery. In Sri Lanka, repeated cycles of political promises followed by policy failures have created a credibility gap. The disconnect between expectations and outcomes is particularly acute for Gen Z, contributing to a sense of frustration and democratic fatigue.

In Nepal, students and young activists played a decisive role in both the 1990- and 2006-People's Movements. Their participation not only strengthened mass mobilization but also reflected a generational demand for political freedom, inclusion, and accountability. Youth-led student unions and grassroots networks were instrumental in sustaining protest movements and shaping political outcomes.[x] In the post-conflict era, however, youth engagement has undergone a significant transformation. While earlier generations were closely aligned with party politics, contemporary youth particularly Gen Z are increasingly distancing themselves from traditional political structures. Instead, they engage through digital platforms, civil society initiatives, and issue-based activism, reflecting broader global trends.

On the other hand, In Sri Lanka, youth activism has historically been episodic but impactful. The most striking recent example is the Aragalaya in 2022, where young people played a central role in mobilizing protests against economic mismanagement and political elites. The movement's decentralized and leaderless character, facilitated by digital media, marked a shift from traditional forms of political participation to more fluid and networked modes of engagement. Thus, a key paradox is that the youth remain politically conscious and active yet increasingly disconnected from formal institutions. This shift is critical for understanding the changing nature of democratic participation.[xi]

Digital-First Strategy

Despite declining trust in formal institutions, Generation Z in both Nepal and Sri Lanka remains politically active, albeit through transformed modes of engagement. The political communication shrugged off the ideological rhetoric and focused on everyday lives and issues like employment generation and entrepreneurship opportunities, prospects in local tourism, preservation of local resources, traditions and heritage sites. The movements were primarily organized via apps like Discord, Instagram, TikTok and gaming platforms, allowing rapid mobilization and digital resilience against state surveillance.

In Sri Lanka, the 2022 protest movement was characterized by its reliance on digital platforms for coordination and communication. Similarly, in Nepal, youth engagement is increasingly visible through digital activism, civil society initiatives, and local issue-based campaigns. Social media platforms serve as spaces for political critique, awareness campaigns, and mobilization around issues such as governance, environment, and social justice.

Across both countries, there is a clear shift toward non-traditional and issue-based participation. Youth are more likely to engage in short-term, cause-oriented initiatives rather than long-term affiliation with political parties. Volunteer networks, grassroots movements, and online campaigns provide alternative avenues for political expression and action.[xii] This contrasts with traditional forms of participation, such as voting and party membership, which are often perceived as less effective or meaningful. While elections remain important, they are no longer the primary or sole mode of engagement for Gen Z. Instead, participation is becoming more networked, flexible, and digitally mediated.

However, this transformation also presents challenges. Digital activism, while impactful in mobilizing attention and dissent, does not always translate into sustained institutional change. The absence of strong linkages between informal activism and formal political processes can limit the long-term impact of youth engagement. At the same time, important differences remain. Sri Lanka's recent experience of acute economic crisis and mass protest has produced a more visible and confrontational form of youth engagement, whereas Nepal's trajectory reflects a more gradual and diffused process of disillusionment within a post-conflict federal framework.

Implications for Democratic Consolidation

The erosion of trust among Gen Z has far-reaching implications, particularly in the context of recent electoral developments and governance priorities. Persistent distrust can weaken governance in several ways like, reduced public compliance with policies, lower civic engagement in institutional processes and increased volatility in electoral behaviour. For a federal system still in the process of consolidation, such trends can create instability and hinder effective policy implementation.[xiii]

In Nepal, recent elections have shown both continuity and change, while traditional parties continue to dominate, there has been a noticeable rise in support for independent candidates and newer political formations. This indicates that voters especially youth are not abandoning democracy but are questioning the credibility of established actors.

The disconnect between Gen Z and traditional political parties points to a representation deficit. Party structures in Nepal remain hierarchical and elite-driven, offering limited space for youth leadership. As a result, younger citizens often feel excluded from decision-making processes. So, Gen Z is increasingly engaging through digital platforms and online activism, issue-based campaigns (environment, governance, accountability) and support for independent or alternative political actors. This shift has both positive and negative implications. On one hand, it reflects a more critical and participatory citizenship unwilling to accept unaccountable governance. On the other hand, the decline of institutional engagement such as party membership can weaken the organizational foundations of democracy.[xiv]

Conclusion

While the gen Z Revolution in the two countries has been all encompassing, the phenomenon has largely been urban concentrated. The state has primarily been in charge of the distribution of foreign aid and development initiatives. In the absence of domestic opportunities, deepening dependence on aid and remittances, rising unemployment and inflation fueled youngsters' aspirations as well as frustrations. The new chosen actors have largely been anti-establishment, social media driven and characterized by dramatic gestures rather than any substantial structural reforms. But this is what clicked Gen Z and

these political alternatives, if they are unable to deliver now, will only unleash a fresh wave of disenchantment in a broken economy with fewer resources and a weak state.

Addressing this trust deficit requires a multi-dimensional approach through civic and Democratic engagement which can help bridge the gap between democratic ideals and institutional realities. Secondly, political parties and state institutions must create meaningful avenues for youth participation, including leadership roles, policy consultations, and local governance platforms. Token representation is insufficient and substantive inclusion is essential.

Thirdly, institutional reforms aimed at reducing corruption and enhancing transparency are critical. Mechanisms such as open data initiatives, independent oversight bodies, and timely service delivery are essential to rebuild confidence. Fourthly, addressing youth unemployment and economic insecurity is central to restoring trust. Policies focused on skill development, entrepreneurship, and job creation can align democratic governance with material aspirations. Lastly, given the centrality of digital platforms in Gen Z's political life, governments and institutions must engage constructively through these spaces. Combating misinformation, promoting credible communication, and integrating digital feedback into policymaking can strengthen trust.

Thus, generation Z in both countries is redefining its relationship with democratic systems. The decline in institutional trust reflects not apathy, but a form of critical and evaluative engagement—a demand for accountability, transparency, and substantive representation.[xv] The youth today are less willing to accept procedural democracy without corresponding governance outcomes. The erosion of trust observed in Nepal and Sri Lanka should be understood not only as a crisis, but also as an opportunity for democratic renewal.[xvi] It reflects a generational shift toward higher expectations from governance and a refusal to accept institutional stagnation. The central question, therefore, is not whether Generation Z is turning away from democracy, but whether democratic institutions are capable of adapting to the aspirations of a new generation, one that demands not merely democracy in form, but democracy in substance, responsiveness, and everyday practice.

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Salt Satyagraha to the Chipko Movement: Ecofeminist Readings of Women's Mobilization on Resource Politics in India

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Abstract

Ecofeminism, a significant development in the field of Political theory since the 1970s, offers a fresh and unique vantage point for re-evaluating certain events in the colonial past of India and offers a premise on which the engagement of women with politics can be increased. This paper seeks to retrospectively examine the Salt Satyagraha of 1930 as not just an anti-colonial movement but also as a nascent ecofeminist assertion as it involved large-scale female participation to resist capitalist patriarchy encapsulated by colonialism and its tendency of privatization and monopolization of natural resources like salt. The Salt Satyagraha has then been compared and contrasted with the Chipko Movement of 1973 to bring forth their shared ecofeminist underpinnings and key divergences. Finally, this paper makes a case for revisiting the ideals of ecofeminism for increasing the participation of Indian women in the political processes, particularly by positioning women as natural advocates and leaders

for fair resource management and challenging the cultural barriers that inhibit women's political agency.

Keywords: *Salt Satyagraha, Chipko Movement, Ecofeminism, Women's political participation, Anticolonial feminism*

Introduction: Ecofeminism in India and Abroad.

Ecofeminism is a relatively recent development in the field of political theory. It is classified as both a movement as well as a theory that postulates that there in a close connection between women and nature, in the way both are perceived as being nurturing and also in the context of their exploitation. It found its beginning in tandem with the second wave of feminism and the green movement in the mid 1970s. Ecofeminism performed the dual task of combining the ideals of feminist and ecological movements and also of critiquing some of their aspects. Thus, Ecofeminism draws on the green movements for highlighting the impacts of indiscriminate human use of the natural world and from feminism it adopts a critique of the gendered perspective of humankind that oppresses, exploits, and subjugates women (Mellor, 1997).

The seventh decade of the twentieth century has been crucial for the discourse of Ecofeminism. It was in 1974 that 'Ecofeminism' as a term was coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne and it was in this decade itself that one of the most vivid Ecofeminist movements, the Chipko movement occurred predating the coining of the term. In 1973, 27 women of the Chamoli district of Uttarakhand led by Gaura Devi stood up to forest loggers by embracing trees of the Reni forest to prevent their felling (Shiva, 1989). This came to be known as the historic Chipko movement, an explicitly Ecofeminist endeavour, which became a precedent for various "angalwaltha" movements led by women in different parts of India. The latter part of 1970 also saw the Green Belt movement in Kenya and Love Canal movement in New York which made women visible stakeholders in environmental concerns and solutions (Salman & Iqbal, 2007).

Finally, the 1970s was also the decade when global attention was captured by several studies that revealed that ecological issues like global warming, food crisis, nuclear contamination etc. were having a disproportionately larger impact on women and other marginalised groups. Subsequent studies have built upon the findings to indicate a link between reproductive health and

environmental degradation (Gaard, 2010). Such awareness brought women to the helm of environmental movements and increased their political assertion and presence, giving an impetus to the discourse of Ecofeminism.

'Ecofeminism' as a term was coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974. Eaubonne asserted that the oppression of women and other marginalised groups is intrinsically linked to the degradation of the natural world, both purportedly arising as a result of patriarchal dominance (d'Eaubonne, 1974/2022). Simply put, ecofeminism is a brand of feminism that establishes a connection between nature and women. The radical/cultural strand of ecofeminism attributes this closeness between the two to the biological roles (such as pregnancy, lactation and menstruation) and gender roles as family nurturers and food providers assigned to women. This makes women more sensitive to environmental degradation as this has a direct bearing on their ability to discharge their biological and gender roles. Thus, cultural ecofeminists make a case for valuing this sensitivity as it is life affirming (Carlassare, 2000). The radical ecofeminist regards this association between nature and women as a construction by the capitalist patriarchy to control and exploit both (Plumwood, 1993). On the other hand, the Socialist Ecofeminist focuses on the material realities like the undervaluation of labor done by women and similarly the devaluation of ecological resources citing capitalism and patriarchy as the common oppressors of women (Salleh, 1997). Mies and Shiva (2014) hold the capitalist-patriarchal perspective as the subjugator of women and the environment through its tendency of favoring uniformity over difference and by placing differences in a hierarchal order. For instance, nature, women and Global South is considered as being on the lower hierarchical rung vis-à-vis profit, men and Global North respectively. This hierarchy legitimizes the exploitation of the latter at the hands of former. In this context technology and reductionist modern science also assumes an exploitative dimension (Mies & Shiva, 2014)

While the Chipko Movement of 1973 has been regarded as a pioneer movement for ecofeminism in India and abroad, it drew its legitimacy and strength from the fact that respect for nature has been deeply rooted in the ethics and history of the Indian subcontinent. Right from the Harappan civilisation, where the discovery of the Pashupati seal and the statue of Mother goddess is indicative of nature worship to the Bishnoi movement where Amrita Devi of the Bishnoi tribe laid

down her life to prevent the felling of trees by the King of Jodhpur in 1730, the respect for the environment has been a central concern (Agoramoorthy & Hsu, 2011). Thus, this priority accorded to nature and its association with divinity is not merely a momentary attitude or a community's personal belief system but a systematic political attitude that has developed over time and permeated into the politics of India taking coherent forms like the Chipko movement (Shiva, 1989). With the developments in the field of contemporary political theory, the lens of ecofeminism offers an alternative framework to analyse some of the episodes of modern Indian history such as the Dandi March of 1930 and tribal movements of the eighteenth century and demonstrate that the Ecofeminist underpinnings were present in Indian politics much before the 1970s.

Ecofeminism in Colonial India: The Salt Satyagraha

In 1930, Mahatma Gandhi decided to launch a Civil Disobedience Movement against British colonial rule in India (Chandra, et al., 2016). Along with the boycott of British goods, breaking immoral rules was going to be a central strategy and Gandhi chose to target an oppressive Salt Law which gave the British a monopoly over salt production and also imposed a heavy tax on the purchase of Salt. The objective behind selecting this Act for the purposes of registering civil disobedience can be understood as being threefold: This Act was considered highly immoral as salt, a most basic mineral and ingredient, that was otherwise abundantly available in nature were rendered inaccessible or extremely expensive to the majority of poor Indians. Further, the selection of salt served to unite disparate and diverse strata of Indian society as salt is a universal kitchen ingredient consumed by all households regardless of their socio-economic standing and religious affiliations (Suchitra, 1995). But perhaps the most important segment of the population to be integrated into the national movement was that of women. Ordinary women, until then had played an instrumental role in the national movement but had done so usually from the margins and perhaps many of their contributions went undocumented. However, the Salt Satyagraha visibilised the assertion and participation of women.

While there had been the participation of women even before 1930, it was the salt march that serves as a watershed period because earlier the participation of women was limited in terms of scale, method and purpose while after and during

the Salt Satyagraha the participation of women started en masse (Chatterjee, 2001). Prior to 1930, there were renowned figures like Rani Lakshmi Bai and Begum Hazrat Mahal of the Revolt of 1857, Sarla Debi Ghoshal was credited with the formation of Bharat Sri Mandal in 1910 and for patronising Akharas, Annie Besant for the presidentship of Congress and Home Rule League, and Madam Bhikaji Cama for advocating armed struggle for India's liberation (Chatterjee, 2001). The participation was limited in terms of number and spread with most women being the relatives of Congress leaders. But after 1930 women's participation became more broad-based and women from all walks of life, from cities to villages participated as a united mass, as equals and empowered members of a nation (Chatterjee, 2001).

Kamala Chattopadhyay (1983) has regarded the Salt Satyagraha as a special turning point in human history as well as the independence struggle for politically mobilizing women who were so far concerned mostly with their domestic responsibility. A simple unassuming ingredient like salt became the mobilizing plank for the women surprisingly because of the otherwise debilitating gendered responsibility in the kitchen. Owing to gender roles, matters of the kitchen were considered a women's domain and thus salt, a very essential ingredient of the Indian kitchen, provided an effective entry point to women in the then politics of colonial struggle (Kishwar, 1985). The availability and cost of salt were of very direct concern to the Indian woman tasked with the job of running a cost-effective kitchen. Here the connections with Ecofeminism may be established. Ecofeminism postulates that women tend to bear a larger proportion of the burden of ecological degradation or indiscriminate consumption of natural resources than men. In order to illustrate, let us consider the contemporary case of a water-stressed village in Maharashtra called Denganmal where women have to walk long distances to fetch water for domestic use. This process can be so time taking and backbreaking for women that they are unable to discharge their other domestic responsibilities. As a response, men of the village have taken to polygamy, as one wife is insufficient to run the household optimally (Crowder, 2015). According to studies, gender disparities are exacerbated by climate-related risks, which cause increased workloads for women, occupational risks both indoors and outdoors, emotional and psychological stress, and higher mortality relative to men (Crowder, 2015).

Ecofeminist arguments are cognisant of these realities and resist the extractive and arbitrary attitudes and policies concerning natural resources as they tend to have tangible and higher costs for women. Thus, the Salt Satyagraha too can be said to be premised on Ecofeminist thought where women asserted control over the decision-making concerning natural resources (salt in this case) and resisted laws they considered exploitative, extractive and indiscriminate.

For the early part of the colonial struggle, women were seen as secondary actors whose main concern continued to be their family but after Dandi women began to view themselves as having agency, as being equal partners in the colonial movement (Chatterjee, 2001). It is important to note that while the salt march initially excluded women, it was Sarojini Naidu's unrelenting persuasion of Gandhi that women were not only involved but eventually became instrumental in carrying forward the movement. Kasturba Gandhi led 37 women Satyagrahis from Sabarmati, Sarojini Naidu and Manilal Gandhi initiated a raid on Dharsana Salt Works and Kamaladevi on Wadala salt work respectively (Kishwar, 1985). Women were engaged not only in the process of producing salt but also in the processes of buying and selling. Various women organisations like the Desh Sevika Sangh, Nari Satyagraha Samiti, Ladies Picketing Board etc. worked to make the movement a success (Chatterjee, 2001). The watershed monumentality of the Salt Satyagraha can be gleaned from the fact that women participation in the independence struggle did not frizzle out after the salt satyagraha but rather took diverse shape and kept evolving and continuing. Even common women, of different age and social standing contributed in their unique ways, individually and collectively as a precedent had been set. Earlier confined in domestic spaces, women entered the public sphere courageously picketing outside shops selling liquor, opium and foreign goods and using the force of moral suasion to erode the British hegemony (Chandra et al., 2016).

Yet, it must be borne in mind that the involvement of women was accepted by Gandhi and others as the women's participation was seen as a continuation of the essentialized nature of the Indian women -self-sacrificing and devoted to the family as here nation was defined as a larger family (Seth, 2013). Gandhi viewed women as an embodiment of strength which was rooted in non-violence and acknowledges that he had developed his method of passive resistance in some measure as inspiration from his mother and wife (Kishwar, 1985). He was aware that women's presence in the movement would also minimise the

possibility of a repeat of the violence of Chauri Chaura which was the cause of the failure of the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921 (Kishwar, 1985). Women of colonial India were seen to inhabit the 'inner' social space (*ghar*), this inner domain composed of family, spirituality, and core identity as opposed to the 'outer' social space (bahir) of the male-dominated material world which was the site of colonial suppression and resistance (Chatterjee, 1989). But with the Salt Satyagraha, the women could extend this inner domain to subsume a part of the outer domain thus blurring the dichotomies of the "inner/outer", "spiritual/material" or "*ghar/ bhahir*". The women used the rationale of the betterment of family, food provisioning and redefinition of the nation as a family to enter the material domain of politics. Of course, women could eventually transcend these essentialized roles and contributed in more militant and alternative capacities to the national movement as illustrated by the valiant contributions of Sumati Morarjee, Matangini Hazara, Usha Mehta, Bina Das, Suhasini Ganguly etc. In fact, post-1930 the militant strand of nationalism also absorbed more women such as Shanti Ghosh and Suniti Chaudhuri who assassinated a district magistrate in 1931, Bina Das who made an attempt on the life of the Governor of Bengal, her elder sister Kalyani Das courted arrest, and Pritilata Waddadar and Kalpana Dutt boldly led raids in Chittagong. (Chatterjee, 2001). Thus, we find the Salt Satyagraha that flagged off the civil disobedience mobilised women by connecting a natural resource and culinary ingredient of the kitchen to the larger issue of national subjugation. This enhanced participation of women in the anti-colonial struggle of India persisted well into the Quit India Movement of 1942 and women also contributed actively as members of Azad Hind Fauj.

Comparison and Contrast between Salt Satyagraha and Chipko movement.

The argument here is that while Salt Satyagraha was not an ecological movement, it was a movement for fair resource management rooted in material sustenance issue of accessing affordable salt, an indispensable ingredient in Indian cooking, wherein women participated in large numbers (Thapar-Björkert, 2006). Ariel Salleh (1997) regards the ecofeminist focus on ecology as more nuanced from the biocentric position of 'environmentalism for environment's sake', as promoted by deep ecology but rather also incorporates considerations of social justice and fairness. Thus, the aspect of fair use of natural resources is present in the aims of Salt Satyagraha.

Further, Vandana Shiva regarded colonialism as the embodiment of capitalist patriarchy which disrupted the tradition of harmony (Shakti) between nature (Prakriti) and culture (Purusha) inherent in the philosophy of the Indian subcontinent since times immemorial (Shiva, 1989). Thus, the Salt Satyagraha, in its act of resisting colonial extraction, assumes within itself the objectives of ecofeminism of resisting capitalist patriarchy.

Ecofeminism in the Indian subcontinent has been regarded as distinct from the western conceptualizations of ecofeminism on the grounds of being materially rooted in caste, class and race whereas the western interpretations focus on ideological and symbolic association between nature and women based on Cartesian dualisms of Culture vs Nature, Male vs Female etc. (Plumwood, 1993). Bina Agarwal (1992) asserts that women find themselves closer to nature because of their gender roles of catering to domestic upkeep and food provisioning for which women become directly reliant on nature. She does acknowledge the extent of this dependence on nature is conditioned by factors of caste, class and race. The arguments of Agarwal (1992) and Shiva (1989) connect well with the retrospective analysis of Salt Satyagraha as a form of ecofeminist assertion where the material realities of colonized Indian women compelled them to show solidarity against monopolistic salt laws which sought to privatize and commercialize a naturally abundant resource.

Forty-three years later, in 1973 the Chipko movement emerged, which was hailed as one of the most iconic ecofeminist movement globally. The aims of Chipko Movement were overtly ecofeminist in the sense that women were seen mobilizing against deforestation which had a direct bearing upon the environment and also on the women of the region as they would have to undergo more drudgery to source firewood, fodder and water in degraded ecosystems. Yet Guha (1989) and Agarwal (1992) contend that it was also a livelihood issue and an anti-liquor movement, showing that sustenance and social justice are important factors in ecofeminist movement that cannot be overlooked. This aspect of focus on sustenance issues, social justice and fair use of natural resource, namely salt, was also present in the Salt Satyagraha, as was largescale participation of women. Thus, Salt Satyagraha and Chipko Movement differ in time period, immediate aims and degree of focus on the environment but share common ecofeminist underpinnings and similar methods specifically, through women solidarity against commercialization of nature (Salt in salt satyagraha;

trees in Chipko) and through peaceful morally persuasive non-cooperation.

Lessons for the Present

After independence, Indian politics has been characterised by the low participation of women. With Gandhian politics giving way to Nehruvian consensus, democratic electoral politics has come to dominate the stage. A gender gap has been observed with respect to women's political participation as voters, party candidates and representation in the Parliament and state legislature remains low (Khanna, 2009). Despite reaching a high of 14.39% as of June 2019, India's representation of women in parliament is still worse than that of 140 other nations. The percentage of women in parliaments around the world was 24.6% on average (Sen, 2019). Several reasons have been identified for the low participation of women and can be classified into psychological variables such as the perception that politics is not an appropriate domain for women, socio-economic variables which include limited access to primary goods and political variables for example, the reluctance of parties to provide party tickets to women (Khanna, 2009). While a holistic treatment of all the variables is required to improve women's political participation with the aid of suitable interventions like reservations for women, and socio-economic schemes for women empowerment, it is a priority to overcome the psychological variables as well. Politics is and has been, especially in the cultural context of Indian history, the arena for women too. The feminist assertion that private is political is made clearly manifest through ecofeminism as was demonstrated by the resounding success of the Civil disobedience movement in involving women in the colonial struggle.

The Cultural Ecofeminist underpinnings in the Indian subcontinent's history render women and politics as intimately linked and the distinction between the inner and outer domain or the cultural and material world begins to blur. Women's political assertion after independence has taken the form of issue-based activism and extra-parliamentary politics such as protesting against rising prices, violence against women, and liquor consumption. Ecofeminism has also been leveraged as a plank to mobilise the people of Chamoli through the Chipko movement, the Bhopal gas tragedy, the Appiko movement, and Narmada Bachao Andolan. Yet, such participation is localised, and individual-based and rarely translates into coherent long-term policymaking. The reservations for

women provided in local bodies have demonstrated the ample capacity women have as political decision-makers. The value of ecofeminism in this situation lies in providing women with an entry in terms of psychological acceptance to electoral politics as well.

Conclusion

The traditions of Ecofeminism and Ecomasculinities have been present in India's colonial political history and have continued to provide political undertones to events in post-independent India which need to be reinvestigated with these perspectives. Women face tremendous cultural barriers in terms of participating in politics and many of such barriers arise from the assumption that women should limit their interest to the domestic sphere. While there has been immense socio-economic progress of women over the last century yet with the continuing evidence of 'Proxy Pati' or 'Sarpanch Pati' in Panchayati Raj Institutions (Pandey, 2016), the limited presence of women in decision making roles, and lower voter turnouts leave much to be desired. In such a situation, the idea of ecofeminism can provide a basis for enhancing the assertion of women in political processes, as was done in the Dandi March. This enhanced access will, in turn, have tremendous positive spinoff for the nation as a whole since the increased presence of women in parliaments and decision-making bodies, as in the case of Norway, has been seen to be more environmentally conscious and inclusive (Norgaard & York, 2005). With the passing of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (The Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023) providing for reservation of 33% seats for women in parliament and state assemblies, awaiting implementation post delimitation, leveraging of ecofeminist ideals assumes even more significance as it can give women ideological grounding and an indicative priority list of interlinked political issues of resource management, ecological conservation and gender empowerment that can be taken up by Female Indian politicians and representatives to function as effective and viable political actors.

It must be acknowledged that the mere entry or acceptance of women into politics though necessary, is not sufficient. The efforts to politically empower women through education, health access, employment and training opportunities, affirmative action must continue with full vigour to prevent tokenism with respect to feminist concerns or environmental issues. With that in mind, it is

just as important to appreciate and understand the Ecofeminist sensibilities that have conditioned the Indian way of life from time immemorial and use it as a powerful premise to take our nation ahead.

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Ethical Considerations

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Manufacturing State Advantage Under GST: Evidence from Gujarat's Fiscal Trajectory (2008–2025)

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Abstract

This paper examines the examines the fiscal impact of Goods and Services Tax (GST) in Gujarat which is a strong base of manufacturing activities. The paper covers the time period from 2008–09 to 2024–25 and uses an Interrupted Time Series model with Newey-West HAC standard errors. The paper finds evidence of persistent but moderate fiscal deceleration post-GST. During the study period, revenue growth decelerated by 4.0 percentage points annually and expenditure by 3.2 points. Chow test confirms structural breaks for both revenue and expenditure. Though the revenue CAGR had declined from 13.94% pre-GST to 9.29% post-GST, SGST achieved remarkable 18.05% CAGR compared to pre-GST Sales Tax at 13.51%. A decline in fiscal Autonomy Index was also registered during the study period from 66.1% to 60.3%, which can be attributed to increased transfer dependence from the centre. Developmental expenditure

share had remained stable, while the interest burden declined from 17.9% to 15.5%. Revenue buoyancy improved from 1.01 to 1.22, the highest among major states. Findings reveal a manufacturing state paradox: destination-based GST created initial revenue losses requiring large compensation, yet improved buoyancy. It suggests long-term SGST potential exceeds pre-GST Sales Tax/ VAT performance.

Keywords: *GST, Fiscal federalism, Manufacturing states, Time series, Gujarat, Revenue buoyancy*

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Introduction

India implemented Goods and Services Tax (GST) on July 1, 2017. It was a milestone in restructuring of fiscal federalism. It subsumed over 17 central and state level sales tax/VAT into a destination-based consumption tax (GOI, 2017). The efficiency gains through eliminating cascading taxation and broadening the tax base were some of the selling points of GST, but it has led to asymmetric impacts across states based on their economic structure. As the GST shifts the tax system from origin-based Sales Tax/VAT to destination-based SGST, states with strong manufacturing base faced a critical transition. The new system has threatened revenue loss from production states to consuming states (Rao, 2018).

This paper examines Gujarat, to assess three interrelated questions. First, has GST altered Gujarat's revenue growth trajectory and if so, is the change a one-time level shift or persistent? Second, how has the destination principle affected revenue composition and fiscal autonomy for production-oriented economy? Third, has GST improved buoyancy of revenue, compensated for the initial transition losses, and what is the implication for post-compensation fiscal sustainability?

Gujarat is an ideal state to study the GST impact dynamics. It is the fifth-largest economy of India on GSDP basis in 2024-25 and contributes approximately 9% of national output. It is also the home of major industrial clusters like petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, and textiles. Contribution

of Sales Tax/VAT was 62% of own-tax revenue in 2016–17, thus making the transition to destination-based SGST particularly impactful. Pre-GST analyses put Gujarat in the category of states that would experience the revenue loss among major states (Purohit, 2017). This concern is also validated by compensation receipts during 2017–22.

This paper contributes to the existing literature both methodologically and empirically. Methodologically, the paper focuses on balanced analytical window, which includes 9 pre-GST observations (2008–09 to 2016–17) and compares it with 8 post-GST observations (2017–18 to 2024–25). It minimises structural bias from asymmetric sub-samples. The paper works entirely with nominal current-price data (Mankiw, 2010), to avoid macroeconomics measurement error from state-level price deflators. This methodology design with Newey-West HAC robust standard errors addresses serial correlation inherent in fiscal time series.

Empirically, the paper challenges conventional wisdom about manufacturing states under destination-based taxation. Despite destination-based taxation diverting consumption tax base to consuming states, Gujarat experienced significant revenue deceleration and increased transfer dependence, though SGST buoyancy (1.22) substantially exceeds pre-GST Sales Tax buoyancy (1.01). It suggests long-term revenue potential. This performance reflects Gujarat's robust manufacturing growth, and effective tax administration.

1. Institutional Background

The Seventh Schedule of Constitution of India assigns Sales Tax/VAT to the state list. While under the union list income tax, customs, and central excise are reserved to the central government. This fiscal arrangement under the constitution of India between union and its constituent units have created vertical fiscal imbalances. All States together collected 38% of combined tax revenue but had incurred 58% of expenditure responsibilities in 2024 -25 (PRS, 2024).

The 101st Constitution Amendment act, enabled GST by creating concurrent taxation powers. The dual structure comprises State GST (SGST) on intra-state transactions, Central GST (CGST) on intra-state transactions, and Integrated GST (IGST) on inter-state transactions (Purohit, 2017). Under the GST

framework, the Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) follows the principle of destination-based taxation. IGST is collected by the Central Government and is transferred to the consuming state. This means that tax revenue ultimately accrues to the consuming state rather than the producing state. This system represents a significant shift from the pre-GST tax regime, where producing states retained a substantial share of tax revenue from interstate trade. Thus, Implementation of GST has restructured the horizontal imbalances among the states. Manufacturing states like Gujarat which generated large Sales Tax/VAT collections from production are now discriminated against the consumption states.

To address revenue uncertainties of the manufacturing states, the Parliament guaranteed states a compensation for revenue losses for a period of five years (2017–2022) at a 14 percent compound annual growth rate in tax revenue relative to the 2015–16 base year. Any shortfall in revenue was to be compensated through a GST Compensation Cess imposed on selected luxury and demerit goods (Chakraborty & Dash, 2020). Gujarat, received Rs.42,438 crore in total compensation. The compensation mechanism expired in June 2022, creating a fiscal testing whether SGST growth could sustain expenditure needs of the states.

Gujarat is characterized by a strong manufacturing base supported by industries such as petrochemicals, automobiles, and pharmaceuticals. The state also has a very vibrant and expanding service sector. All these factors support strong domestic consumption. The state's Gross State Domestic Product had increased substantially over the past decade, from approximately ₹5.98 lakh crore in 2008–09 to around ₹27.9 lakh crore in 2024–25.

2. Theoretical Framework

Classical fiscal federalism theory (Musgrave,1959 ; Oates,1972) assigns taxation and expenditure powers in such a way that promotes efficiency, equity, and fiscal autonomy at all levels of governance. Contributions by Richard Musgrave and Wallace E. Oates emphasized that subnational governments should have access to adequate revenue sources to finance their expenditure requirements. Within this framework, as the GST shift from origin-based taxation to destination-based taxation in India, fiscal capacity of states depending on their

economic structure is bound to be affected. The empirical analysis focuses on evaluating the impact of GST on revenue performance, fiscal dependence, and compensation flows for a manufacturing-oriented state such as Gujarat.

In a theoretical and Empirical study of VAT system in India, Keen & Lockwood (2010) concluded that the destination principle is expected to create asymmetric impact on the states. So consuming states such as Bihar, UP, and Rajasthan stands to gain and producing states like Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra stands to lose. The magnitude depends on production-versus-consumption balance. Highly industrialized states with lower per-capita consumption like Gujarat which exports 60–70% of production face largest losses.

2.1 Revenue Buoyancy as Compensatory Mechanism

Revenue buoyancy (η) which measures tax responsiveness to economic base is an important tool to gauge the impact of any policy initiative on the tax collection (Mansfield,1972). Buoyancy increases if broader base captures previously untaxed services or improved compliance through GSTN reduces evasion or harmonized rates eliminates cascading effect stimulating growth. If post-GST buoyancy exceeds pre-GST levels; buoyancy revenue growth could offset destination-based losses over time.

2.2 ITS Identification Strategy

When policy intervention occurs at known time points across all units, Interrupted Time Series (Shadish et.al, 2002), is appropriate to capture the impact of policy change. GST is a perfect case for ITS assumptions. July 1, 2017 implementation was nationwide and exogenous to Gujarat's fiscal trajectory. ITS estimates immediate level shifts coefficients and slope changes coefficient gives distinct values for one-time shocks and persistent trajectory changes.

3. Literature Review

There are studies examining the fiscal implications of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), for manufacturing-oriented states. Empirical analyses indicate significant implications for state-level revenue distribution because of the structure of GST in India. M. Govinda Rao illustrates that several manufacturing states experienced revenue shortfalls after the initial implementation of GST in India. His analysis attributes the structural shift toward destination-based

taxation for the revenue effects. Mahesh C. Purohit (2017) projected that industrial states could face substantial fiscal pressures following the GST transition. Rao and Chakraborty (2020) also find that manufacturing-intensive states received relatively higher compensation payments under the GST compensation framework linking it to the destination principle in the GST.

Mansfield (1972) and Tanzi (1987) links the responsiveness of tax revenue to changes in income without discretionary policy adjustments. Empirical studies on India suggests buoyancy of Sales Tax/Value Added Tax (VAT) in the range of 1.1 to 1.4. However, empirical evidence on tax buoyancy under the Goods and Services Tax regime is not well documented due to the relatively recent introduction of the system. Existing studies suggest that State GST exhibit higher buoyancy compared to the earlier Sales Tax regime

In econometrics Chow test (1960) is used widely for the structural break test. Newey and West method (1987) which gives HAC covariance is deployed to address the issue of autocorrelation in time series regression (Stock & Watson, 2020). Linden and Adams (2011) used Interrupted Time Series (ITS) approach in fiscal policy analysis. This is a quasi-experimental method to examine the impact of reforms by comparing trends in outcomes before and after policy implementation

3.1 Research Gap

Existing GST literature is limited to short post-implementation windows, and it is insufficient to distinguish transitory shocks from persistent changes. The 8-year post-GST window here presents a robust analysis. Most studies are based on deflated real data which leads to measurement error. Our focus on nominal-methods allows us to avoid measurement errors.

4. Data and Variable Construction

Reserve Bank of India's Handbook of Statistics on Indian States (2024) is our data source; we have extracted 17 fiscal years data from 2008-09 to 2024-25 at current prices by consolidating state budget documents following standardized classification method.

Table 1

Data Description

Item	Detail
Source	RBI State Finances: A Study of Budgets
State analyzed	Gujarat
Analysis window	2008–09 to 2024–25 (17 years)
Pre-GST observations	9 years (2008–09 to 2016–17)
Post-GST observations	8 years (2017–18 to 2024–25)
Price basis	Current (nominal) prices
Value unit	Rs. Crore (nominal)

Source: Authors' summation of data

Key variables include Total Revenue Receipts, Own Tax Revenue, SGST, Sales Tax/VAT, GST Compensation, Revenue Expenditure, Developmental Expenditure, and Interest Payments. Four ratio indicators: Fiscal Autonomy Index (Own Tax/Total Revenue), Interest Burden (Interest/Revenue Expenditure), Developmental Share (Developmental/Revenue Expenditure), and Capital Productivity (Capital Outlay/Total Capital Disbursements) have been constructed.

Deflation of the fiscal series has been deliberately avoided. No valid state-specific price deflator exists for Gujarat; applying all-India GDP deflator introduces measurement error exceeding any gain from real-value interpretation. Our research questions concern fiscal sustainability—inherently nominal concepts. States must service nominal debt and meet nominal obligations. Our ratio indicators are dimensionless, invariant to deflation choice (Bird, 2011).

5. Methodology

For this paper descriptive analysis, interrupted time series model, Chow Structural Break test and revenue buoyancy index have been used. Fiscal autonomy index has also been constructed to gauge the impact of GST on the Fiscal autonomy of the state. GST and VAT performance comparison is also

made in the paper to evaluate the impact on GST on tax collection. Following three regression models have been fitted for our analysis.

Model 1 — Interrupted Time Series:

$$\ln(Yt) = \alpha + \beta 1t + \beta 2DGST + \beta 3tstar + ut$$

where ln(Yt): Natural logarithm of tax revenue and t is time trend variable and captures the underlying pre GST growth trend in tax revenue. DGST is a GST intervention dummy variable , Equals 0 for all pre-GST years and 1 for all post-GST years. tstar = max (0 ,t−9) , it measures Post-GST trend variable , equals 0 before GST and increases by one each year after GST. Captures the change in the growth rate after GST . β1 annual growth rate change in annual revenue before GST implementation , β2 Immediate level change in tax revenue following GST implementation and β3 represents change in the slope after GST implementation relative to the pre-GST period

Model 2 — Chow Structural Break Test:

$$F = \frac{(RSS_{pool} - RSS_{pre} - RSS_{post})/k}{(RSS_{pre} + RSS_{post})/ (n-2k)}$$

Rejection of null hypothesis confirms GST represents genuine parameter break.

Model 3 — Revenue Buoyancy:

$$\ln(Revenuet) = \gamma 0 + \eta \ln(GSDPt) + vt$$

where $\eta > 1$ tax buoyancy is elastic.

6. Empirical Results

6.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics by Period — Gujarat (Rs. Crore)

Series	Period	N	Mean	Min	Max
Revenue Receipts	Pre-GST	9	72,242	38,676	109,842
	GST Era	8	167,747	123,291	229,653

Revenue Expenditure	Pre-GST	9	70,645	38,741	103,895
	GST Era	8	162,428	118,060	219,832
Own Tax Revenue	Pre-GST	9	47,732	29,850	75,715
	GST Era	8	101,125	82,932	150,126

Source: Authors' calculation

The descriptive statistics indicate a profound hike in fiscal parameters during the GST era compared with the pre-GST period. Evidence suggests that the GST period is associated with higher revenue mobilization along with increased public expenditure. However, to determine the statistical significance of these changes and relation with the GST reform , Interrupted Time Series (ITS) framework is conducted.

6.2.Regression Results

Table 3

Model 1 — Interrupted Time Series Results

Dep. Variable	Term	Estimate	Std. Error	p-value
ln(Revenue)	Intercept	10.45	0.05	0.00***
	t	0.13	0.01	0.00***
	DGST	−0.09	0.07	0.25
	tstar	−0.04	0.01	0.00***
ln (Expenditure)	Intercept	10.53	0.04	0.00***
	t	0.12	0.01	0.00***
	DGST	0.01	0.02	0.74
	tstar	−0.03	0.01	0.00***

Source: Authors' calculation ;Note: Newey-West HAC SEs (lag=2). *** p < 0.01.

The Interrupted Time Series (ITS) regression results table 3 measures the impact of the GST reform on the state's fiscal indicators. The log revenue estimate for the baseline revenue level and the pre-GST time trend coefficient is positive and significant. It indicates that revenue receipts were growing prior to the introduction of GST. The implementation of GST did not have a significant

immediate impact on revenue levels as the coefficient of the GST intervention dummy (DGST) is negative but statistically insignificant. This suggests that revenues increase during the GST era is in sync with the pre-GST trend.

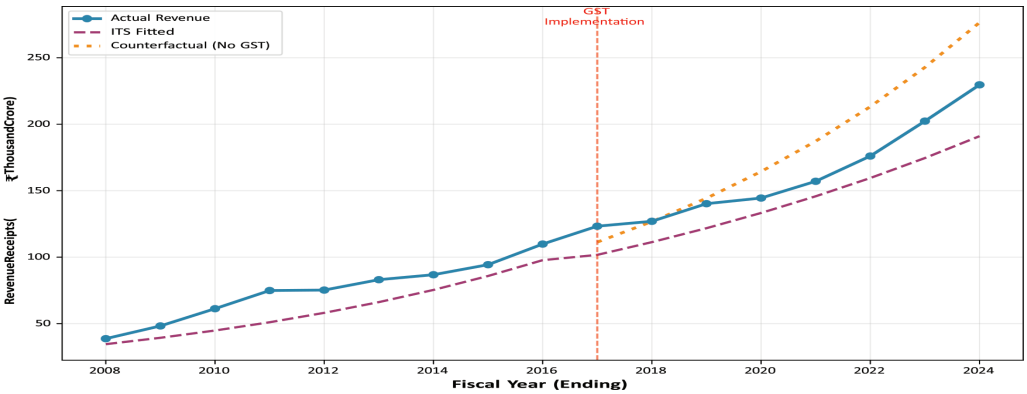
For expenditure model also, similar trend is observed. The baseline expenditure level and the pre-GST trend coefficient suggest a consistent increase in revenue expenditure over time. This with statistically insignificant GST dummy variable indicates that GST did not generate an immediate fiscal shock but the increase in indicators were on the trend line.

Figure 1

Revenue Trajectory with ITS Decomposition

Gujarat, 2008-09 to 2024-25

Source: Authors' construct



6.3 Chow Structural Break Test

Table 4

Model 2 -Chow Structural Break Test

Series	F-statistic	df1, df2	p-value	Conclusion
ln(Revenue)	4.85	2, 13	0.03**	Structural break
ln(Expenditure)	9.05	2, 13	0.00***	Structural break

Source: Authors' calculation Note: *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05.

Both series exhibit statistically significant breaks at 2017–18, validating ITS assumptions.

6.4 Revenue Buoyancy

Table 5

Model 3 — Revenue Buoyancy

Period	Buoyancy (η)	Std. Error	p-value	R^2
Pre-GST (2008–09 to 2016–17)	1.01	0.04	0.00	0.99
GST Era (2017–18 to 2024–25)	1.22	0.06	0.00	0.99

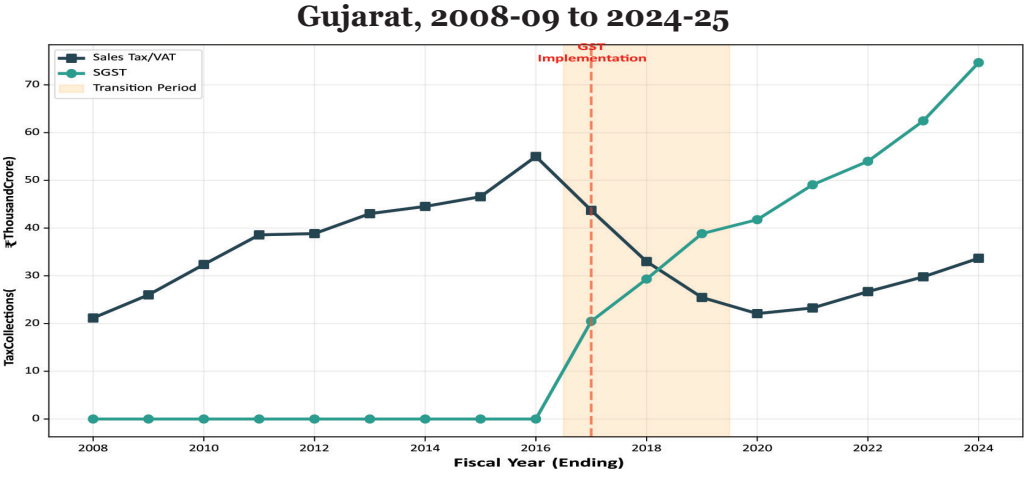
Source: Authors' calculation

Buoyancy increased significantly from 1.01 to 1.22—the highest among major states. This 21-percentage-point increase indicates SGST captures economic growth more effectively than pre-GST Sales Tax/VAT, despite destination-based taxation.

6.5 SGST vs Sales Tax (VAT) Performance

Figure 2

Transition from Sales Tax/VAT to SGST



Source: Authors' construct

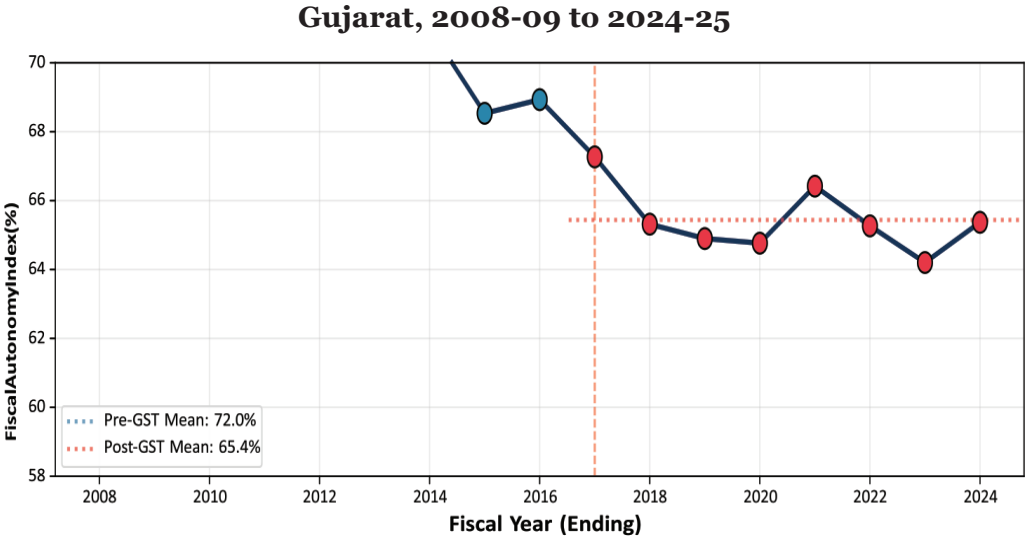
Sales Tax collections peaked at Rs.54,997 crore (2016–17), dropped to Rs.43,712 crore (2017–18), declined further through 2020–21 (Rs.22,084 crore), then partially recovered to Rs.33,675 crore (2024–25). Residual reflects assessments, penalties, and petroleum products outside GST.

SGST commenced at Rs.20,473 crore (2017–18, 9 months), grew to Rs.74,662 crore (2024–25), achieving 18.05% CAGR—exceeding pre-GST Sales Tax CAGR (13.51%) by 4.5 points. This remarkable performance contradicts expectations that destination-based taxation would devastate manufacturing state revenues.

6.6 Fiscal Autonomy Index(FAI)

Figure 3

Fiscal Autonomy Index Over Time



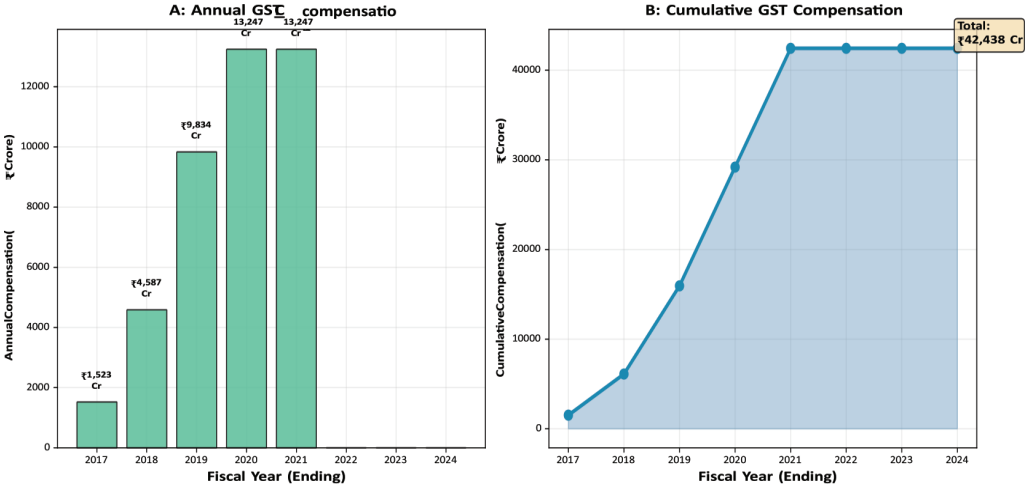
Source: Authors' calculation

FAI declined from 66.1% pre-GST to 60.3% post-GST. Gujarat is successful in maintaining relatively high autonomy but has experienced significant decline. The decline can be attributed to two factors: (a) destination-based taxation reduced own-tax share, (b) compensation transfers (categorized as grants) inflated total revenue denominator though that was not own .

6.7 GST Compensation

Figure 4

GST Compensation Transfers to Gujarat, 2017-18 to 2021-22



Source: Authors' construct

Gujarat received Rs.42,438 crore total: Rs.1,523 crore (2017–18), Rs.4,587 crore (2018– 19), Rs.9,834 crore (2019–20), Rs.13,247 crore (2020–21), Rs.13,247 crore (2021–22). The compensation trajectory has nearly tripled from 2017–18 to 2019–20,validating pre GST predictions of substantial destination-based losses.

6.8 Expenditure Quality

Table 6

Expenditure Quality Indicators, Gujarat

Indicator	Pre-GST Mean (%)	Post-GST Mean (%)
Developmental Share	64.8	64.5
Interest Burden	17.9	15.5
Capital Productivity	95.4	83.6

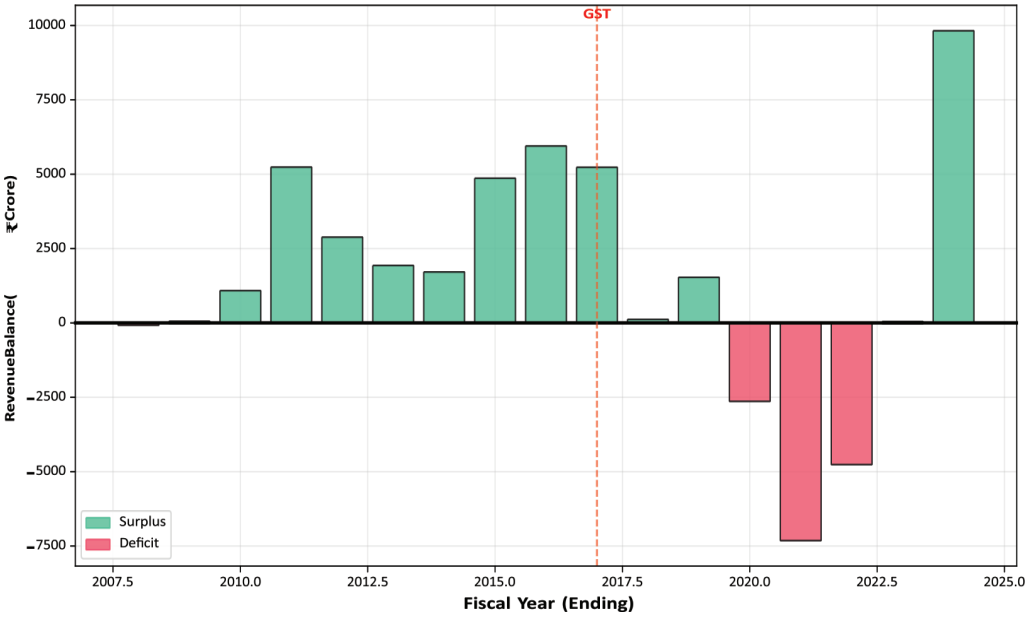
Source: Authors' calculation

The expenditure quality indicators in Table 6 compares Gujarat in the pre- and post-GST periods. The developmental share of Gujarat has remained stable. This stability indicates that Gujarat was able to maintain productive and development-oriented spending despite a deceleration in revenue growth. But the interest burden has declined significantly from 17.9% to 15.5%. This is due to better debt management. During the same time period, capital productivity declined from 95.4% to 83.6%, a potential shift away from growth-enhancing expenditure

Figure 5

Revenue-Expenditure Balance

Gujarat, 2008-09 to 2024-25



Source: Authors' calculation

Gujarat succeeded in maintaining near-balanced revenue accounts throughout the study period with small surpluses in several pre-GST years and moderate deficits post-GST.

7. Discussion and Policy Implications

This paper provides evidence that GST has impacted fiscals of Gujarat negatively. Six key findings have emerged from our analysis. First, using Chow tests it is confirmed that structural break had happened at 2017–18. Second, ITS slope coefficients prove persistent deceleration for revenue as well as for expenditure. Third, revenue CAGR has also declined from 13.94% to 9.29%, despite SGST achieving remarkable CAGR of 18.05% which exceeds pre-GST Sales Tax. The paradox of overall revenue deceleration coexisting with superior SGST performance suggests that though destination-based taxation diverts base to consuming states. Gujarat has SGST benefits from robust manufacturing growth and rising domestic consumption. Fourth, revenue buoyancy has also improved significantly from 1.01 to 1.22. This is highest among major states and an improvement of 21 percentage points above pre-GST levels. Fifth, Transfer dependency has increased as fiscal Autonomy Index declined from 66.1% to 60.3%, This reflects both destination-based losses and compensation's distorting effects on autonomy metrics. Sixth, Gujarat received Rs.42,438 crore in compensation this is highest amount nationwide and proves pre-implementation apprehensions of substantial destination-based losses correct. Sixth, Gujarat received Rs.42,438 crore in compensation, this is the highest amount nationwide and proves pre-implementation apprehensions of substantial destination-based losses for manufacturing State.

The following policy interventions are recommended on the basis of our findings. First, extend compensation cutoff line for manufacturing states till 2030. This will ease the transition and incentivise for SGST optimization. Second, limited SGST rate flexibility should be provided to states (±2 percentage points) to restore partial autonomy while preserving the current structure of GST. Third, GST Council should simplify the compliance and rationalise the rate for industrial inputs.

8. Limitations

Our study has two major limitations. First, due to focus on single-state design, external validity results of the study cannot be generalised. Cross-state panel analysis can be taken by interested scholars to provide broader inference. Second, as our study focuses on nominal-data approach, and it prevents real growth decomposition.

9. Conclusion

This paper employed Interrupted Time Series (ITS) design to assess the fiscal impact of GST on Gujarat between 2008–09 to 2024–25. Findings reveal that for a manufacturing state, destination-based GST created significant initial losses. Though improved buoyancy suggests long-term SGST potential benefits over pre-GST performance. The primary policy intervention calls for transitional support through extended compensation and enhanced vertical devolution through the Finance Commission.

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Bleeding Green: War, Poetry and Ecology in Select Poems from Northeast India

Aishwarya Jha

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Abstract

Peter Nicholls's essay 'Wars I have Seen' explores the mediation of war through the medium of poetry, visuals and technology, comments on its ramification and the alteration in the perception of war in the popular imagination. By extrapolating salient themes from the essay, specifically, the interrelation of visuality and violence and the adoption of poetry as the mode of creative expression and representation in a conflict-ridden landscape, this paper will re-read poetry from the Northeast of India. Studies have undertaken an eco-critical reading of the poetry from the Northeast of India given the immersiveness of the poets in the ecosphere, while others have critiqued the representation of armed conflict in the region. Keeping this in mind, the current study would extend the ecocritical approach to include the effects, if any, of the militant clashes in the region on the biosphere and investigate its presence and representation in the poetry from the Northast.

Keywords: *Northeast India, War poetry, Ecology, Environment, Representation, Conflict*

It appears to be standard practice to begin literary research in the corpus of Northeast poetry with a caveat. The inadequacy of the term Northeast to encapsulate the varied differentiations within the eight Indian states, and how it precludes the foregrounding of the differentiations that abound in those states like linguistic, ethnic, literary and cultural differences (Chandra & Das, 2007, p. 1). The choice of poets to write about war using the medium of poesy does not seem odd when seen with the backdrop of literary history of war beginning with Iliad in the West and Mahabharata in the East. Yet the suitability of the usage of the poetic form for the representation of warfare seems strange when seen in the light of the purported marginalization of the form (Nicholls, 2005). In the Indian subcontinent especially, with its contemporaneous utilitarian Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) leanings (Pant & Das, 2018), the "academic irrelevance" of poetry is thrown into relief. Thus, before delving into further intricacies of the current study, we must interrogate the usage of the medium in question for the purpose of expression during military combat when the brutal, absolutist annihilating logic of war overpowers if not completely dominates the life affirming aestheticism of poetry, when "gunfire reverberates in the hills, and when bullets sprout from windows, instead of geraniums" (Ngangom ,"When You Do Not Return", Dancing Earth, 2009, p. 199). Nicholls addresses this incongruous coupling by referring to the therapeutic quality of poetry (p. 12), making the channeling of simmering angst against prolonged warfare possible. Similarly, Easterine Iralu posits the palliative capability of poetic speech as it is "an integral part of the healing of a people's psychological wounds" in "Should Writers Stay in Prison?" (2011, p. 273). James W. Tupper in 1918, corroborates the emotional import of poetry because of its resonance with rhythmic emotional excitement and its emotional expressive ability (p. 445). Yet, the expressiveness of poetry suggests absorption and close involvement with war rather than a belated composed reflection on the conflict. The temporal coordinate of the poetic speech is another parameter that is worth contemplating. While Manipuri poet Robin S. Ngangom admits to the self-reflexiveness of his earlier poetic output in "Poetry in the Time of Terror" (2005), he discusses at length how the violence draws the poet out from within himself and aids him in engaging with the violence in the region head-on. The writer from Northeast, he says "living with the menace of the gun he cannot merely indulge in verbal wizardry or woolly aesthetics but must perforce

master 'the art of witness'" (p. 171). Thus, the seemingly vast divide between violence and aestheticism is traversed in the poetry from Northeast India by writing poetry that is "raw", earthy and engages with the violence in the region instead of resorting to mystical escapism. Mona Zote says in her poem, "What poetry Means to Ernestina in Peril", "Poetry must... drip blood, remind you of sweat/ and dusty slaughter and the epidermal crunch/ and the sudden bullet to the head" (2005, pp. 318-9). However, Ngangom warns against the tendency to confine poetry from the Northeast to "extreme realism" and notes a move towards surrealism in the contemporary Northeastern poetry in India ("Poetry in the Time of Terror" 2005, p. 172). A case in point is R.K. Bhubhonsana's poem "Jatinga" which illustrates the mysterious phenomenon of mass suicide by birds by "hurling themselves/ against the walls" (p. 56) which is then compared to human deaths listed in the newspapers. This poem highlights the absurdity of death in the valley by placing it alongside the inexplicable phenomenon of bird suicide.

Nicholls addresses this incongruous coupling by referring to the therapeutic quality of poetry (p. 12), making the channeling of simmering angst against prolonged warfare possible. James W. Tupper in 1918, corroborates the emotional import of poetry because of its resonance with rhythmic emotional excitement and its emotional expressive ability (p. 445). Yet, the expressiveness of poetry, suggests absorption and close involvement with war rather than a belated composed reflection on the conflict. The temporal coordinate of the poetic speech is another parameter that is worth contemplating.

How can a study of Northeast Indian poetry be read through the lens of warfare when as part of the Indian subcontinent the region has not experienced a war for decades? Would it be amiss to refer to the military occupation of the eight states under the acronym of Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act or AFSPA as a war, with the state and insurgents as the primary combatants? However, Pradip Phanjouman says that, "Curiously, nobody, especially the state, wants to describe it as a war situation either—largely—because war implies conflict between two states" (2013, p. 32) yet Nicholls's words about war mirror that of Gautam Navlakha who refers to the AFSPA as "war against our own people." (2011, p. 24). Regardless of the nomenclature, there is no doubt that the citizens from the Northeast are caught between the crossfire of the militants and the armed forces and to them, this armed conflict disrupts the monotony of everyday

life. Yet military combat encompasses a monotony of its own with periods of peace interspersed with intermittent eruptions of violence. This is evident in the poetry from the Northeast where the armed conflict penetrates the home and becomes part of the everyday. The domestication of war so to speak is seen in "I Want to Be Killed By an Indian Bullet," by Thangjam Ibopishak where the five undisclosed armed men enter the poet's drawing room (p. 133) which can be read as a metaphor for the nation at large or as a cartography of war. War is not taking place in a remote location here but has entered the private space and rudely imposed itself. Yet there is a paradoxical civility in the intrusion of the armed men who choose to have an encounter in the semi-private semi-public space and not the more intimate and relatively private room like the bedroom. This is one of the many antinomies of the conflict. There is a parallel defamiliarization of the humdrum everyday existence to the familiarization or normalization of armed conflict here. "Exposure to death exists as an everyday reality" (Baishya, 2018, pp. 39-40).

Before proceeding to the clash of war activities and biosphere, a brief outline of eco critical theory and practice must be laid out. The etymology of the taxonomy ('eco' derives from the Greek word oikos which means house and 'critical' means judgement) provides an entry point into the discourse. Ecocriticism can be understood as the appraisal of the house or ambient biosphere. The term "Ecocriticism" was first used by Rueckert in his essay 'Literature and Ecology: An experiment in Ecocriticism' where he defined ecocriticism as " application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature" (qtd. Glotfelty & Fromm, p. xviii) Cheryl Glotfelty later redefined it as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" in the introduction to the seminal collection of essays dealing with the same topic, also discussing the reason behind the choice of the term "ecocriticism" instead of "environment studies" since using the term environment places human in the center. An "earth centric" approach de-centers humans from the study of biospheres and does away with anthropocentrism (Glotfelty & Fromm, p. xx).

The interrelationship of Northeast offers fertile ground for eco-critical analysis owing to their intimate association of the inhabitants with their environment and is reflected in various poems and myths including the mythical provenance of the Ao ethnic group of Nagaland from the earth or six stones at Lungterok. In the poem "Stone People from Lungterok" by Temsula Ao, the earth is

feminized and gives birth to the ancestors of the Aos, the Stone people (pp. 1-3). The landscape here does not serve as a mere backdrop for the enactment of human activities but provides a sense of identity to the community (Chandra & Das, 2007, p. v) and anchors them firmly in the terrain. Their bond with the biosphere thus runs as deep as blood, as the community forges ties of kinship with their non-human counterparts in the biosphere.

The Aos, traditionally, have held animistic belief and worshipped "spirits of trees and forests, of stones and rivers…" (Ao, p. 3) showing a reverence for the ecosystem that is now under threat of modernization and urbanization. Besides these two inimical forces, the armed conflict wreaked havoc on the sensitive ecological system, yet the damaging effects of the conflict on the flora and fauna have been sidelined. Easterine Iralu mythicizes the war ecology in the poem "Genesis" tracing the mythic-historical life cycle of the North-Eastern ecosystem constituting of the seven daughters from the times when the "hills were untamed/ her soil young and virgin…The earth had felt good" (p. 139). This was a time of plenty as the earth was "full and rich" and "every evening they (the seven daughters) would return with their baskets overflowing with the yield of the land" ("Genesis", p. 87). The ecological contamination and damage that this pristine and wild ecosystem experienced because of the insurgency is symbolized as the "plague" (Biswas & Thomas, 2012, p. 54) in the poem that "reaped premature harvests of field and men" using her scythe ("Genesis", p. 87). The seven sister's "summer night locks/ grew lank and were shorn" and the rich soil turned into "the dead earth" ("Genesis", p. 88). Here, the forest cover of the states has been personified as a young maiden whose locks are cut. The dense forest cover of the state is usually cleared for the mobility of the state forces and to defoliate the hiding grounds of the insurgents. The "dead earth" could be a result of the usage of landmines in the region which results in the scorched earth, removal of topsoil (Berhe, p. 4), loss of fertility which subsequently impacts the production of forest resources. Studies have also shown the effect of landmines on land degradation and vegetation and discussed how it poses a grave threat to fragile ecosystem and its inhabitants, many of whom are endangered species. The "dead earth" can also be understood as the unresponsiveness or lifelessness of the bio-forms from their earlier mythical animation and sentience. It could also be indicative of the death of endangered animal life inhabiting the biodiversity parks or conservation grounds (which also provide refuge to

insurgents) that get caught in these areas of military skirmishes (Mandal & Sarkar, n.d.). The intensity and magnitude of such detrimental effects of armed conflicts on Northeastern ecology is beyond the scope of this paper, nor can the reversibility of the damage be ascertained. Iralu however, ends the poem on a sanguine note, hinting at the regenerative potential in the biosphere which is depicted as Kelhoukevira or "where life is good" (Biswas & Thomas, pp. 53-54). In "Slumber" roadside shrubs are trampled by both soldiers and "extremists" (2009, p. 181).

The poem "Dawn" by Nirmalprabha Bordoloi suggests the disturbance to the non-human life form especially winged creatures by the sound of gun fire and places this momentary disruption caused by war in the antediluvian history of biosphere, highlighting its incongruence in the temporal framework of life-forms. "Does the day break/ with the sound of guns? / No, / it breaks with the cry/ of that bird..." (p. 73). Gunshots can never signal day breaks like birds have done traditionally, affirms Bordoloi and thus violence can never assimilate ecologically in the region. Although humans seem to have become habituated to the ongoing armed conflict in the states, which can be seen in the matter-of-fact description of life in insurgent states in poems like Thangjam Ibopishak's "I want to be killed by an Indian Bullet" and "Between Bomb Blasts" by Shimanta Bhattacharya. The intermittent silence between the blasts presented in the latter is unnatural for another reason. One expects the alarmed cacophony of birds and animals after the blasts but perhaps the poet or persona's hearing is affected from the proximity to the blasts. Or is it possible, that the birds from the region have migrated to safer grounds away from the din of the battle? The same eerie unearthly silence reappears in "The Right Hour" by Niranjan Chakma: "The hills and valleys are steeped in an infinite silence/ there are interminable tremors now" (p. 77). The tremors, possibly caused by explosions by either the insurgents or army in "the deep forest of Kachalong/ in the deep forest of gunpowder" (p. 77) affirm the earlier hypothesis of the migration of fauna to relatively undisturbed regions.

In "An Obscure Place" Mamang Dai begins by elucidating the "history of our race" voicing the collective anguish of the various ethnic groups of the Northeastern states who "gave shelter to men/ who climbed over our hills/for glory of a homeland" (p. 88). While the identity of these men may be safely established as members of the Indian army, the identity of those who are merely referred to as

"they" who slay the "wild cat" cannot be established. "They" could be poachers or rebels who are hiding under the forest cover and are quite clearly sabotaging the precarious balance of the bioecological system by killing wild animals for profit or because they feel threatened by their proximity. The destruction of forests, for instance, results in the loss of habitat for wildlife, leading to their subsequent extinction. Insurgents often sell animal body parts to fund military operations. While the widespread loss of human life is symbolically depicted through the imagery of blood , the effect on wildlife and vegetation is alluded to indirectly in the poems. Various poems employ objective correlative to mirror the feelings of pain and anguish through cataracts, rain and water bodies.

The poem titled "Dust" by Nini Lungalang captures the same insouciance to violence in the poet as seen in "I Want to Be Killed by and Indian Bullet" and "Between the Bomb Blasts":

I saw a young man gunned down

As I shopped in the market place.

Two thick thuds, and then he fell,

And thrashed a bit, on his face.

That's all. He sprawled in the staring sun. (p. 166)

It also serves as a testament to the theorization of Northeastern poetry as "poetry of witness" (Ngangom, p. 172) realistically recording events from the life of the region. This documentation comes with a sense of immediacy and intimacy, yet paradoxical stoic distanciation as seen in the verses above. The gaze of the poet in these poems is direct and focused on the material reality observed through the visual senses. A different kind of "seeing" occurs in the poem "Genesis" discussed above, where the poet "sees" the contemporaneous violence and conflict through a mythic-historic lens. Once again, there is a distance between the poet and the armed conflict. When this distance is psychological, there is a sense of passivity in the role of the poet as witness who becomes a chronicler of distressing events. In the second case, a three-layered buffering takes place: temporality, myth and poetry. The act of writing poetry too provides a sense of distance from the events and provides time for reflection on the violence. Like Gertrude Stein, these witness poets "see" war through poetry (Nicholls, p. 20)

where it is re-enacted. Certain poems also present a different kind of mediation of armed conflict. News reports like the one in "Jatinga" by Bhubonsana show "men wearing different masks of birds/lay dead on newspaper pages" (p. 55). The different masks here could represent different ethnicity or factions. In "An Obscure Place" Mamang Dai observes, "If there is no death the news is silence" (p. 88). Like the techno mediated wars, wars mediated through newspaper too produce alienation in the readers who feel estranged from the violence. For them death tolls are mere statistics as recorded in the poem "Native Land" by Ngangom as human beings are reduced to numbers:

First came the screams of the dying

in a bad dream, then the radio report,

and a newspaper: six shot dead, twenty-five

houses razed, sixteen beheaded with hands tied

behind their backs inside a church.... (The Poetry in the Time of Terror, p. 54).

Inundated by the incessant death tolls, the people lose their "tenuous humanity" and are rendered insensitive to sympathy.

This paper does not wish to delimit the literary criticism pertaining to the Northeast India to notions of armed conflict or ecology but wishes to present a nuanced understanding of the interrelationship between people, their environment and armed conflict. It was observed that poetry is used as a therapeutic, palliative, documentative and emotive medium in literature from regions of heavy militarization and used to represent the adverse effects of both the insurgency and armed states, as Murasingh remarks in "Slumber" roadside shrubs are trampled by both soldiers and "extremists" (p. 181).

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i. When discussing the necessity of war for the constitution of the state, Nicholls briefly mentions 20th century fiction's paranoia of the conspiracy that "the state is actually at war with its own citizens." "Wars I Have Seen", p. 13.

ii. Naorem Bidyasagar "Blood -smeared Dawn" Dancing Earth"Each of us ordinary citizens/ is a target / of blind bullets / bursting like flame from two directions" (p. 63)

iii. Mandal and Sarkar: "Attempts by the forces of the State to flush the militants out of these parks result in armed conflict, which consequently destroys the environment. For example, trees often have to be felled over the course of the advance of the State forces into these parks."

iv. For instance in "The Right Hour", "bloodstains fresh and dried lie scattered on the ground"(p. 177).

Robin S. Ngangom observes in "Poetry in the Time of Terror", "In contemporary Manipuri poetry, there is a predominance of images of 'bullets', 'blood', 'mother', 'the colour red' and, paradoxically, 'flowers' too." (p. 227)

Ethical Considerations

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Community Conserved Areas in India and Beyond: Histories, Threats, Legal Recognition and Future Directions

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Abstract

Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) represent one of the oldest forms of ecosystem governance, particularly among Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs). In India, CCAs are closely linked to the livelihoods, culture, and traditional practices of Scheduled Tribes (STs), yet remain under-recognized within formal conservation frameworks. This study examines the relationship between CCA extent and ecological, socio-economic, and governance outcomes using a mixed-methods approach that combines a literature review and district-level analysis from Nagaland and Maharashtra. The findings identify an "Efficiency Paradox", where larger conservation areas do not necessarily translate into improved ecological or development outcomes. The study proposes policy directions, including hybrid governance models, strengthening of community rights under existing legal frameworks, and integration of livelihood-based conservation strategies. It argues that effective

conservation in India must be community-driven, context-specific, and rooted in indigenous knowledge systems.

Keywords: *Community conserved areas, Scheduled tribes, Efficiency paradox, Indigenous knowledge systems, Hybrid governance models*

1. Introduction

Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) are locally governed ecosystems managed by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities through customary institutions and traditional practices. In India, these areas are particularly significant due to the close relationship between Scheduled Tribes (STs) and forest ecosystems, where livelihoods, culture, and conservation are deeply interconnected.

Community Conserved Areas (CCAs), internationally referred to as Indigenous Peoples' and Community Conserved Areas and Territories (ICCAs), are rooted in long-standing traditions of environmental stewardship that predate modern Protected Areas (PAs). Indigenous and local communities have historically managed ecosystems through customary laws, sustaining biodiversity alongside livelihoods and cultural practices. In India, this relationship is evident in institutions such as sacred groves and community-managed landscapes, and even early conservation models like the Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary, which originated as a community-protected area.

While similar practices exist globally, ranging from sacred natural sites to multifunctional cultural landscapes, conservation in CCAs has traditionally been embedded within everyday life rather than pursued as an isolated ecological objective. Communities often integrate ecological, economic, and social goals, unlike modern conservation frameworks that tend to separate them. However, despite their historical significance, ICCAs received formal international recognition only in the early 2000s through processes led by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

In the Indian context, CCAs represent a spectrum of community–ecosystem relationships shaped by cultural values, customary governance, and collective rights. Their continued relevance demonstrates that conservation driven by local institutions and traditional practices can contribute to socio-ecological resilience, particularly in the face of biodiversity loss and climate change.

This study is especially relevant for India as it highlights the gap between formal

conservation policies and ground-level realities, where customary institutions, traditional ecological knowledge, and community-based management systems continue to play a crucial role. By focusing on states like Nagaland and Maharashtra, the paper contributes to understanding how decentralized governance, if aligned with legal and economic support, can enhance both conservation and development outcomes in India.

2. Review of Literature

CCAs provide crucial buffer zones that halt the further degradation of ecosystems and the rapid rate of biodiversity loss, often making a significant ecological contribution for relatively low cost when compared with top-down management (Kothari, 2006; Kothari et al., 2013). These initiatives provide critical ecosystem functions such as water security and gene pool maintenance and protect habitats and species (Kothari, 2006). For instance, in Nagaland, many tribal villages protect large areas of forest and wildlife, with over 100 villages, such as Khonoma, managing several thousand hectares of land and prohibiting hunting (Pathak, 2006; Pathak Broome & Taraporevala, 2010; Stevens et al., 2024). This village-based management conserves globally and regionally threatened species such as the Blyth's tragopan (Tragopan blythii), the Asiatic black bear (Ursus thibetanus), and the spotted linsang (Prionodon pardicolor) (Pathak, 2006; Pathak Broome, & Taraporevala, 2010). Likewise, in Assam, villages such as Shankar Ghola manage forests with the endemic, threatened golden langur (Trachypithecus geei), helping to stabilize populations (Pathak, 2006; Pathak Broome & Taraporevala, 2010). Coastal villages in states such as Orissa and Kerala oppose environmentally destructive sand mining and fishing to protect wildlife habitat, as fisherfolk protect sea turtle nesting beaches at Rushikulya and Kolavipaalam for the olive ridley turtle (Lepidochelys olivacea) (Pathak, 2006; Pathak Broome, & Taraporevala, 2010). Moreover, CCAs often occur in clusters or corridors, creating important ecological "stepping stones" between formal PAs, which are essential for facilitating animal and gene flow and complement landscape-level conservation strategies (Kothari, 2006; Pathak Broome, & Taraporevala, 2010; Vaz, 2013).

For communities in India, CCAs serve as vital security measures for cultural preservation, political mobilization, and socio-economic sustenance, helping prevent social and economic degradation, often worsened by resource depletion

and externalization (Kothari, 2006). CCAs ensure long-term access to basic resources (food, water, energy, and fodder) required for livelihoods (Kothari, 2006; Pathak Broome, & Taraporevala, 2010; Vaz, 2013). Conservation efforts often lead to poverty alleviation, income generation, and self-reliance, thereby embedding the motivation for future sustainable use within the community itself (Kothari, 2006; Pathak Broome, & Taraporevala, 2010). In Maharashtra, the Gond tribe of Mendha (Lekha) initiated the process of declaring and subsequently controlling 1,800 hectares of forest, which has ensured steady income for community members, created year-round employment, and enabled political empowerment through self-governance (Pathak Broome & Taraporevala, 2010; Pathak, 2006). In Uttarakhand, the ancient Van Panchayats (village councils for forests) also manage large, high-elevation forest and pasturelands. In contrast, villages such as Jardhargaon, through forest regeneration, re-established many crop species (Pathak Broome, & Taraporevala, 2010). CCAs also provide a sense of unity and community, in contrast to external factors which can cause alienation (Kothari, 2006). But this can be undermined by inequities within the community, where social injustices and existing hierarchies (e.g., gender, caste, land-ownership) may lead to power struggles and domination by a few over resource management, which may hinder conservation or result in inequitable distribution of benefits (Kothari, 2006; Sengupta et al., 2025; Pathak Broome & Taraporevala, 2010).

A defining feature of CCAs in India is their deep connection with the traditional practices and cultural systems of Scheduled Tribes (STs). Tribal communities have historically governed natural resources through customary laws, sacred beliefs, and collective decision-making systems. Practices such as sacred groves (Orans, Devrais), seasonal hunting bans, rotational farming (jhum cultivation), and protection of water sources reflect a strong conservation ethic embedded within cultural traditions.

For instance, in Nagaland, village councils regulate hunting and forest use through customary norms, while in central India, Gond and Baiga tribes follow spiritual restrictions on forest exploitation. These practices not only conserve biodiversity but also ensure intergenerational sustainability. However, modernization, market pressures, and the weakening of traditional institutions are eroding these systems. Recognizing and integrating ST knowledge systems into formal policy frameworks is therefore essential for the long-term

sustainability of CCAs in India.

While existing literature highlights the ecological and socio-cultural importance of CCAs, most studies remain descriptive or localized. Limited attention has been given to the relationship between conservation scale, governance efficiency, and socio-economic outcomes. This creates a gap in understanding whether larger conservation areas necessarily lead to better development and ecological results, particularly in the Indian context.

2.1 The Essential Role of Laws and Policies in Securing CCAs

The viability of CCAs, especially in the face of major external pressures such as resource grabbers and commercial interests, destructive development initiatives, and other threats, is ultimately determined by policy and law recognition (Kothari, 2006; Pathak Broome, & Taraporevala, 2010). India has numerous informal CCAs operating under customary law, but key national and state laws provide opportunities for formalization and recognition.

India's approach to conservation has historically been exclusionary, involving the demarcation of "Protected Areas" (PAs) under State control, based on colonial ideas of nature conservation (About Community Conserved Areas; Pathak, 2009). India is thought to have the largest number of CCAs in the region, but these largely informal initiatives are often ignored, unsupported, and even threatened within the formal system (Pathak, 2006; Kothari, 2006; Saigal, 2013). CCAs are typically based on customary law and practice and may lack statutory support in national laws and may even be opposed by "hostile" laws (Kothari, 2006; Pathak, 2006). While legal avenues for community conservation have been opened up since the early 2000s, they are limited by their design (Saigal, 2013):

• **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (WLPA):** Amendments created Community Reserves (CRs) and Conservation Reserves (Saigal, 2013). But CRs typically apply only to private land, leaving out most CCAs, which are on government land (Pathak, 2006; Pathak, 2009; Pathak Broome & Taraporevala, 2010). It also prescribes a one-size-fits-all management institution, which is at odds with the diversity of local governance (Pathak, 2006; Pathak, 2009). This "one size fits all" approach is viewed with suspicion by communities as it may

lead to greater government intervention (Kothari, 2006; Pathak, 2006; Pathak, 2009).

- **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA):** This Act offers an important opportunity through the category of Community Forest Resource (CFR), which offers legal support for forested CCAs (Saigal, 2013; Pathak Broome & Taraporevala, 2010). The ambit of this category enables local communities to legally secure their forests (Pathak, 2009; Pathak Broome, & Taraporevala, 2010).
- **Biological Diversity Act, 2002 (BDA):** Although it creates categories such as Biodiversity Heritage Sites (BHS), recent amendments to Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) appear to undermine community rights. Some organizations using codified traditional knowledge or medicinal plants cultivated are now exempt from the prior community consent and benefit-sharing requirements for commercial use (Joshi et al., 2025).

A major limitation is insecure tenure. Most reported CCAs are found on public lands (Pathak, 2009). Along with the absence of political support, this makes CCAs susceptible to threats from development, mining, or land grabbers (Kothari, 2006; Pathak, 2009; Pathak Broome & Taraporevala, 2010).

CCAs play a vital role in ecological and human security, as well as the Millennium Development Goals on poverty reduction and environmental sustainability (Kothari, 2006; Pathak, 2006). Climate-wise, CCAs ensure the provision of essential ecosystem services for adaptation (Kothari, 2006). For example, Nagaland has more than 700 known CCAs spanning more than 1,700 km2 that are critical for carbon storage (Edake et al., 2015).

CCAs are extremely financially vulnerable (Saigal, 2013). Financing is generally small and intermittent, limiting management activities (Saigal, 2013; Cumming et al., 2021). The costs of management (time, labor, village guards, compensation for opportunity costs) are often internalized as part of livelihoods or cultural practices (Kothari, 2006; Pathak, 2009). The narrow funding base (government schemes, corporate donations (CSR), or multilateral projects) and vulnerability to global economic crises make CCAs vulnerable to disruptions (Saigal, 2013; Cumming et al., 2021). The absence of secure funding curbs sustainable community conservation efforts (Saigal, 2013; Cumming et al., 2021).

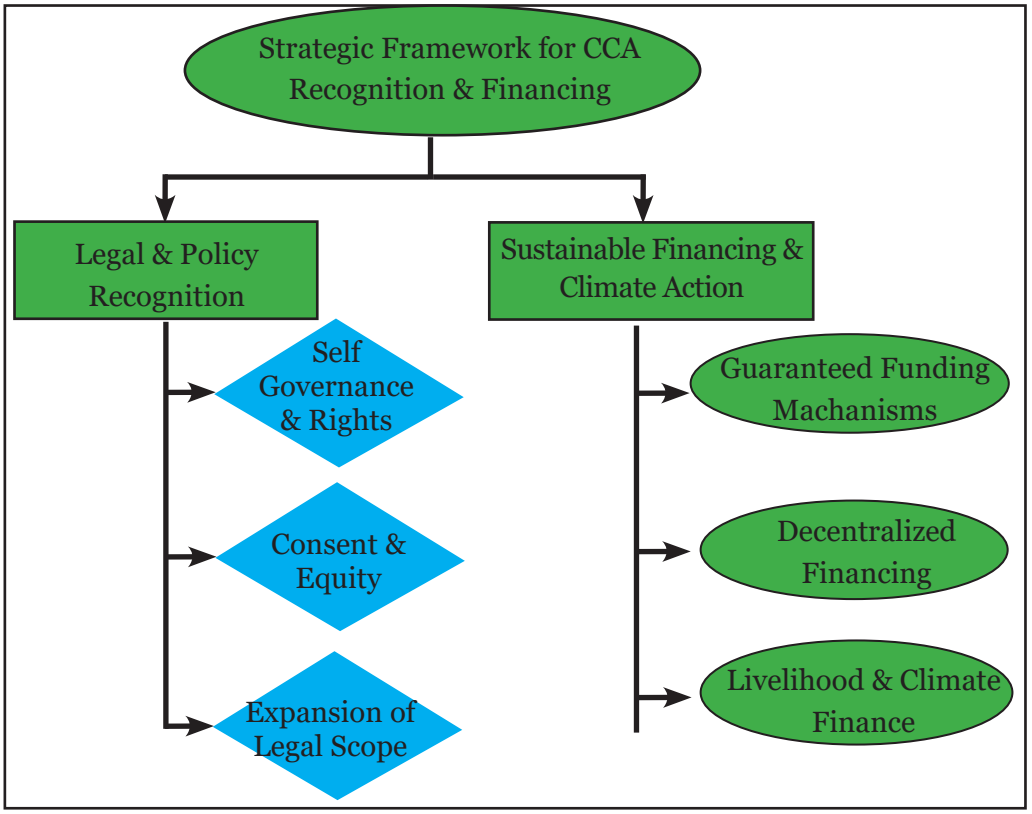
2.2 Proposal for Legal Recognition and Sustainable Financing

To harness CCAs for conservation and climate adaptation, a careful strategy that emphasizes legal certainty, community control, and long-term financial commitments is crucial (Saigal, 2013; Kothari, 2006).

Legal and Policy Recognition

Figure 1

Strategic Framework for CCA: Recognition & Financing



Policy reforms should focus on recognizing CCAs in accordance with custodians' desires and rights, ensuring a mutually beneficial partnership (Saigal, 2013; Stevens et al., 2024).

1. Recognizing Self-Governance and Rights: Legal frameworks must recognize IPs and LCs' rights to self-govern and manage their lands using their own institutions and practices (Stevens et al., 2024). This should involve embracing political and legal pluralism, rather than state-centered policies (Kothari, 2006).

2. Resolving Inequities and Consent: Policy should require Free-Prior-Informed Consent (FPIC) for the formalisation of self-declared CCAs (Saigal, 2013; Stevens et al., 2024). Recognition should preserve the institutional autonomy of CCAs (including the right to retain customary law) (Stevens et al., 2024).

3. Expanding Legal Options: Governments must address inconsistencies between conservation legislation and laws on rights and legally recognize existing (unofficial) CCAs and those that want to become formal (Saigal, 2013). This includes enabling the recognition of existing CCAs as PAs governed by IPs and LCs, if they are willing to do so, which may involve transferring or devolving governance (Stevens et al., 2024).

- **Sustainable Financing and Climate Action:** Long-term and secure funding is needed to cover the costs of conservation and build resilience (Cumming et al., 2021).

1. Secure Funding Mechanisms: Suitable financial mechanisms with government and other funding are needed for formal and informal CCAs (Saigal, 2013). This mechanism should include a full costing of conservation and management, and the opportunity costs to the community (Saigal, 2013).

2. Independent Financial Control: CCAs should be able to receive funds, which should be managed by the communities themselves, thus allowing them to receive support when needed (Pathak, 2009).

3. Livelihood and Climate Finance: Assistance should enable local enterprises that balance ecological and economic benefits, improving communities' socio-economic status (Saigal, 2013; Vaz, 2013). Also, CCAs should be connected to climate finance, with planning that includes India's 2030 targets under the Paris Agreement, furthermore CCAs should also be supported through fair distribution of economic benefits from PAs or other projects associated with CCAs (Stevens et al., 2024).

CCAs, which conserve biodiversity and hold carbon in perpetuity, can deliver vital social, economic, and cultural benefits through legal sanctity and secure financing, thereby bolstering their role in achieving national biodiversity conservation objectives and climate change adaptation (Saigal, 2013; Stevens et al., 2024).

2.3 CCA Case Studies: Lessons from the Indian and Global context to define an ideal CCA

Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) come in many forms, depending on who holds the rights to them and how they are conserved. In India and other parts of the World, conservation can take place through legal mechanisms, including Conservation Reserves, Community Reserves, Biodiversity Heritage Sites, and Community Forest Resource (CFR) areas. These examples demonstrate varying degrees of community participation, from consultative to ownership and control. In addition, many fields also adhere to informal systems of conservation based on heritage, culture, and communal regulations.

These systems are often effective CCAs because communities can protect nature without regulation, often more effectively than legal processes. With this knowledge of different forms of conservation organizations, we can understand the effectiveness of the three case studies of CCAs as good, practical examples of environmental and biological conservation and as effective means to address climate change.

Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) come in many forms around the World. Still, they all demonstrate a vital idea: when people who depend on nature are in charge of protecting it, conservation is strengthened. The set of examples draws on examples from Nagaland, Rajasthan, and Tanzania to demonstrate the effectiveness of CCAs in conserving and protecting natural resources. Cases were selected to illustrate how CCAs work across different settings, including coastal areas, hilly forests, and arid and savanna woodlands. These examples demonstrate that CCAs are effective because of both ecological approaches and cultural, historical governance, as well as community accountability. Organized around a basic structure of location, governance, conservation, results, and challenges to highlight the success of CCAs.

2.4 Global Perspectives on CCAs: Observing Ecological and Governance Approaches

Tanzania, which has community-based conservation areas in savanna and forest ecosystems, is home to wildlife such as elephants, zebras, and large predators. These areas are threatened by poaching, agricultural encroachment, and droughts caused by climate change. In Tanzania, CCAs are part of a formal governance structure that allows local communities to create Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and work with the government to manage them. Village assemblies set up committees to formulate land-use plans, establish grazing controls, and determine the locations of wildlife corridors and buffer areas. Critical conservation actions include anti-poaching patrols, grazing management, habitat protection, and collaboration with eco-tourism enterprises. These measures show promising results: wildlife populations remain stable or increase, communities receive income from tourism, and forests and grasslands are enhanced for carbon storage. WMAs reduce human-wildlife conflicts by zoning and providing buffer zones. However, Tanzania faces challenges such as inter-community land-related conflicts, limited funding, and disparities in benefits in some regions. Droughts are exacerbated by climate change, which causes water and pasture shortages.

The Tanzania example demonstrates that with rights, incentives, and support, conservation is successful in large, complex landscapes. Tanzania's Makame Savannah program in a Wildlife Management Area (WMA) protects 364,322 hectares of the woodlands, a home to the Masai people, and prevents ~ 130,000 tonnes of CO_2 emissions annually by preventing deforestation. The community has been grazing livestock in the Rift Valley for 2,000 years and still enjoys this traditional livelihood in wildlife-rich forests. The community depends on its livestock to survive in this unpredictable environment, whilst also providing habitat for wildlife. Engagement with the Masai will create community-level land management plans that will use seasonal pastures to raise their livestock.

2.5 Indian Perspectives on CCAs: Comparing Ecological and Governance Approaches

The hilly state of Nagaland, situated in the northeast of India, is blessed with dense forests, high rainfall, and rich biodiversity. The ecology of Nagaland includes tropical and subtropical forests that host a variety of flora, fauna,

and avifauna, as well as insects. The state is unique in that more than 90% of it is owned and managed by communities under customary law. Decisions on land use, forest and wildlife conservation, and hunting are made at the village council, clan, and tribal levels. Communities decide on which forests are "reserved" (forbidding cutting trees and hunting) and which are "managed" (allowing sustainable practices).

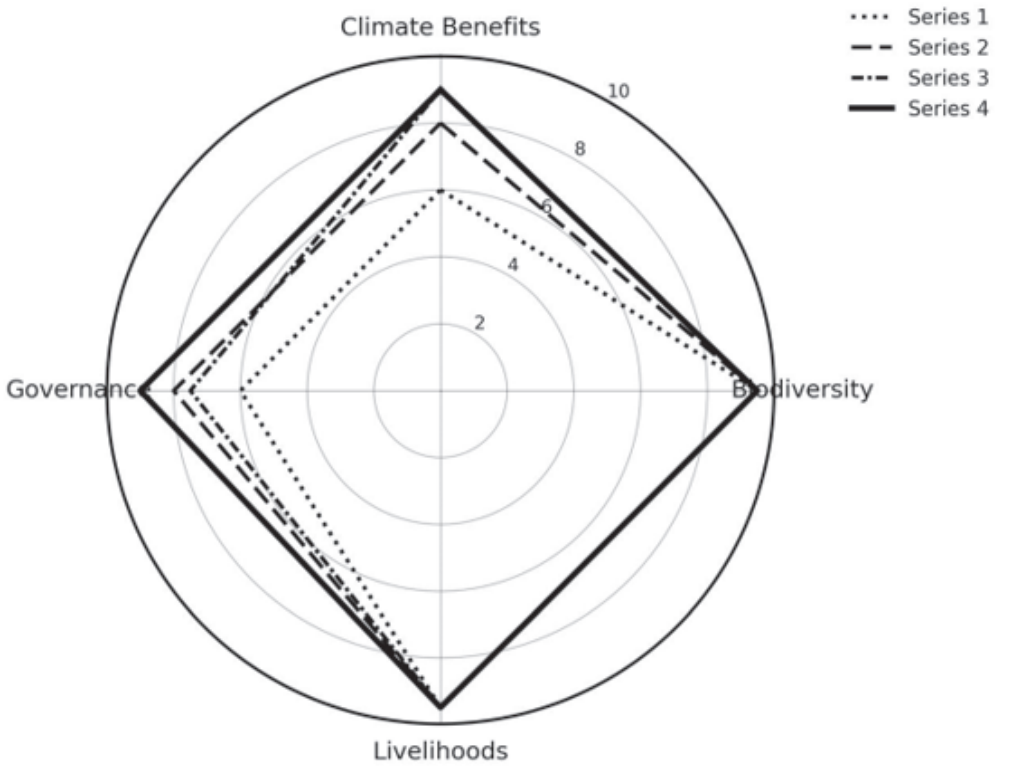
Key conservation measures include bans on hunting certain species, protection of forests that provide watershed services, local forest monitoring patrols, and restrictions on wood harvesting. These have led to strong signs of success, such as vast forest tracts remaining preserved, wildlife populations recovering from hunting bans, and springs and streams protected by maintaining forest canopy (TERI reports ~678,135 tonnes of carbon sequestered annually in 407 CCAs). The forests' carbon sequester helps to mitigate climate change, and healthy watersheds support agriculture and water supply.

Nagaland has faced various challenges with development, road construction, and shifting political alliances. Young people sometimes stray from traditional practices, and external markets could impact wood harvesting. However, Nagaland is one of the most successful community-based conservation success stories, demonstrating that community ownership can enhance biodiversity and improve climate resilience. Rajasthan, where sacred groves, known as Orans or Devrais, play a key role in biodiversity conservation in a harsh arid environment. Rajasthan's ecosystems include dry and semi-dry regions where life is sustained by scant rainfall, robust vegetation, and traditional water conservation. In such areas, sacred groves are maintained as cultural or religious spaces, often dedicated to local deities or ancestral deities. These areas are governed by informal rules, enforced by elders or temple committees. Even without specific regulations, it is usually forbidden to cut down trees, graze animals, and collect firewood in these groves. Conservation strategies include rigorous protection of mature trees, grasslands, and water bodies (ponds or springs) within the groves. As a result, sacred groves exhibit numerous indicators of success: they serve as biodiversity refuges in arid zones, sheltering birds, medicinal plants, and pollinators (Robinson & Makupa, 2015). They store carbon in old trees with considerable biomass and help prevent soil erosion in vulnerable areas. They protect water recharge zones, which are important for villages' water supply. Among the challenges are encroachment, urbanization,

and changing cultural perceptions among the youth. Without legal recognition, many groves face threats from development projects. As the sacred groves of Rajasthan demonstrate, when coupled with community ownership, ecosystems can be preserved amid water scarcity and climate change.

Figure 2

Comparative Effectiveness of CCAs across four regions



3. An Analysis of Institutional, Legal, and Societal Failures in Community Conserved Areas

One of the key factors affecting CCA sustainability is the lack of tenure security over conservation lands (Pathak et al., 2009). Most reported CCAs in India

are located on government land; a product of colonial forest nationalisation policies that expropriated local forests and converted them into government property (Sundar, 2000; Kothari et al., 1996). Communities have de facto rights to manage their lands, based on customs and long-term occupation, but not de jure rights to own property or have constitutionally protected rights to access (Sarin, 2001). This legal-institutional set-up allows governments to allocate lands for development, commercial use, or other forms of conservation without community approval, compensation or consultation (Agarwal & Narain, 1989).

Ownership issues are exacerbated at community levels. Individual householders can own land within CCAs through personal or clan property rights; however, common property control vests with village councils or conservation committees (Bhatt et al., 2012). This creates problematic ownership scenarios leading to conflicts. Private landowners increasingly assert timber harvesting rights, pasture conversion, or cultivation for cash crops, and community institutions must either condone or sanction this behavior, thereby destroying interpersonal relations (Pathak, 2009). The demand that communities forego benefits from timber production that government agencies and private companies are allowed to harvest from nearby forests is increasingly felt as unfair by resource-dependent households (Kothari et al., 2000).

3.1 Internal Inequities and Socio-Economic Marginalization

CCA sustainability depends on overcoming socioeconomic disparities (Pathak et al., 2009). Power in decision-making is usually concentrated in elite social groups (men as household heads, landowners, upper castes, and long-term community residents). In contrast, women, landless households, scheduled castes, and new migrants are sidelined or excluded from management committees and decision-making (Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2004). This hierarchical decision-making model is especially problematic for conservation sustainability because excluded groups have no stake in conservation efforts (Kasbekar et al., 2024).

Women, who are often deeply knowledgeable about medicinal plants, sustainable harvesting, and resource availability, are under-represented in management committees (Kothari et al., 1996). Conservation committees in Nagaland villages are exclusively or predominantly male, despite women's traditional

involvement in agriculture and resource management (Pathak et al., 2016)). Landless families, who depend on common property resources for subsistence, are unable to participate in decision-making regarding the creation of use restrictions and harvesting policies (Pathak, 2009). This leads to misalignments in conservation rules and those impacted by resource constraints.

Conservation rules have disproportionate opportunity costs for economically disadvantaged households (Bhatt et al., 2012). Poorer farmers can't afford to forego land conversion for forest cover; poorer pastoralists can't afford to lose income from livestock grazing; poorer households can't afford to lose hunting or logging income that other households can lose (Pathak et al., 2009). The opportunity costs of conservation - through time lost patrolling, establishing boundaries, resolving conflicts, and maintaining foregone use - are disproportionately borne by those with least disposable income (Agarwal & Narain, 1989). It leads to resentment, incentive to cheat, and social division, especially when state or other external actors benefit from conservation but do not bear equal costs (Kothari et al., 2000).

3.2 Deficiencies in Economic Sustainability and Livelihood Protection

A common shortcoming of CCAs in South Asia is a lack of integration between conservation and livelihoods (Pathak, 2009; Bhatt et al., 2012). For many resource-extracting communities, there are basic conflicts between conservation and livelihoods (Pathak et al., 2016). Without alternative livelihood opportunities that deliver a similar return on investment, enforcement of ban on hunting, timber harvesting, or fishing is economically unviable for people experiencing poverty (Kasbekar et al., 2024). Nagaland communities are aware of declining wildlife and deforestation but continue to overexploit them due to the lack of market mechanisms, alternative livelihoods, and government livelihood schemes (Pathak et al., 2016). Conservation cannot rely on ecological knowledge when subsistence livelihoods are restricted.

Nagaland's shrinking jhum (shifting cultivation) cycles are an example of livelihood-induced degradation that communities cannot avoid (Pathak et al., 2016). A sustainable jhum cycle with 15-20 years of fallow periods has given way to three-to-five years of fallow due to demographic pressures and land scarcity (Bhatt et al., 2012). Communities are aware of ecological impacts but

face unsolvable livelihood maths: longer fallows mean less cultivable land per household in set boundaries (Pathak et al., 2016). Conservation entailing ongoing livelihood deprivation becomes socially and economically unviable (Pathak et al., 2009). The majority of CCAs in South Asia lack sufficient livelihood options, rendering conservation rules ineffective and unsustainable (Bhatt et al., 2012).

3.3 Challenges in Oversight, Enforcement, and Execution

Many CCAs have insufficient resources for ecological monitoring and management (Kasbekar et al., 2024). Detailed biodiversity assessment, population trend analysis, and impact assessment require skills, resources, and regular data gathering, which may be unaffordable for poor communities (Fikret et al., 2000). Thus, CCAs often lack basic data on conservation effectiveness, restricting adaptive management and trust in the need for conservation among local communities (Pathak, 2009). Regulation enforcement is also difficult and demands ongoing organizational commitment, funding, and community harmony, which fade over time as initial excitement subsides and tensions arise (Bhatt et al., 2012).

4. Data and Research Methodology

The present research uses a mixed-methods approach to explore the relationship between the extent of community conserved area (CCA) and ecological, socio-economic, and governance indicators in some districts of Maharashtra and Nagaland. Original data on CCA area and numbers were obtained from the Community Conserved Areas Consortium (CCAC), an international network that maps areas conserved by Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Ecological indicators, such as forest cover, were sourced from Global Forest Watch and the State of Forest Reports published by the Forest Survey of India. Socio-economic indicators, including poverty, were obtained from the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) reports prepared by NITI Aayog and from Census of India data. Literacy indicators were also derived from Census data and district-level portals. Governance and social inclusion indicators were compiled from the Maharashtra District Good Governance Index, the Nagaland Vision 2030 policy document, and reports from government agencies, research institutions, and non-governmental organizations.

Data were sourced from official government portals, research institutions such

as Azim Premji University and the Indian Institute of Human Development, and civil society organizations such as Kalpavriksh. These data were standardized across the period 2011–2024 to ensure comparability.

The study employs descriptive statistics for district-level aggregation, time-series analysis for forest cover, poverty, and literacy indicators, and comparative qualitative analysis to assess governance efficiency. Triangulation and limited data interpolation techniques were used to address gaps in the dataset.

The states selected for this study are Nagaland and Maharashtra due to the presence of Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) and their contrasting governance and socio-economic contexts. The study is designed to compare districts with relatively high and low CCA area-to-number ratios, enabling a representative subset analysis across ecological, socio-economic, and governance parameters.

The districts selected for analysis include Peren and Gadchiroli (representing high CCA area contexts) and Dimapur and Sindhudurg (representing relatively lower CCA area contexts) in Nagaland and Maharashtra, respectively.

Table 1

Distribution of CCAs across districts in Maharashtra

District	Number of CCAs	Area (hectares)
Gadchiroli	32	45,000
Other districts	150	25,000
Ratnagiri	25	12,000
Pune	18	8,500
Satara	15	6,500
Sindhudurg	12	5,000
Total (Maharashtra)	252	102,000

Source: Community Conserved Areas (ICCA Consortium) and Kalpavriksh

Table 2

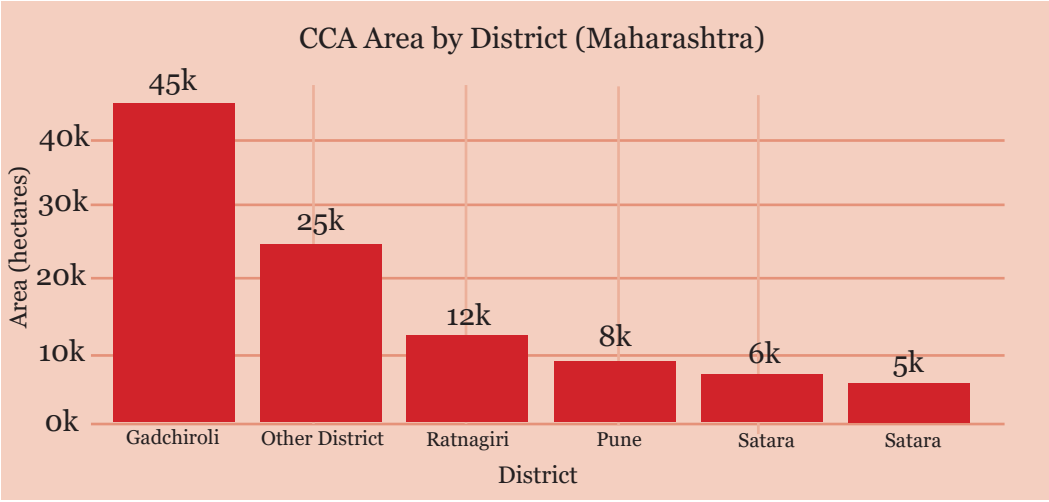
Distribution of CCAs across districts in Nagaland

District	Number of CCAs	Area (hectares)
Peren	74	25,000
Mon	69	22,000
Phek	66	18,500
Wokha	47	15,000
Zunheboto	40	12,000
Kohima	28	8,000
Tuensang	24	8,000
Mokokchung	20	7,000
Konyak/Longgleng	15	6,000
Dimapur	15	5,000
Other districts	10	5,500
Total (Nagaland)	408	132,000

Source: Community Conserved Areas (ICCA Consortium) and Kalpavriksh

Figure 3

CCA Area District-wise in Maharashtra and Nagaland



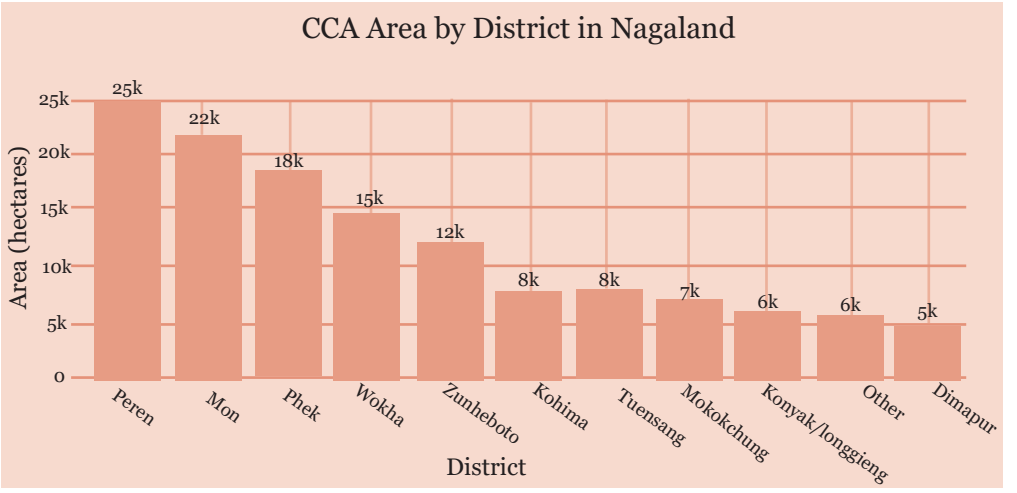
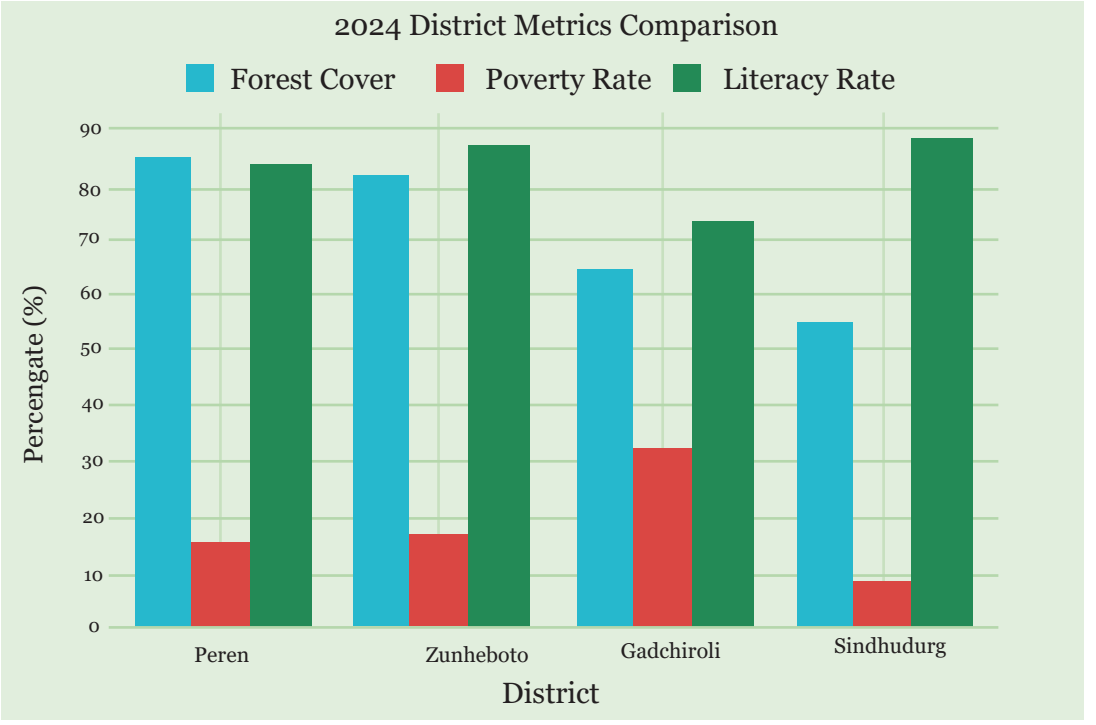


Figure 4

Metrics Comparison - Nagaland vs Maharashtra Districts (2024)



Findings

These patterns underscore that extensive CCA areas do not necessarily yield improved socio-economic and ecological outcomes unless supported by strong governance systems and diversified livelihood opportunities. Districts with better inclusion, education, and institutional capacity tend to perform better across indicators, as observed in Zunheboto and Sindhudurg.

Nagaland districts such as Peren and Zunheboto exhibit relatively higher forest cover and literacy levels, along with comparatively lower poverty rates over time. However, certain ecological pressures, such as declining forest cover in Zunheboto, remain a concern.

In contrast, Gadchiroli in Maharashtra, despite having a large CCA area, continues to experience high poverty levels and forest degradation. Sindhudurg, despite a smaller CCA extent, performs relatively better on literacy and socio-economic indicators, supported by diversified livelihoods and improving governance structures.

Table 3

Comparison of CCA under Nagaland and Maharashtra

Aspect	Nagaland High Area (Peren)	Nagaland Low Area (Zunheboto)	Maharashtra High Area (Gadchiroli)	Maharashtra Low Area (Sindhudurg)
Forest Conservation	Stable or slight gain in the forest, strong community control	High forest cover but under threat	Declining forest cover, encroach-ment issues	Mixed forest trends; coastal forest under some pressure
Socio-Economic Status	Moderate poverty, improving literacy	Slightly better literacy, ongoing social efforts	High poverty, low literacy, tribal distress	Moderate poverty, better literacy, livelihoods diversified

Governance & Inclusion	Village governance, progressing inclusion	Strong community governance needs more inclusive education	Governance challenges; poor scheme implementation	Improving governance, active NGO presence
CCA Area vs Metrics	Larger CCA area with effective community conservation, slower but steady socio-economic progress	Smaller area but higher literacy; social inclusion gaps	Largest area but with greater socio-economic and governance challenges	Smaller area with somewhat better socio-economic and governance indicators

The Efficiency Paradox:

The analysis indicates that CCA extent shows a weak or negative relationship with development outcomes per unit area. Governance quality has a stronger influence on conservation and development outcomes than the physical extent of CCAs. This study conceptualizes this as the "Efficiency Paradox," where an increase in conservation area does not proportionately translate into improved ecological or socio-economic outcomes, thereby challenging conventional area-based conservation strategies.

Three CCA Patterns Recognized:

- **Subsistence–Security (Nagaland):** Traditional governance combined with moderate CCA extent supports relatively strong forest and poverty outcomes.
- **Rights–Recognition (Gadchiroli):** Formal rights combined with a large CCA extent produce limited outcomes in the absence of livelihood diversification.
- **Resilience–Integration (Sindhudurg):** Smaller CCAs combined

with diversified livelihoods and stronger governance produce relatively better outcomes.

Governance Diversity:

CCAs perform more effectively when institutional design is tailored to local contexts, including customary tribal governance systems, decentralized arrangements, and capacity-building interventions in vulnerable regions.

Development Integration:

CCAs in isolation are insufficient. Complementary investments in education, markets, and institutional capacity are essential for achieving sustainable conservation and socio-economic outcomes.

Theoretical Contribution:

The study challenges linear, area-based conservation approaches. It supports polycentric institutional frameworks, particularly those associated with Elinor Ostrom, emphasizing that CCAs are context-specific institutional arrangements embedded in local socio-economic systems.

5. Policy Suggestions

Based on the empirical findings and comparative analysis in this study, it is evident that the effectiveness of Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) in India depends less on their physical extent and more on governance quality, tenure security, and livelihood integration. Therefore, policy interventions must move beyond conventional conservation approaches and adopt a context-specific, community-centered framework.

First, there is a need to legally strengthen tenure security under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, particularly through the effective implementation of Community Forest Resource (CFR) rights. Without secure land tenure, communities lack the incentive to invest in long-term conservation.

Second, policy must promote hybrid governance models in which state institutions support rather than replace traditional systems. In regions like Nagaland, where customary institutions are strong, policies should formally recognize village councils and tribal governance structures as legitimate conservation authorities.

Third, conservation policies must integrate livelihood diversification strategies, especially in economically vulnerable regions such as Gadchiroli. This includes promoting non-timber forest produce (NTFP) value chains, eco-tourism, and small-scale forest-based enterprises. Conservation cannot succeed in isolation from economic realities.

Fourth, there is a need to institutionalize benefit-sharing mechanisms that ensure communities directly receive economic returns from conservation efforts, including through carbon markets, biodiversity credits, and ecosystem service payments.

Fifth, targeted capacity building for tribal youth should be prioritized. Training local communities as para-ecologists, forest monitors, and biodiversity data collectors can bridge the gap between traditional knowledge and scientific management.

Finally, policy must explicitly recognize and protect Scheduled Tribe (ST) cultural practices and traditional ecological knowledge systems as integral to conservation. Rather than viewing them as informal or outdated, these systems should be embedded within formal governance frameworks.

In conclusion, India's conservation future lies not in expanding protected areas alone, but in strengthening community-led conservation through rights-based, inclusive, and economically viable approaches.

5.1 Hybrid Governance and Co-Management Systems

Governance conflicts remain a major challenge across CCAs, particularly due to the disconnect between customary institutions and formal conservation laws. Evidence from multiple studies highlights recurring tensions between community practices and state regulations related to hunting, forest use, and development control.

These conflicts often hinder effective conservation by creating uncertainty, weakening community trust, and leading to inconsistent policy implementation. A viable solution lies in adopting hybrid governance models based on co-management, where state support complements community leadership.

International experiences demonstrate that co-management arrangements—where communities and state agencies jointly design management plans, zoning

systems, and monitoring frameworks—can improve ecological outcomes while preserving customary norms.

In the Indian context, this can be operationalized by strengthening implementation of the Forest Rights Act, integrating CCAs into biodiversity governance frameworks, and formalizing community-led management plans. Such approaches can reduce conflicts, enhance clarity in resource-use rules, and ensure that conservation responsibilities are shared between the state and communities.

Hybrid governance thus provides legal recognition and administrative support while preserving the autonomy and cultural integrity of CCAs.

5.2 Digital Tools for Mapping, Monitoring, and Recognition

A major limitation in the governance of CCAs is the lack of systematic documentation and mapping, which increases the risk of misrecognition and land-use change. Digital technologies offer significant potential to address these gaps.

Participatory GIS mapping enables communities to document boundaries, sacred groves, wildlife corridors, and seasonal resource-use areas, thereby strengthening tenure claims and improving spatial planning. Mobile-based biodiversity applications and community monitoring platforms can support real-time data collection and enhance local participation in conservation.

In addition, remote sensing technologies can assist in monitoring deforestation, encroachments, and forest degradation, enabling timely intervention. Integrating such data into national and global platforms, including ICCA registries, can enhance visibility, improve policy recognition, and strengthen community claims.

These tools help bridge traditional ecological knowledge with modern scientific approaches, enabling more adaptive, transparent, and evidence-based conservation practices.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that, in the Indian context, Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) function not merely as ecological spaces but as socio-cultural systems embedded within the practices of Scheduled Tribes and local

communities. The findings challenge the conventional assumption that larger conservation areas necessarily produce better outcomes, instead identifying an "Efficiency Paradox" in which governance quality, institutional diversity, and livelihood integration play a more decisive role than spatial extent.

In a country like India, where forest-dependent populations are substantial, effective conservation requires a shift from centralized, top-down approaches to community-led, rights-based frameworks. Strengthening tenure security, recognizing traditional institutions, and aligning conservation with local economic realities are essential for sustaining both ecological and social outcomes.

CCAs thus offer a viable pathway for achieving biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and inclusive development. However, their success depends on policy frameworks that are context-sensitive, institutionally inclusive, and grounded in indigenous knowledge systems. The future of conservation lies not in expanding protected areas alone, but in empowering the communities that have sustained these ecosystems over generations.

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Ethical Considerations

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