Vol.16 No.3 July - September 2023 [Private Circulation only] ISSN 2349 - 0241

The Urban World

Quarterly Publication

Regional Centre for Urban and Environmental Studies
All India Institute of Local Self-Government, Mumbai

Regional Centre for Urban & Environmental Studies (RCUES), Mumbai

(Supported by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India)

Established in 1926, the All India Institute of Local Self Government (AIILSG), India is a premier autonomous research and training institution in India. The Institute was recognized as an Educational Institution by Government of Maharashtra in the year 1971. The Institute offers several regular training courses in urban development management and municipal administration, which are recognized by the Government of India and several State Governments in India.

In the year 1968, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), earlier Ministry of Urban Development), Government of India (GoI) established the Regional Centre for Urban & Environmental Studies (RCUES) at AIILSG, Mumbai to undertake urban policy research, technical advisory services, and building work capabilities of municipal officials and elected members from the States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and UTs of Diu, Daman, Dadra & Nagar Haveli. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), Government of India added States of Assam and Tripura from February, 2012 and Lakshadweep from August 2017 to the domain of RCUES of AIILSG, Mumbai. The RCUES is supported by the MoHUA, Government of India. The MoHUA, Government of India has formed National Review and Monitoring Committee for RCUES under the chairmanship of the Secretary, MoHUA, Government of India. The Principal Secretary, Urban Development Department, Government of Maharashtra is the ex-officio Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the RCUES, Mumbai, which is constituted by MoHUA, Government of India.

The RCUES was recognized by the MoHUA, Government of India as a National Training Institute (NTI) to undertake capacity building of project functionary, municipal officials, and municipal elected members under the earlier urban poverty alleviation programme-UBSP. The RCUES was also recognized as a Nodal Resource Centre on SJSRY (NRCS) and Nodal Resource Centre (NRC) for RAY by then the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India.

The then Ministry of Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation (MoUE&PA), GoI and UNDP have set up the 'National Resource Centre for Urban Poverty' (NRCUP), which is anchored by RCUES at AIILSG, Mumbai.

AIILSG, Mumbai is empaneled by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India, for providing technical support to the ULBs in the field of water supply, sanitation, sewerage and drainage systems. RCUES, Mumbai is also identified as a technical service provider in Municipal Solid Waste Management projects under Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) launched by the MoHUA, GoI.

Over the years, RCUES of AIILSG Mumbai has been working in close coordination with state and local Governments to provide strategic, advisory, technical and capacity building support for assessment and improvement in infrastructure service delivery in cities.

Maharashtra Urban WASH and Environmental Coalition (Maha UWES-C) is a joint initiative of the RCUES of AIILSG, Mumbai, and UNICEF Maharashtra. The Coalition brings together local organisations, thought institutions and sector experts to strengthen municipal capacities and encourage collaborative action to enhance service delivery in WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) in urban Maharashtra. The Secretariat of the Maha UWES-C is anchored at RCUES of AIILSG Mumbai. In 2022, MoU is signed with the Directorate of Swachh Maharashtra Mission, Urban Development Department, Government of Maharashtra for building capacities, facilitating partnerships, and supporting innovations under Swachh Maharashtra Abhiyan - Urban 2.0 under Maha UWES-C.

Along with ULBs, it is also engaging with multiple stakeholders like NGOs/CBOs, SHGs, private sector organisations, financial institutions at city level for providing technical and strategic support focusing on preparing action plans/strategies, technical assessment reports, CSPs/CDPs/DPRs as well as on-ground support by engaging with communities for improvement in various urban sectors to ensure improved quality of life to the citizens. AIILSG, Mumbai is also working at the grass root level in cities through field visits, guiding ULB officials, conducting situation assessments with the objective of bridging the gap between the cities and state for sustainable sanitation solutions under Swachh Bharat Mission Urban.

In February 2016, the then Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India empaneled the RCUES of AIILSG, Mumbai for conducting training and capacity building programme for experts of SMMU, CMMUs, COs, Key Officials and other stakeholders of the states and ULBs under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY – NULM).

In 2017, AIILSG was empaneled among one of the 35 agencies in India for conducting Integrated Capacity Building Programmes (ICBP). AIILSG Mumbai is supporting the states of Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Goa for the same.

Through all these activities, RCUES of AIILSG Mumbai is striving to transform the notion of capacity building by not limiting itself to trainings / workshops but engaging with the state and local governments at multiple levels. With a small but enthusiastic team, RCUES, Mumbai will continue to strive towards improving the capabilities of municipal officials with a broader objective towards developing able governments thereby enabling better cities.

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The Urban World - Quarterly Publication of Regional Centre for Urban and Environmental Studies of All India Institute of Local Self-Government, Mumbai

(July - September, 2023)

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Printed by **All India Institute of Local Self-Government, Mumbai.**

The Urban World
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Mumbai

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No: 3
July - September 2023

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Editorial

Urban population has grown from 28.6 crores in 2001 i.e. 28% of the total population to 37.7 crores in 2011 i.e. 31% of the total population. As the United Nations, in 2020, the estimated urban population of India was 48.3 crores and 35% of the total Indian population. As per Niti Ayog, During the decade of 2021-2011, number of urban households living in slums has increased from 1.01 crores to 1.37 crores but the percentage of these urban households living in slums has reduced from 23.5 per cent (2001) to 17 per cent (2011). Multidimensional poverty index of the Niti Ayog shows that the urban poverty has reduced from 25.7 per cent (2004-05) to 13.7 per cent (2011-12). Urban centre have the engines of economic growth. The Indian cities contributed 60 percent of India's GDP in 2011.

After India's adoption of New Economic Policy, 1991 that was marked by liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, urbanisation in India has witnessed rapid growth. During last 3 decades, the urban transformation in India has focussed on development of physical infrastructures in terms of roads-rail-air transport, flyovers, bridges, multiple sources of energy, and social infrastructure in terms of educational institutions, upgradation of Industrial Training Institutions, expansion of super-specialised and technology driven health care facilities in the peri-urban and rural areas. The demand on urban infrastructure and urban services is continuously increasing a large number of young-persons migrating from the rural areas to the urban and peri urban centres, increasing numbers of urban poor and 92% of the works force in informal sector earning precarious wages their low-income levels.

To make the large majority of people residing in urban India lead a better quality of life, the urban development programs for housing and WASH infrastructure have to be given top priority for which financial empowerment of the urban local bodies (ULBs) by both union and sub-national governments id imperative. At the same time, through decentralisation of decision-making and facilitating management of their own revenue and creation of infrastructure and urban services better future can be ensured. The urban governance framework envisions greater autonomy of ULBs by devolving 18 functions listed under the 12th Schedule of the Indian Constitution which are- regulation of land use and construction of land buildings, urban planning including the town planning, planning for economic and social development, urban poverty alleviation, water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purposes, fire services, public health sanitation, conservancy and solid waste management, slum improvement and up-gradation, safeguarding the interests of the weaker sections of society, including the physically handicapped and mentally unsound, urban forestry, protection of environment and promotion of ecological aspects, construction of roads and bridges, provision of urban amenities and facilities such as parks, gardens and playgrounds, promotion of cultural, educational and aesthetic aspects, burials and burials grounds, cremation and cremation grounds and electric crematoriums, cattle ponds, prevention of cruelty to animals, regulation of slaughter houses and tanneries, public amenities including street lighting, parking spaces, bus stops and public conveniences, vital statistics including registration of births and deaths.

However, this devolution has not been uniform across all states and has not necessarily provided cities with the autonomy that was predicted. For translating political decentralisation into 'maximum governance and minimum government' all stake-holders- elected representatives, administrators and citizens will have to make united efforts.

Grassroots Democracy: Women's Political Empowerment and Panchayati Raj Institutions in India

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Abstract

The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) is a three-tier structure that the Indian government uses for rural development. India's experiment with direct democracy at the grassroots level is symbolized by the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The Panchayats have their roots in India's customs and can be said to have originated during the Vedic period. Janapadas and Gram Sanghas finds mention in the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Manusmriti. The Arthashastra, the Smritis, and the Dharmasutras also talks about the concept of rural communities or Panchayats. The Panchayats continued developing as the centuries progressed. However, when British rule came to India, the Panchayats experienced their first setback. Decentralization was not the key to British rule; rather, it was centralized governance. However, toward the end of the 19th century, the British government deemed it necessary to establish rural self-government in India. Because his Resolution of 1882 sparked the concept of rural self-government, Lord Ripon is considered a pioneer in the field. The Royal Commission on Decentralization of 1907 and the Government of India Resolution of 1918 emphasized the significance of panchayats. The Panchayat and Village government Acts were enacted in most of the provinces when Diarchy was implemented in 1919 and local self-government was given to the ministers under it. The 1992 Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act was a turning point in the development of decentralized planning, governance, and development. As a result of this Act, panchayats became the third level of government and were granted reasonable authority and power to develop marginalized and vulnerable groups, such as women and children. Women's advancement and the establishment of a gender-equal society are dependent on their empowerment in all areas, particularly politics. Kofi Annan, a former UN Secretary-General, believed that women's participation in decision-making was essential to the advancement of women worldwide and humanity as a whole. According to Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to participate directly or through freely elected representatives in the country's government. All Indian citizens would be guaranteed equality of status and opportunity, as well as social, economic, and political justice, according to the Constitution of India. Notwithstanding the sacred declaration, women in the Indian subcontinent keep on being grossly under-represented in politics because by and large it is still considered as a male domain. In accordance with Article 243D of the Indian Constitution, women are guaranteed at least a third of the direct election seats and panchayat chairperson positions. This paper will look at the evolution of India's Panchayati Raj institutions over time and attempt will be a made to determine

the extent to which women's participation in grassroots democracy could be accomplished with the passing of the 73d Amendment Act of 1992. The necessity and significance of women's political empowerment would be examined as well.

Keywords: *Political Empowerment, Panchayat, Grassroots governance, Decentralization, Economic and Social Development*

Introduction

Status of women in political and legislative issues can be gauged by the level of equity and freedom enjoyed by women in the sharing of power and in the worth given by society to the political role of women. In the opinion of Kofi Annan, former Secretary - General, United Nations the role of women in decision-making is central to the advancement of women around the world and to the progress of humankind as a whole. India is the largest democracy in the world and its constitution incorporates the best aspects of many other countries' constitutions. The Indian Republic began with the ideals of liberty, equality, and justice, promising survival, equality of treatment, and gender justice to every Indian. Article 15 of the Constitution prohibits discrimination, including on the basis of sex, and Article 15(3) states that the state may make special provisions for women and children in any way it sees fit. This means that, despite the fact that there can be no general discrimination based on sex, women and children can benefit from special provisions. Yet we see that living with gender discrimination is a daily reality for many women. Women's role in the social, political and financial arena should be duly acknowledged and the forces that promote discrimination against women should be countered. Women's participation in society and their rights and responsibilities may be linked to their status. Political participation, representation, and participation in decision-making are important indicators of women's status in any society. Politics is thought to belong to men. Essentially, politics is the art of acquiring and exercising power-the ability to influence policies and decision-making processes. Choices are intended to be taken by men and followed by women. Characteristics like discipline, being self-restraint and rational are viewed as significant for political investment. It is believed these qualities adorn males. Women, on the other hand, are portrayed as being impulsive, irrational, and not disciplined enough. This gender stereotype causes women to be marginalized in the political arena because they are advised to avoid politics and remain confined to feminine roles.

Evolution of PRIs in India

The five elders who mediated conflict and spoke on behalf of all village residents were referred to as "panchayat" in ancient times. Women and members of the lower castes were underrepresented in these traditional organizations. The Indian government has a three-tiered structure called the Panchayati Raj for rural development. The structure of the PRIs, which are legally considered local government, is pyramidal. The Gram Panchayat(GP), is the first elected body at the bottom level and serves approximately 5,000 people. There may be multiple villages included in a single GP. The Gram Sabha, which is made up of all the residents of these villages, becomes the fundamental unit of democracy. In India, there is a great deal of variation among the states regarding the powers enjoyed by the panchayats, which are enshrined in the laws enacted by each state. The Panchayat Samiti, or Block Panchayat, sits above the Gram Panchayat and is essential for ensuring accountability and transparency from below. At the district level is a Zilla Parishad, which is the link with the state government. India's experiment with direct majority rule government at the grassroots level is represented by the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

The Panchayats have their roots in India's customs and can be said to have originated during the Vedic

period. The Mahabharata, the Ramayana, and the Manusmriti all make mention of Janapadas and Gram Sanghas. The Arthashastra, the Smritis, and the Dharmasutras additionally discuss the idea of Panchayats. As the centuries passed, the Panchayats continued to grow. Notwithstanding, when English rule came to India, the Panchayats encountered their most memorable misfortune. The key to British rule was not decentralization; instead, it was governed centrally. However, the British government decided that rural self-government in India was necessary toward the end of the 19th century. Lord Ripon is regarded as a pioneer in the field because his Resolution of 1882 introduced the idea of rural self-government. The Royal Commission on Decentralization of 1907 and the Government of India Resolution of 1918 underscored the significance of panchayats. In general, the term "decentralization" in our country refers to a situation in which authority is transferred from the national level to any institution or agency at the sub-national level for the purpose of managing public services like the supply of drinking water and the upkeep of primary school buildings, among other things. It is anticipated that once decentralization begins at the top, it will eventually reach the grassroots level, empowering individuals to participate in planning and governance. The Panchayat and Village government Acts were enacted in most of the provinces when Diarchy was implemented in 1919 and local self-government was given to the ministers under it.. Village panchayat formation was authorized by Article 40 of Part 4 of the Directive Principles of State Policy, of the Indian Constitution.

The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee set up in 1957 suggested the formation of 'three tier system' of Panchayati Raj Institutions to execute rural development programmes through people's cooperation. The provision to co-opt two women to each of the three tiers after the elections was one of the most notable aspects of this Committee. In fact, this was the first time women could participate in the Panchayati Raj system, but not as elected members. The Committee on the Status of Women in India strongly recommended in 1974 that women should be given special opportunities to participate in the representative structure of local government and this marked the next significant step in the history of rural women. Again, in 1977, Ashok Mehta Committee was established to suggest ways to increase women's participation in local bodies. It also maintained women's token representation, but it suggested that two women who received the most votes in Zilla Panchayat elections should become members in the event that no women were elected. Two women could be co-opted in the event that no women run for office. Despite all of this, women's participation in meetings and their representation in all Gram and Zilla Panchayats remained extremely low.

The National Perspective Plan for Women 1988-2000 was developed with the intention of elevating women's roles and status in India. At the Gram Panchayat to Zilla Panchayat level and in the Municipal Bodies, it was clearly recommended that 30% of seats be reserved for women. This demonstrated a gradual acceptance of the need to move beyond the token nomination or co-option of one or two women in panchayats, as recommended by two committees: the B R Mehta Committee (1957) and the Ashok Mehta Committee (1978). Instead, the need was felt to include mass, which was estimated to be 30 percent at the time. On May 15, 1989, the 64th Constitutional Amendment Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha with the intention of strengthening and revitalizing the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The bill's special feature was that 30 percent of seats were reserved for women and reserved for scheduled castes and tribes. Despite considerable effort, the bill was not implemented.

The 73rd Amendment Act and Women's Political Empowerment

Gender politics and women's groups insisted vehemently that reservation be restricted to the

panchayat level in order to encourage women's participation in electoral politics at the grassroots level. In response to this demand, the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution were approved in 1993, establishing a reservation of 33% for women in local governance institutions. The 73rd Amendment Act made panchayats the third tier of government and gave panchayats reasonable powers and authority, as well as enough room in the federal structure for women and other underrepresented groups. The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution Act of 1992 marked a turning point in the growth of decentralized planning, governance, and development and it may be said that an amendment to the constitution from the "top" has brought about grassroots democracy. By mandating at least one-third reservation for women out of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election and the number of offices of panchayat chairpersons, Clause (3) of Article 243D of the Constitution ensures that women participate in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Article 243-D (4) stipulates that women shall have equal access to at least one third of the total number of Panchayat Chairperson positions at each level, including those at the village or other levels. The one-third seat reservation for women did not occur as a result of widespread public protest or because women demanded their due share in power. The Indian state was of the opinion that including local people, particularly women, would make poverty alleviation and development programs more effective for a variety of reasons. In the elections of 1993 and 1994, this reservation of seats brought approximately 8,00,000 women into the political process in a single election. Hence, it may be inferred that the 73rd Amendment Act was indeed a revolutionary step towards women's participation in decision- making and in the political process in the country at least at the grass-root level. Through training, marginalized groups and women in panchayats are given political space and, as a result, some exposure to decentralized governance, planning development, and capacity building. This exposure to local governance has given them some confidence in taking on leadership roles in developing and implementing plans for social justice and economic development at the grassroots level. Women's representation in Panchayati Raj bodies increased from almost 2 to 3 percent to at least 30 or 32% in the below mentioned states as a result of this amendment. This indicated women's political empowerment at grassroots level.

Table 1
Women's participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions
Comparison- Before 1985 and after 1995

States	Overall Percentage in G.Ps. 1985	Overall Percentage in G.Ps. 1995
West Bengal	2 women	35.4%
Gujarat	2 women	33.3%
Haryana	2 women	33.1%
Uttar Pradesh	0 women	29.6%
Karnataka	1-2 women	37%
Madhya Pradesh	2 women	38%
Kerala	1 women	38.2%
Rajasthan	2 women	32.4%
Panjab	2 women	30.02%

Source: Panchayati Raj Development Report (1995), Institute of Social Studies, New Delhi.

The West Bengal Scenario with regard to Women in PRIs

Before the Seventy-Third Constitution Amendment Act was enacted, the government of West Bengal implemented reservations to increase women's participation in panchayat bodies. The West Bengal Panchayat (Revision) Act, 1992, provided reservation of one third of the total number of seats in panchayat bodies for women. In fact, West Bengal was the first state in the country implemented one third reservation of seats for women. West Bengal was the first state in the nation to hold elections that included more women participation crossing the provisions of reserved seats. In 1993 decisions 24,799 ladies were chosen for the various levels of panchayats. The women elected representation to various tiers and their political affiliations are depicted in the table below

A significant number of the women have been Sabhapati, Saha-Sabhapati, Pradhan and Upa Pradhan as the subsequent table portrays.

Table 2
Women Members in Panchayat Bodies

Tier	Communist Party of India (Marxist)	Left Front	Congress	Bharatiya Janata Party	Total (with others)
Gram Panchayat	12404	13443	5702	904	21402
Panchayat Samiti	2106	2297	740	42	3173
Zilla Parishad	174	197	24	-	224

Source: Datta, Prabhat. Women and Panchayat Bodies in India. The Indian Journal of Political Science, 1995, Vol. 56, No. 1/4 (1995), pp. 11.

Table 3
Women Office-Holders in Panchayat Bodies

Designation	Communist Party of India (Marxist)	Other constituents of Left Front	Left Front	Congress	Total
Sabhapati	8	-	8	-	8
Saha Sabhapati	51	25	76	5	81
Pradhan	176	8	187	4	191
Upa Pradhan	422	81	500	45	548

Source: Datta, Prabhat. Women and Panchayat Bodies in India. The Indian Journal of Political Science, 1995, Vol. 56, No. 1/4 (1995), pp. 11.

The Left Front government's commitment to Panchayati Raj Institutions was a major factor in this success. West Bengal achieved a new record for the number of women participating in panchayats. However, in many cases it could be observed that real power in terms of decision making is still exercised by the nearest male members of the elected women representatives. In the three-tier structure created by this Constitutional Amendment, nearly one million women held positions as members and chairpersons. As per 2020 data of Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, there are currently 14,53,973 elected women representatives in the Panchayats with 31,87,320 being total PRI representatives. As far as West Bengal is concerned, there are 30,458 elected women representatives in the Panchayats with 59,229 being total PRI representatives.

Barriers to Women's Political Participation

At the point when 'Swaraj' was proclaimed Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi said that as long as women of India do not partake in the political life of the country, there can be no salvation for the country. Both Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru emphasized the significance of women's participation if decentralization was to become a reality. Here I wish to state the factors that affect women's successful participation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

a. Elected women representatives who come under caste reservation have their share of social and monetary impediments. Many such women are generally non-educated, with minimal useful resources and generally subject to wage work. When women are discussed in panchayats, the consensus is that only educated women should be elected. For men, no such requirement is suggested. A simple wave of the constitutional amendment cannot alter these.

b. Providing panchayat seats to women is beneficial on its own. In any case, it would be naive to accept that it would address social issues such as poverty, gender injustice. In addition to gender, women have class and caste identities. In point of fact, gender as a phenomenon rarely occurs in its purest form because it contains elements of caste, class, and religion. One cannot expect women to join forces with other women against their caste or class loyalties in situations where gender and caste or class is at odds.

c. The greatest impediment for women's effective use of the reservation system in panchayats happens to be the mandatory rotation of chairperson positions. This limits the possibility of being able to contest again.

d. The impact of widespread use of the masculine model of elected government bodies and political life is that the political arena remains dominated by men; the rules of the political game are set by men; what's more, men characterize the guidelines for assessment.

e. The lack of support from the party, including the lack of financial support for female candidates has restricted their entry into political networks. Women rarely hold decision-making positions in these structures, despite the fact that they play significant roles in campaigning and garnering support for their parties. Additionally, political party nomination and selection procedures are biased against women.

f. Poverty and unemployment are socioeconomic factors that hinder women's participation in politics. Apart from these other factors include illiteracy or a lack of access to education, and the double burden of household chores and professional responsibilities.

g. Traditions continue to emphasize and frequently dictate women's primary role as mothers and housewives in many nations. Women have to look after crying children and hungry husbands.

Sexually segregated roles are favoured by a patriarchal, traditional, and firmly held belief system. Such belief prevents women from taking up active professional or political roles.

h. One of the main reasons women are underrepresented in formal political institutions like parliaments, governments, and political parties is that they lack self-confidence. Women can achieve political leadership positions at the highest levels provided they have self-assurance and perseverance. Because of this, women should have faith in themselves and dispel the widespread notion that men should be their leaders.

I. The fiercely competitive nature of politics itself is another barrier to women's participation in politics. Now-a-days politics is more than just a public service job, it is a great way to gain power and make money. It is evident that men are reluctant to cede control of this lucrative sector. In addition, politics is frequently marked by violence, including booth-capturing. Nearly all political parties in India have a significant number of elected representatives with criminal records.

Conclusion

Women all over the planet at each socio-political level end up under represented in national parliaments and women who want to work in politics often encounter hostile political and social environments. Women's advancement and the establishment of a gender-equal society are dependent on their empowerment in all areas, particularly politics. Kofi Annan, a former UN Secretary-General, believed that women's participation in decision-making was essential to the advancement of women worldwide and humanity as a whole. According to Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to participate directly or through freely elected representatives in the country's government. All Indian citizens would be guaranteed equality of status and opportunity, as well as social, economic, and political justice, according to the Constitution of India. Notwithstanding the sacred declaration, women in the Indian subcontinent keep on being grossly under represented in politics because by and large it is still considered as a male domain. In accordance with Article 243D of the Indian Constitution, women are guaranteed at least a third of the direct election seats and panchayat chairperson positions. The effective forces in this direction are education, the development of a scientific outlook, awareness about available legal safeguards, and women's awareness of their own potential such as self-esteem, power, and self-reliance. Women, scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes must all be included in the scope of the goal of empowerment. This, in turn, will make it possible to form a group whose interests can be more clearly expressed and who can have a greater impact on how government policy is made at the legislative level. It is now abundantly clear that public participation in the political process is necessary for any nation to achieve sustainable economic and social development. Necessary and consistent efforts must be taken to engender the political process and ensure all-inclusive participation in politics irrespective of gender or other biases.

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The Interrelationship between Urbanization and Migrant Workers: Exploring through Social Capital

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Abstract

Migration has become a defining feature of the modern world, with individuals and families traversing geographical boundaries in pursuit of improved economic opportunities and a better quality of life. This phenomenon has significant social, economic, and cultural implications, affecting not only the migrants themselves but also the communities they leave behind and those they join. A critical aspect of this migration experience is the concept of social capital, which encompasses the networks, relationships, and trust that individuals build within their communities. This comprehensive study delves into the dynamics of social capital among migrant workers in Dindigul of Tamil Nadu, shedding light on the role it plays in shaping their experiences, opportunities, and well-being.

Key words: *Social Capital, Urbanization, Migrant Workers*

Introduction

Migrant workers form a significant and dynamic segment of India's socio-economic tapestry, contributing to the country's growth and development in multifaceted ways (Sven Selås Kallevik, 2014). The migration phenomenon, driven by a pursuit of better livelihood opportunities, urbanization, and economic factors, shapes the narratives of countless individuals and communities across the nation. This introduction seeks to shed light on the diverse and intricate world of migrant workers in India. Migration, the movement of people from one region to another, is a time-honoured phenomenon deeply woven into the fabric of human history (Asma Khan & H. Arokkiaraj, 2012). In the Indian context, it has been a response to a myriad of factors, including economic disparities, social aspirations, natural disasters, and employment prospects.

India's migration patterns reflect its vast geographical expanse and socio-economic diversity, showcasing a complex tapestry of movement and adaptation. The canvas of migration in India spans various dimensions, encompassing rural-to-urban shifts, both inter-state and intra-state movements, as well as seasonal and permanent relocations. The Census of India specifically defines migrant workers as individuals who relocate from one place to another in pursuit of work or employment opportunities (International Labour Organization, 2020). At the heart of these migrations lie economic disparities that catalyse internal mobility within the country. The glaring contrast between rural and urban areas in terms of economic opportunities drives millions to embark on journeys across geographical boundaries. The allure of better livelihood prospects, improved wages, and enhanced working conditions motivates individuals to traverse vast distances in

search of a brighter future. Yet, the factors influencing migration extend beyond economics alone. Environmental factors, often intertwined with economic aspects, also play a pivotal role in shaping migration trends. Climate-induced changes, such as droughts, floods, and agricultural challenges, drive people from regions that are no longer conducive to sustenance. Additionally, political turmoil and unrest can prompt individuals to seek refuge in areas offering greater stability and security.

Family reunification stands as a poignant motivator behind many migrations. Individuals often relocate to join family members who have previously ventured to new regions. This aspiration to unite with loved ones and create a cohesive family unit contributes to the ebb and flow of migration. The destinations of these journeys are often found within the informal sector, a realm characterized by its unregulated, unorganized, and often low-skilled nature (Migration Data Portal, 2023 and OECD, 2022). Migrant workers fill roles across a spectrum of occupations, from construction sites and agricultural fields to domestic work within urban households and labour-intensive industries. Despite their significant contributions, these workers often go unrecognized and undervalued, existing on the fringes of society.

Challenges and Vulnerabilities of Migrant Workers

Migrant workers, while instrumental in shaping the economic landscape and cultural mosaic of their destination regions, are not immune to a multitude of challenges and vulnerabilities that underscore their journeys. These challenges span from insufficient housing and sanitation to limited access to vital services such as healthcare and education. The transient nature of their work leaves them on the fringes of social security, often excluded from essential benefits. The COVID-19 pandemic, an unprecedented global crisis, unmasked their vulnerability as many found themselves stranded and destitute during lockdowns.

In their quest for economic betterment, migrant workers often grapple with inadequate housing and living conditions. Many are forced to reside in cramped spaces, lacking basic amenities and hygiene facilities. The lack of proper housing exacerbates their vulnerability to diseases and infections, posing a constant threat to their well-being. Access to quality healthcare and education is a fundamental right that often eludes migrant workers. Limited resources and unfamiliarity with the local systems can result in subpar healthcare for them and their families. Children of migrant workers often face disruptions in education due to the transitory nature of their lives, leading to an education gap that perpetuates intergenerational cycles of poverty.

The transient nature of migrant work leaves them outside the traditional social security framework. The absence of formal contracts and job instability hinder them from availing of benefits like provident funds, health insurance, and retirement plans. Their precarious employment status leaves them exposed to financial shocks and limits their ability to save for the future. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic placed migrant workers in an unprecedented crisis. As lockdowns were enforced, many found themselves stranded far from home without means of sustenance. The sudden loss of income, coupled with limited access to transportation, left them in dire straits. Their vulnerability was magnified as they were left grappling with uncertainty and displacement (Malavika Rao 2021).

Yet, amidst these challenges, migrant workers are not passive recipients of hardship. They bring with them a rich tapestry of languages, traditions, and practices that infuse vibrancy into the cultural landscape of their destination regions. The

economic contribution they make, often powering industries and construction projects, is a testament to their resilience and dedication.

Social Capital and Migrant Workers

The concept of social capital shines a light on the profound strength of human connections and their transformative potential in the lives of migrant workers. This intricate web of relationships, networks, and bonds that individuals cultivate within their communities goes beyond the surface, becoming a cornerstone for migrant workers as they navigate new terrains and seek better lives (André Linard, 2022). For migrant workers, these connections serve as more than just threads tying them to a community. They are lifelines, bridges to a world of opportunities and essential services that might otherwise remain elusive. As these workers embark on journeys in search of improved livelihoods, these connections become a priceless asset in their toolkits.

Migrant workers often find solace and camaraderie among peers who share similar backgrounds or hail from the same regions. These shared experiences create an immediate bond, offering a sense of belonging and solidarity that can make a foreign environment feel a bit more like home. Within these networks, the free exchange of information, resources, and advice becomes a currency of empowerment. Whether it's insights into job openings, tips for securing safe accommodations, or guidance on local customs, this sharing of knowledge eases the process of integration. Beyond practicalities, social capital arms migrant workers with a treasure trove of vital information. The complex labyrinth of local laws and regulations can be navigated with more confidence through insights gleaned from these networks. Discovering affordable healthcare services, understanding labour rights, and asserting one's rights become fewer daunting tasks with the support of social connections. This empowerment is a bulwark against exploitation and helps migrant workers stand up for themselves in unfamiliar territories.

While uprooting themselves from familiar surroundings, migrant workers often grapple with feelings of isolation and vulnerability. This is where the emotional support fostered through social capital becomes invaluable. These networks become avenues for celebrating festivals, sharing meals, and extending helping hands during times of distress. The emotional cushion provided by fellow migrants cushions the toll of displacement, fostering resilience in the face of adversity. In the realm of employment, social capital is a conduit to job opportunities that might otherwise remain hidden. Word-of-mouth recommendations and referrals from acquaintances serve as gateways to placements that perfectly match skills to available roles. This network-driven employment not only benefits individuals but also fuels local economies by efficiently connecting human resources to demand. Harnessing the collective power of social capital, migrant workers can assert their rights with amplified voices. Through unity, they can voice concerns, and demand fair wages, improved working conditions, and safety measures. This collective bargaining underscores the empowerment that emerges when individuals stand together, refusing to be silenced. The impact of social capital isn't confined to the present; it extends to future generations. Migrant workers' children benefit from these networks, gaining access to educational opportunities that can break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. By pooling resources, communities ensure that the children of migrant workers receive proper schooling, opening doors to brighter futures.

Objectives of the Present Study

The present study was formulated based on the following objectives

1. Mapping Networks: The study aims to map the social networks and affiliations migrant workers establish in Dindigul. This includes both formal and informal connections, such as friendships, associations, and community groups.

2. Community Integration: Understanding whether migrant workers' social capital aids their integration into the local community, fostering a sense of belonging and cooperation.

Methodology

The study aimed to undertake a qualitative analysis of social capital and challenges faced by migrant workers, necessitating the use of suitable qualitative research methods. The primary approach adopted in this study is the case study method, chosen to unravel the intricate and multifaceted reasons behind migration. This method offers an in-depth examination of individual cases, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the complexities driving migration decisions.

To capture a diverse range of perspectives and insights, the research has integrated additional qualitative techniques. Focus group discussions have been conducted, fostering interactive dialogues among migrant workers. This method encourages participants to share their diverse viewpoints, experiences, and challenges related to both social capital and the reasons that motivate migration.

The study has also incorporated the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach, engaging migrant workers in active participation to assess their circumstances and motivations for migration. By involving participants in this way, the study aimed to enhance the authenticity of the data and empower participants to contribute meaningfully to the research process. To provide a comprehensive analysis, field visits have been carried out. These visits offer researchers the opportunity to directly observe the lived experiences, interactions, and contextual dynamics of migrant workers in their real-life settings. This firsthand observation contributes depth and context to the study's findings, allowing for a nuanced exploration of the underlying reasons for migration.

By utilizing a combination of the case study method, focus group discussions, participatory rural appraisals, and field visits, this study employs a well-rounded qualitative approach. This approach is designed to capture the multifaceted nature of migration, shedding light on the intricate web of social capital and challenges that migrant worker encounter. The data was collected from Dindigul Municipal Corporation. (Write one sentence about dindigul municipality) Dindigul is a district located in the south eastern part of Tamil Nadu. It is known for its rich cultural inheritance, historic landmarks, and economic activities. The district is situated in the foothills of the Western Ghats and has a diverse landscape ranging from agricultural plains to hilly terrain.

CASE -I

Mr. Prenthar, a 40-year-old man from Bihar, embarked on a journey of migration to the Dindigul district in Tamil Nadu, driven by the need to improve his family's living conditions and financial stability. Despite facing challenges, his determination and connection with social capital have shaped his migration experience. In Bihar, Mr Prenthar struggled due to limited job opportunities and inadequate wages. The desire to provide for his family's basic needs, especially his children's education, compelled him to explore employment opportunities in other states. The lack of job security and inadequate wages in Bihar pushed him to search for better prospects. The transition was not without its difficulties. Language barriers posed a significant challenge initially. However, over

time, he managed to overcome this hurdle by learning Tamil, the local language. Celebrating festivals and spending time with his family back home were also challenges, as he often celebrated alone in his new place of work. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated his struggles, affecting his ability to work consistently and earn income.

CASE -II

Mr. Narayan's journey as a migrant worker from West Bengal to Dindigul in Tamil Nadu sheds light on the challenges, motivations, and impact of migration on individuals striving to improve their living conditions. The lack of job opportunities and insufficient wages in West Bengal pushed Mr. Narayan to seek better prospects in another state. The promise of higher salaries and improved job security in the Dindigul district motivated him to migrate in search of a better future for his family.

Migration was not without its share of difficulties. Language barriers initially posed a challenge, but over time, he managed to overcome them by learning Tamil. Celebrating festivals and staying connected with his family back in West Bengal became challenging, as he often celebrated alone in his new residence. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated his struggles, affecting his income and ability to work consistently.

CASE -III

Mr. Ali's journey as a young migrant worker from West Bengal to the Dindigul in Tamil Nadu was driven by the lack of job opportunities and inadequate wages in his native West Bengal, Mr. Ali ventured to the Dindigul in search of a better life. The promise of higher salaries, improved job security, and the desire to support his family were key motivations for his migration. Ali's first venture into work and migration presented several hurdles. Language barriers were a significant obstacle initially, but he managed to overcome them with time. Celebrating festivals and staying connected with his family while being physically distant became a challenge, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Role of Social Capital among Migrant Population in Urban Settlement

Mr. Prenthar's migration journey was facilitated by social capital. He learned about the job opportunity in Dindigul through a friend from Bihar who was already working there. The connection with fellow migrants from his hometown and north Indians living nearby created a supportive network. This network helped him find accommodation, offered guidance, and provided a sense of belonging. The mutual assistance within this network was instrumental in addressing his initial challenges and fostering resilience. Mr. Prenthar currently works as a cook in a restaurant in Dindigul. His monthly salary of 20 thousand rupees enables him to support his family and send remittances back home. He lives near his workplace and enjoys the convenience of having his basic needs met. While facing occasional demands for extended working hours, he remains committed to his job and has even learned the local language to better communicate with customers.

Like Mr. Prenthar, Mr. Narayan's journey too facilitated by social capital. His friend from West Bengal who was already working in Dindigul introduced him to the job opportunity. This connection helped him secure accommodation and navigate the new environment. He formed bonds with fellow migrants from West Bengal and other north Indians, creating a supportive network that offered guidance, companionship, and a sense of belonging. Currently working as a service person in a restaurant, Mr. Narayan earns a monthly salary of 15 thousand rupees. He uses a portion of his income for personal expenses and sends the rest to his

family in West Bengal. While language barriers have diminished, his connections with fellow migrants continue to provide him with emotional support and a sense of community.

Ali's migration journey was facilitated by social capital. Introduced to a job opportunity and accommodation by a friend who had already migrated, he quickly integrated into a community of fellow migrants from West Bengal and other parts of India. This network provided support, companionship, and a sense of belonging in his new environment.

Ali's monthly salary of 15 thousand rupees, earned through his work as a server in a restaurant, not only sustains him but also supports his family back in West Bengal. His remittances have become a lifeline for his family's basic needs and aspirations. Ali's work routine spans from 9.30 am to 11.30 pm, with the possibility of extended hours on busy days. Though he hasn't taken many breaks, he acknowledges the importance of self-care and occasionally takes vacations. His dedication to his work and plans to visit his family once a year reflects his strong sense of responsibility and ambition.

Impact of Migration

Migration has transformed Mr Prenthar's life. The higher income, job security, and access to social capital in the Dindigul have brought him a sense of stability and comfort that he lacked in Bihar. Despite the challenges, he feels empowered by his ability to provide for his family's needs and dreams of a better future for his children.

Migration has transformed Mr Narayan's life by providing him with better income and job security. Despite challenges, he is content with his decision to migrate, as he can now provide for his family's needs and dreams of a brighter future for his children.

Transformation and Adaptation

Five years into his journey, Ali has not only adapted to the new culture and language but also developed a strong sense of belonging in Dindigul. His story illustrates the transformative power of migration in shaping his identity and future aspirations.

Living with three other migrants in his accommodation, Ali experiences a sense of safety and security. Despite minor workplace conflicts, he remains committed to his job and feels a sense of freedom and independence in his new environment. The migration decision was aided by social capital, as he heard about job opportunities in Dindigul through a friend already working there.

Based on the presented cases, social capital has impacted positively on the migrant population.

- The friend's information provided insight into available jobs and working conditions, making the decision more informed.
- Connections with fellow migrants in Dindigul offered valuable support.
- Support networks provided guidance, companionship, and a sense of belonging in an unfamiliar environment.
- Interaction with fellow migrants contributed to the development of resilience.
- Learning from shared experiences and coping strategies helped him navigate the migration process more effectively.
- Connections and shared knowledge fostered a sense of empowerment and self-assurance.
- Social capital played a role in facilitating social integration into the new community.
- Shared experiences and networks helped reduce feelings of isolation, contributing to overall well-being.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the individual's migration journey from his native location to the Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, was shaped by a combination of pressing economic needs and aspirations for a better future for his family. Faced with limited job opportunities and inadequate wages, migrant workers' decision to seek greener pastures was primarily fuelled by their commitment to ensuring their family's essential needs, particularly their children's education. The challenges he encountered, such as language barriers and geographical separation, emphasized the emotional toll of such a transition.

However, his migration was not a solitary endeavour. The presence of social capital played a pivotal role in easing his transition. Learning about job opportunities through a friend already established in Dindigul highlighted the power of connections. The subsequent support network formed among fellow migrants offered guidance, companionship, and a sense of belonging in an unfamiliar environment. This social capital not only helped him surmount initial challenges but also contributed to his personal growth, resilience, and integration into the community.

Based on the data collected from the field and analysed the same through Social Capital, the researchers found that the internal migration was happened due to following reasons.

- Faced with restricted employment prospects and low wages in his hometown.
- Struggled to meet basic needs due to these limitations.
- Recognized the need for better opportunities to improve his family's situation.
- The primary motivation was to ensure his family's essential needs, especially his children's education.
- Compelled by the lack of prospects, he explored opportunities in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu.
- Initial challenges arose from language barriers in his new location.
- Overcame these hurdles through diligent efforts to learn Tamil, the local language.
- Learning Tamil facilitated better communication, integration, and understanding of the local culture.
- Faced difficulties maintaining strong connections with family due to the distance.
- Struggled to participate in festivals and gatherings with his hometown family.
- These challenges led to feelings of isolation and a sense of missing out on important family moments.
- Lured by the promise of higher salaries and improved job security.
- Saw the potential to provide significant support to his family's financial needs.
- Higher earnings would help ensure his children's education and a more stable future.

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Women's Experiences of Being and Navigating through the Urban Spaces: A Study of Select Cities of India

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The sense of being and belonging are significant markers for determining access and safety to urban spaces. How do individuals construct their sense of self and their understanding and expectations about how others perceive them, is connected to one's access to various landscapes. With an objective to create safe urban spaces and strive towards the direction of achieving Sustainable Development Goal 11, India is striving towards creating safe, secure and inclusive urban development. It has been widely acknowledged that the project of designing urban spaces must accommodate needs and concerns of different segments of the society, especially those who are already placed at the bottom end of social hierarchy. This accommodation and construction of spaces include nuances of being, belonging and inhabiting in different spaces. A number of studies have focused on identifying the impediments towards the production of an inclusive and enabling environment, which can be both real and imagined. (Phadke, 2007). Inclusions and exclusions to spaces, both private and public, is an intrinsic aspect of daily life, influencing an individual's right to city through chances to study, work, expand networks, seek healthcare, or rejuvenate, and thus ability to determine one's well-being. (Kett et al., 2002; Lucas et al., 2016; Turner and Fouracre, 1995). This space is impacted by some socio-cultural contexts, where different intrinsic and extrinsic factors interact, leading to diverse forms of access, privilege and deprivation. (Joshi et al., 2021; Lucas, 2011) These factors include both attitudinal and infrastructural aspects, and are responsible for constraining women's mobility, therefore, bearing its impact on their capabilities and full realization of their lives. In recent past, a number of initiatives have been taken across the world to include women specific needs within urban designing, such as safe public toilets, separate parking spaces, CCTV cameras, well -lit streets etc. Sustainable and safe public transport becomes crucial in determining women's access to work, mobility and their participation in public sphere. The present study focuses on the necessity, nature and role of public transport in ensuring women's access to and right over the urban spaces while specifically focusing on the public transport. Women who use the public transport system in different Indian states consist of different identities cutting across different age groups, class, regional and religious backgrounds.

Objectives

A) To examine the role of public transport in ensuring women's access to and right over the urban spaces.

B) To examine the issues and challenges experienced by women who are navigating urban spaces.

C) To identify alternative strategies for enabling equitable mobility environment for women.

Research Methodology

To understand the experiences of women commuters, this study employs qualitative research methodology relying on personal interviews and observation method. The research was conducted on different days during day time (9 am to 5 pm) between August 2022- March 2023 in public buses of the three states, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. This study focuses on the experiences of women commuters in public buses on specific routes of Haryana (Kaithal to Panipat roadways run by Haryana Roadways State Transport), Punjab (Patiala to Samana roadways run by Pepsu Roadways Transport Corporation) and Rajasthan (Rajsamand to Udaipur, Chandesera to Udaipur & Bhilwara depot to Udaipur by buses run by Rajasthan State Road Transport Corporation), to focus on the comparative analysis of the experiences of women traveller either within the city or across different cities. The parameters taken into consideration for the present study are elements of access, provisions for accommodating women's specific needs, and feeling of being safe and secure while examining the infrastructural, behavioral and attitudinal aspects of women's rights of being in the city as citizens.

Women's mobility and commutation in the public sphere takes place for different purposes, both as daily commuters and also as 'not so regular users' who travel for social activities or commitments. Highlighting on women's mobility in public space and use of public transport, this study is aligned with Sustainable Development Goals 11 target to make inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities and human settlements – to provide safe and inclusive urban environment for women. In different cities, there exists variation in public transport system taking into an account the specific geographical needs into consideration, however, it largely includes buses, taxis, auto-rickshaws, e-rickshaws etc. For the purpose of present research, only women commuters travelling in public buses are included, both the intercity and intra-city public buses.

This paper share experiences of women commuters and advocates for gender inclusive guidelines including travel pattern of women commuters; working and non-working women. It explores the barriers to women's potential mobility; role of transport systems; and the use of qualitative research methods to study women's travel experiences, diversity in travelling experiences in their journeys.

Observations from the Field

We conducted the study during the post pandemic period, and when asked about commutation, people had their experiences of going through the COVID-19 pandemic, which had an adverse impact on the various dimensions of lived realities, including mobility. It restricted movements, disrupted social interaction, and activities. However, it needs to be underlined here that there are groups of people who always face such restrictions on accessibility and limitations on mobility which often lead them to stay at home. Access is gendered, whether it is to land, money, property, rights, skills or even accessibility and mobility. (Rabenhorst et. al.) In case of mobility, public transport system play relevant role and mobility of women depends not only on availability and frequency, proximity to transportation but also their pattern of travel, accessibility etc. It is important to note here that women's travel patterns, their needs, and concerns are entirely different and intertwined with the multiple responsibilities that they undertake. Through this paper, we focus on the need to look at the fact that women's mobility requires an inclusive approach and comparison to that of men and their unique needs also shape their mobility and access. Concern about women's travel patterns and challenges also need to take into consideration the fact that public transport plays an important role in the lives of working women including both

organized and unorganized sectors, and also those who commute for managing the affairs of their lives and their households.

When it comes to work, recent survey shows that participation of women in labour workforce seems to have stagnated. 29.4% of women (age 15-59) were part of labour force in 2021-22 in comparison to 29.8% in 2020-21 whereas, rate of men in labour force in the year 2021-22 (80.7%) increased from year 2020-21 (80.1%) (PLFS 2022). Women are mostly employed in informal sector and their workplace is mostly located outside of city business centre. Bus is the most reported means of transport in rural as well as urban households, followed by auto rickshaw (NSSO, 2015). This indicates that women prefer buses for their daily travel needs and if public transport does not cater needs and necessity of women commuters, it may have a negative impact on them.

A common factor that was found in our study across the three states was the fact that women's travel pattern and their perception of safety are strongly influenced by social and cultural conditioning of norms. Women travel pattern includes short trips to perform household responsibilities, and other related works. Their choice of public transport also depends on socio-economic factors including age, gender, education, occupation & income, marital status, household size, vehicle ownership & access. There are instances where women from rural or semi-urban settings have to commute daily to urban locations for work or study as they are not allowed to settle down in cities on their own. Therefore, it can be said that in different contexts, transportation systems in the states covered under the study play crucial role in determining women's mobility. It becomes significant to note that most of these women practice the idea that their presence in the public sphere has to be for a particular purpose. This sense of purpose provides 'legitimacy' to their sense of being, belonging and inhabiting the public spaces. It was also observed that right over property, limited or negligible access to finances and lower chance of employment opportunities prevents them to have private vehicle and patriarchal system of society acts as a barrier and limit their mobility in public spaces/ public transport. Women face harassment (verbal, non-verbal, physical) and violence in forms of vandalism, teasing, staring, touching or groping etc; on daily basis.

Stories of victimization, sexual harassment, assault of their family or friends primarily shape one's perception of safety. Particular groups like women, older adult, people identified with trans sexual community and/or identity, people with disability, people belonging to low economic status report more fear of their safety and about fear of crime. Women's short trips for household works, walking to/ from transit stop/ depot, waiting at bus station, travelling alone or in a group are some of the factors to decide level of fear among women commuters. To avoid travelling during rush hours/ peak hours, women tend to travel during afternoons or before and after office hours.

A study by Jagori (2011) reveals that around 85.4% of women said that sexual harassment is very common in public places. Fear of un/safety, incidents/accidents of sexual victimization, sexual harassment, and assault not only impact on women's access to public transport and use of buses for their study, job and social activities but also may prevent women's ability to participate in school, work and public life (Ceccato et. al. 2022). Necessity, accessibility and mobility experiences of women, whether they travel by public transport or shared vehicle, shape how women travel and kind of measures they take to travel safely.

Understanding Women's Mobility through their Experiences in Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab

It is true that roadways transport system in Rajasthan and Punjab is quite accessible and

provide mobility to women who travel on daily basis. However, the class composition is mostly towards lower classes and scantly middle classes. Thus, the idea of privacy of bodies and space becomes complex and intertwined with other factors. Fear of compromising personal or intimate space in public transport depend on various factors like peak hours, overcrowded with passengers, daily commuters who travel for short duration, male dominance and limited number of women commuters in public transport. In Punjab, the state has provided free commutation for women travelers within the state. As a number of female students come to different colleges in Patiala, this scheme has contributed to their right to education and mobility. As per the state government released official data, there is a reported increase in the number of women commuters (Hindustan Times, 30th December 2022). It was found during the interview that women are more assertive and vocal of their needs and issues on the specified route in Punjab.

We have interviewed daily commuters who travel daily by public bus. Public bus being a predominantly male space, where women of any age, class, occupation, marital status face assault, harassment on daily basis. Lakshmi (21), a student of law, travel from a village to Udaipur city for study. When she was doing her graduation from university, she used to travel by bus along with her two female friends. Last year she took admission in LLB and since then she often travels alone. She shared that when there are groups of women or college going girls, Male person are more secure as compared to female in context of travelling alone. "We are habitual of such gazing and comments because questioning first begins at home, and then comments on the way to bus station and then similar kind of behaviour in buses too. We tend to ignore these things."

A research scholar of Women's Studies travel from Rajsamand to Udaipur, who travel daily from Rajsamand to Udaipur, shared that a lot of women can be seen taking roadways buses while commuting. She usually takes buses between 6 to 12 morning and maximum have taken it by 6 in the evening while return journey. There have been some of instances of unwanted touches but overall have felt safe inside the bus, due to presence of women passengers, but not at and around bus station. After travelling for long women start understanding how to negotiate with the public space.

Respondent shared that with respect to clothing, I mostly prefer wearing kurtis and dupatta to avoid any deformed. It is also a sub-consciousness of how I have arranged my femininity over time to negotiate with my family, for other things like study or going out alone as well as the type of crowd one navigates. But I realize that somewhere have left wearing big earings also because one doesn't want to seek any attention. So crucially it is to pass through the space without notice that's always on mind while negotiating the public space. There is Government Nursing College in between the route so if at times there are women students (mostly in groups) who board bus wearing crop tops and jeans etc., the gazes are definitely towards them. This also can be witnessed that girls also try to avoid any eye contacts and try build a temporary zone around her, importantly because she is on move and would get down.

Recalling few incidents, she said that there is this posture of men sitting with legs spread occupying a lot of space makes it really uncomfortable to sit in between two men on three people seats, so mostly try to take a side seat on two seat side preferring the window seat. The elbows of men touching boobs (sometimes it can be unintentional but many times intentional too) is the most frequent unsafe experiences, but have started using bag for avoiding it. Also, at times I ask the person to keep their hands in better positions and make him conscious of my uneasiness. Haven't faced any out

rightly intended harassment till now, but the unconscious touches of men while standing and sitting is crucial limitation to self-preservation while travelling.

Bhilwara depot while returning back is very packed, like there is no seat available as well as no space to stand with ease also. I usually use my bag in front to avoid any unwanted touches.

A daily commuter who works in the city said that all the idea and perception of body we learn in our homes gets shattered in these public spaces. Men can't be blamed all the time. Public Transport System need to address needs and necessity of travellers especially who suffer the most and those are women only. "The other day when I reached my destination had to move from back of bus to the front pushing people, there is no idea of body preservation. At one point I was just stuck badly, the conductor started shouting for me to move even when there were a lot of men with no space to move. So, he intended that stop preserving your body and move this is how it is. So there my ideas of gender that has bodily space integral to it get shattered. Although other women also show their unease many times while such uncomfortable situations".

One of the important factors which leads to forced immobility is safety. Lack of safety in public spaces and public transport remain most concerning factor of mobility. Risk of harassment has a major impact on women's mobility and accessibility. Crime against women reduces their freedom and limits their participation in socio-economic activities outside the home. (The Asia foundation & Centre for Social Research, Women and mobility, A case study of Bhopal, Gwalior and jodhpur, 2011)

Women travelling with husbands or any male co-passenger are constantly being protected by their male co-passenger. Most of the time, these women use public transport to travel for social activities or work purposes. These women, when travel alone, experienced similar kind of assault as shared by regular women commuters. A women commuter (age 34) travelling from Kaithal to Panipat in early hours (07:00 am) shared her experience in this bus. "It was a crowded bus with college students where number of girls' students were very less, it was constant struggle to cover my chest with dupatta and protect my body from external forces and unintentional and also intentional touches. repeated efforts to put his hand on my hand, touching me inappropriately, keeping his college bag near my shoulder and my efforts to protect my head, shoulder from all these was constant non-verbal exchange between the two of us. Confidence of being old, working women and a teacher helped me to shout at that college boy around 22 years of age. He declined all of the accusation I made and continue with his act of harassment and assault. Before getting down, still in crowded bus, he dropped a chit with his mobile number in my kurta. I must share this that the neckline of that kurta was very high close to neck. I was shocked. I started shouting, he started saying sorry. Many of them were engaged in similar kind of harassment in the bus and everyone stopped and kept themselves away from nearby women."

Such incidents raise question about socialization of a woman where she is burdened with idea of dignity, being izzat of family/ community, perception of gender, perceived perception of safety and idea of personal space for women being taught in our families and societies. And at the same time, negotiating with the same society while compromising the same idea of personal space, dignity, safe among others. Witnessing such incidents and experiencing such disgust make women or girls fearful for themselves.

Known as educational hub of the region, Patiala caters to number of universities such as Punjabi Thapar University, etc. There are also more than 80 colleges in Patiala. A large number of students come from neighbouring, remote and rural areas to

attend these educational institutes. PEPSU provides roadways services in the state. Frequency of buses, quality of services & infrastructure provided by PEPSU not only have tall claims but also experiences from Punjab shows different & better picture. Respondent traveling from PEPSU shared that behaviour and attitude of bus conductor and co-passengers were supportive. Infrastructure within buses are very commuter friendly. There were water cooler facility in the buses, commuters can go to the back area in the bus and refill their bottles from provided water cooler facility in the bus. Proper mechanism of ticket checking, free ticket services to women passengers, supportive and sensitive environment in the buses made PEPSU a better roadways model; that is inclusive and gender friendly. Depots are also equipped with fundamental necessities like feeding room, clean washroom and well-lit areas with cameras on the routes travelled by the respondents. Though studies (Kaur, et. al., 2021) shows that women feel safe traveling in morning and feel unsafe in evening or late evening time. Women mobility is restricted due to fear of safety and infrastructure like footpath, street light have been rated poor; hence fear of harassment and violence during peak rush hours in morning and evening. Travelling experiences in Punjab covered in this study, unlike other state, demonstrate a comfortable and gender inclusive attitude in roadways. It is also relevant to mention that number of women commuters have been doubled after induction of free bus services to them.

Conclusion

The study shows that women are more fearful when they are on transit or on bus station/depot. Cases of stalking, commenting etc. happens more at the depot/bus station. While in bus, fear of safety or violation of personal space depends on various factors including time of travel, spatial location, proportion of men as well as women commuters and gender gap, socio-economic factors. The study shows that equal proportion of men and women commuters in public transport provide a zone where fear of harassment or any kind of assault decreases. Frequency of buses on covered routes in Rajasthan, unlike Punjab, are lesser in number, students and working professionals, most of the time, manage their daily work/classes according to timing of buses. Traveling during late evenings increases fear for their safety in transit or way to their home from bus depot/station.

Experience from Haryana indicate that even older/adult women face such incident of violation of personal space, stalking and inappropriate touch by male co-passenger. Traveling in off-peak hours on the same route may be a comfortable and safe journey for women commuters. Women adapt coping mechanism like desexualise their body in public space, traveling in groups, minimum eye contact with other commuters especially male commuters, travel in off-peak hours. Water cooler facility in public buses, supportive attitude of bus conductor and driver, induction of women drivers and conductors in public buses in Punjab are best practices adopted. Government interventions like reserved seat for women, only women bus, pink bus, exemption of women from fair, increasing frequency of buses on busy routes, infrastructural development (feeding room/ designated are for lactating mothers on depots/ in transit, signboards for person with disabilities, pregnant women) maintenance of gender inclusive infrastructure (clean washroom, feeding room, accessible space for person with disability, pregnant ladies), well-lit area in transit, online system for bus tickets have made public space more inclusive and sustainable. Women get 50 % rebate on fare in bus services run by Rajasthan state transport services within the state, whereas Punjab offers free travel for women commuters within the state. Haryana Roadways will be offering free bus services to women passengers on Raksha Bandhan this year.

It can be concluded that women's transport experience must be seen through a rights-based

approach, i.e. an individual's rights to move freely and access the space. We need to locate the issue within the immediate and broader socio-political and cultural contexts. Public transport system should adapt inclusive approach to address travel pattern of women or short trip - chaining, making public transport accessible to complete their tasks and household works. Frequency and availability of public transport should be ensured according to their travel pattern and need.

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The Girl in the Pandemic: Transnational Perspectives[1]

Book Review

Reviewed by Vanita Ganesh,
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Introduction, Context, and Themes

"The Girl in the Pandemic" is a collection of essays compiled by Claudia Mitchell and Ann Smit that offers much-needed perspectives on the challenges and resilience of gender justice and development practitioners and scholars in the 'Global South' as they navigate the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic in young women and girls' lives. In this review, I will delve into the main themes and contextualize this gender justice work in the Indian context and also look at the overall impact of this gender justice work.

I am composing this review based on a comprehensive analysis of educational patterns and access for girls, drawing from my observations and the collective knowledge and expertise of the community leaders affiliated with the organization I represent, Shadhika.

After over three years since the first pandemic-induced lockdown came into place in India in March 2020, we are yet to recover from the lasting impact the pandemic has had on the communities we work with. Not to forget that individuals belonging to underserved and minority communities face a significantly higher incidence of physical, emotional, and other kinds of violence and apathy, directly linked to gender, sexuality, caste, religious, or socioeconomic identities.

This volume helps to draw a picture of what the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns were like for girls and young women in eight countries located in the so-called 'global south'[2]. The chapters, as the author's introductory note states, were written in the early stages of the pandemic, just before COVID-19 vaccines came into the public discourse, and as the world was still struggling to bring the virus under control.

The volume and the essays it contains reflect the complexity of working in the gender justice sphere, especially during times of disasters or crisis: the nature (and complexity) of time and the way 'context' can change in the blink of an eye, and of the nature between research/academic writing and praxis and the constant fight to keep both connected. As the authors have quoted Sathyaraj Venkatesan and Ishani Anwesha Joshi (2022:1): *"The pandemic also implies a dismantling and rearranging of the fundamental structures of time within which human beings interacted with the world. Such a discontinuity in the linear trajectory of chronological time engenders an epistemic and ontological reconfiguration of the very sense of time itself."*

The book is organized into three parts— *Part I: Reflections; Part II: Continuing Education; and Part III: Vulnerabilities,* which highlights the authors' emphasis on the evolving and (somewhat) nonlinear nature of scholarship in the development sector.

[1] *Editors: Claudia Mitchell and Ann Smith (2023), Series: Transnational Girlhoods, Vol. 5, New York: Berghahn Books, Pages: 196 https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.2809006, Creative Commons*
[2] *Teixeira da Silva JA. Rethinking the use of the term 'Global South' in academic publishing. European Science Editing 2021;47.*

Telephone calls and document/data analysis have substituted in-person interviews, as highlighted by numerous scholars in this volume. This shift, along with the author's own experiences in the field has blurred the definition of the 'field' and disrupted the presence of respondents in research. Historically, reduced proximity to the 'field' and respondents has resulted in a disconnect between policies/learnings and genuine needs. The authors of the volume acknowledge this gap by noting the absence of girl-led narratives in their collection.

Logistical roadblocks during the pandemic have impacted researchers globally. It is important to examine representation in academia and research of the communities studied. Would a decolonized approach have influenced the response of development practitioners to the pandemic and lockdown differently? Nonetheless, the scholars and practitioners in this volume prioritize seeing people and communities beyond numbers.

The authors and scholars make a compelling case for social scientists and practitioners to look at research as collaborative, evolving, and nonlinear, and to not see this as a stumbling block or halt in the work we do, but as opportunities to better inform our work and policies going forward.

The works featured in the volume and the retrospective bent of mind the reader is pushed to read them from is a reflection of the unanswered questions and unclear futures that many girls as well as development practitioners and gender justice advocates are trying to grapple with in a seemingly 'post pandemic' world: *Where do we go from here and how do we start?*

Chapter One by Nidhi Kapur revisits the 2018–20 Ebola epidemic in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to shed light on the disproportionate impact on girls and young women during disease outbreaks. Kapur's essay utilizes reflective analysis of evidence from gender and age-disaggregated group discussions and primary data from women and girls in the DRC to draw lessons for addressing the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide.

Kapur emphasizes the significance of qualitative data in highlighting the skewed effect disease outbreaks have on women and girls, be it Ebola or COVID-19. The five lessons outlined by Kapur underscore the exacerbation of existing gender disparities, the need to address biases in scientific research and resource allocation, and the persistent invisibility of girls in crisis situations.

Women and girls, alongside gender and sexual minorities, bear the initial brunt of the crisis across various domains such as home, education, healthcare, and employment. The fallout from the pandemic, including increased dropout rates and reduced access to education, raises concerns about early marriages and neglect of menstrual, sexual, and reproductive care. In India, the proportion of out-of-school girls in India has dropped to 2% in 2022[3], the lowest-ever rate. Gender-sensitive interventions are imperative in addressing these issues.

Implicit biases in policies and interventions pose a significant threat to gender justice efforts during crises like Ebola and COVID-19. Kapur's lessons highlight the lack of representation and commitment to economic, social, and political policies globally.

Kapur's work underscores the importance of making data readily available, analyzed, and actionable for on-the-ground actors, both in India and worldwide, as we navigate the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter Two, titled 'How to Build “Meaningful Bonds” with Poor Young Women? State Interventions during the Lockdown in Argentina' by Ana Cecilia Gaitán, moves the reader to the situation unfolding in the South American country of Argentina.

[3] *Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2022*

Gaitán's chapter looks at the ways in which the Argentinian state authorities had to invent and reinvent themselves. Coming from a place of precarity, having just been established some months before the pandemic struck, the *National Ministry of Women, Genders, and Diversity* and its provincial counterpart in Buenos Aires (Argentina's capital city) and given the decentralized nature of the government, as cited by Gaitán, the local governments and state authorities were at the forefront of making sure measure to slow down the spread of the virus and mitigate the socio-economic issues that came with it.

Gaitán uses these two questions to explore and measure the effectiveness of state action to prevent and mitigate violence against women and girls: "How does the state provide care and support with limited territorial interventions?" and *"How does the state maintain this bond when it must dispense with the facilities and types of interaction that are built on daily life and proximity?"*

This essay, through three distinct sections, examines the Argentinian government's accountability and flexibility in the face of a crisis, what a decentralized approach to care can look like through the example of a commercial middle-class district that goes by a pseudonym in the chapter (Las Luciérnagas), and lastly examines the "persistent invisibility" (to borrow Nidhi Kapur's words) of women and girls' issues amidst this.

The data looks at digital or virtual lines of action—from social media posts by government agencies to distributing relief materials and information locally— to understand the state's approach to mitigating the effects of the deadly pandemic. The study of the Las Luciérnagas District and the examination of state action, especially in making social care accessible during shelter-in-place orders, points us to the effectiveness and scalability of community care, or *"The neighborhood looks after the neighborhood."*

Gaitán's chapter prompts practitioners and development scholars in India to examine how we rely on community-based collective care: How community and collective care[4] rather than state-sponsored care has been used in other contexts as well.

Chapter Three by Nokukhanya Ngcobo, Zinhle Nkosi, and Ayub Sheik explores the experiences of young female rural students during the COVID-19 lockdown when they were sent home due to university residence closures. This chapter sheds light on the often-overlooked psychosocial challenges faced by young women and girls while sheltering in place.

The authors focus on the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, where scarce resources, rising unemployment, and salary cuts have resulted in economic hardships. These hardships have further exacerbated pre-existing gender inequalities, including increased incidents of domestic violence, limited access to education and healthcare, and food and nutrition insecurity. The authors provide qualitative insights into the experiences of eight undergraduate women who were forced to return home to rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal following the lockdown.

The study reveals three main themes—home environment experiences, societal experiences, and personal experiences—each with its own sub-themes. While not all sub-themes will be discussed here for brevity, a few specific sub-themes stand out.

One notable sub-theme explores how living conditions during the pandemic disregarded physical distancing norms, leading to increased instances of domestic violence, intensified household chores, and prioritization of care work over education for women and girls.

Another significant sub-theme focuses on the psychosocial effects of the pandemic on youth, particularly young women. It highlights the

[4] *https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/04/11/women-self-help-groups-combat-covid19-coronavirus-pandemic-india*

prevalence of fake news, the impact of salon closures, the social stigma associated with being a government aid recipient, the stigmatization of COVID-19 infection, and the adoption of unhealthy lifestyles.

The respondents reported adverse effects on their mental health and social ridicule due to salon closures and receiving government aid. The authors emphasize the need for empathy in addressing these issues, particularly those faced by young women and girls. Social stigma and isolation resulting from COVID-19 further exacerbate the risk of conflicts and domestic violence[5], emphasizing the urgency of a compassionate approach.

Section two opens with a chapter on building and fostering alternate models to sustain education, which sets the tone for the entire section.

All four chapters in this section highlight the psychosocial and psychological impact that the pandemic and lockdowns have had on young women and girls from different countries and contexts.

Chapter Four, titled 'Women Teachers Support Girls during the COVID-19 School Closures in Uganda' by Christine Apiot Okudi introduces the *Senior Woman Teacher (SWT)*. In the absence of support mechanisms to guide and counsel young women and girls in school during the COVID-19 lockdowns and to guide them through school reopening and re-enrollments, or to support *"child mothers and pregnant girls", SWTs have been recognized by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) in Uganda as "as one of the basic requirements and minimum standards for the operation of schools (MoES, 2013)."*

The author expounds on the continued need for SWTs in schools across Uganda to identify and address issues affecting young women and girls in the face of school closures. This is backed by findings from the survey conducted which pointed out that: Access to guidance and counseling from SWTs stood at 91% of the school girls interviewed and 85% of the LC1 women representatives appreciated the support of the SWTs.

Like *Anganwadis (a type of rural child care center)* and ASHA workers[6] in India, the SWTs have better access and inroads to the community and the people. The SWTs also have a better chance of making interpersonal and social connections with the girls and their families. The author illustrates the significance of adolescent health information and a robust support system in mitigating challenges faced by young girls. This evidence underscores the transformative impact that access to such resources can have on young women and girls.

Chapters five, six, and seven examine, among socio-economic factors, the psychosocial impact, among other indicators, of the COVID-19-induced lockdowns on young college-going women in Poland, across rural Ethiopia, and New Delhi.

Chapter Five uses Dinners in the Time of Pandemic, defined as a "grassroots initiative based on the concept of care" in Poland by the authors as a case study to understand the very concept of care. "We created Dinners in the Time of Pandemic to facilitate supporting people in urgent need of food by connecting them with individuals who were willing to share their supplies," write the authors, while also stating that the initiative has only been operating for four months (A/N: since the time of publishing of the volume). This chapter stitches together the theoretical understanding of 'care' with the context in Poland, and finally with the authors' findings and understanding of care after having engaged with the initiative.

Chapters Six and Seven specifically look at the experiences of college-going students in Ethiopia and India. While differences in context remain — geographical, cultural, religious, sexual

[5] *Psychological Consequences of Social Isolation During COVID-19 Outbreak by Pietrabissa Giada, Simpson Susan G. (2020) https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.02201*
[6] *https://theleaflet.in/asha-and-anganwadi-workers-are-the-backbones-of-indias-rural-health-and-care-services/*

orientation, and legislative — the problems arising from the lockdowns, unfortunately, resonate across both countries.

Cut off from campuses, peers, and classes, the young women from across Ethiopia and New Delhi have to reckon with increasing domestic and care work, patriarchal bias in accessing online education, diminishing financial and job prospects, early and forced marriage, gender-based violence within and outside homes, and mental and physical health issues, among other socio-political problems.

"The girls who participated in our study had many fears and uncertainties about the future, but every one of them said that she was looking forward to continuing her education," reported the chapter by Hannah Pugh, Eleni Negash, Frehiwot Tesfaye, and Madalyn Nielsen from agriculture, technical, vocational, education, and training ATVET colleges across Ethiopia.

"Anxiety related to their academic lives, to the loss of income, and to the increased fear of losing out on educational opportunities in a country that prioritizes boys' education," note Richa Rana, Poonam Yadav, and Shreya Sandhu — authors of chapter seven titled 'Exploring the Psychosocial Experiences of Women Under-Graduates in Delhi, India, during the COVID-19 Pandemic'.

In both chapters, we observed respondents describe their experience during the lockdown as *"feelings of frustration and hopelessness," "loss of goals" and "just a lot of monotony right now"* (sic).

College campus spaces to break free from patriarchal norms were lost, along with the sudden shift back to a hetero-patriarchal set-up at home. *"In the back of the mind, there is a lingering tension that when there was a college there was some joy in our life. Going to college daily, traveling daily. And for me, they were mainly solo trips,"* said a college student in Delhi, lamenting the time she had to herself - a luxury during lockdowns.

The study of ATVET students from across Ethiopia and the undergraduate students in Delhi underline warnings given by social scientists since the beginning of the pandemic and lockdowns: That already existing socio-economic inequalities combined with the consequences of the pandemic will push back any progress made to bolster women's presence in higher education. To ensure the full participation of young women in colleges after the lockdowns were lifted, both chapters underline the need to address academic anxieties and provide support for the various forms of distress, including financial, social, psychological, and psychosocial challenges.

In the **third section** of the volume, titled "Vulnerabilities," the focus is on examining the experiences of gender and sexual minorities in accessing the medico-legal infrastructure during the global implementation of lockdown measures.

This section juxtaposes real life incidents with the legal framework to highlight the importance of social change and robust political will. It underscores that, without these catalysts, marginalized and underserved populations will continue to be reduced to mere statistics, rendering the strength of the law on paper ineffectual.

Chapter Eight 'Lockdown and Violence against Women and Children: Insights from Hospital-Based Crisis Intervention Centers in Mumbai, India' is based on the experiences of survivors of violence who sought help at Dilaasa centers[7] during lockdown. The authors use the challenges faced by adolescent and young women survivors in seeking help and those faced by counselors in providing it to demonstrate the need for effective and prompt state response during times of crisis.

A UN survey conducted in 13 countries reports that nearly 1 in 2 women and girls report direct or indirect experiences of violence since the start of the pandemic[8]. Violence against women (VAW) is

[7] *https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/dilaasa-crisis-centres-prove-a-haven-for-women-facing-domestic-violence-118100500109_1.html*
[8] *https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2021/11/covid-19-and-violence-against-women-what-the-data-tells-us*

associated with a wide range of adverse physical, sexual, and mental health impacts (Rege and Bhate-Deosthali 2018).

With the public health system overwhelmed, private healthcare providers overcharging or shutting down services termed as 'non-essential', and despite directives by the government to continue the provision of VAW/C (violence against women/children) response services, shelter homes, child welfare services, child welfare officers, and other services were not available or slow to respond.

The authors of this chapter turn to one of the few functioning and responsive services during the time of lockdown— the Dilasaa Centers in Mumbai. *"At Dilaasa centers, survivors of violence are provided with psychological support through empowerment counseling, an emergency shelter in the hospital, police aid and legal intervention, and medical and medico - legal support. Dilaasa counselors liaise with other support agencies…"* These centers continue to provide support over the phone or in person when needed.

The authors of this section provide us with a thematic breakdown of the challenges faced by survivors of violence who approached the Dilasaa centers, and also about the challenges faced by support personnel at these centers. State apathy combined with entrenched patriarchal beliefs, restricted mobility, restriction of services, and uncertainty proved to be a deadly combination for women and girls facing different kinds of violence within and outside their homes.

Chapter Nine looks at another aspect of violence faced by young women and girls during the pandemic: early and forced marriages. A 2020 report by UNICEF warns us that ten million additional child marriages may occur before the end of the decade due to the pandemic and its fallout[9].

What this chapter, by Gayatri Sharma and Ayesha Khaliq, along with the other chapters in this section aim to do is to map out the ways in which communal strife and discrimination along with preexisting lack of access to support and rights have pushed back progress made in the sphere of girls' education.

Girls from underserved and marginalized communities whose access to education and social services has been neglected are at a higher risk of early marriage or trafficking[10]. The National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) tells us that 48% of girls in India with no education were married below 18 years of age, as compared to only 4% among those who attained higher education.

Unfounded beliefs and practices, and communal tensions compounded the issues faced by women and girls from Muslim and historically oppressed caste communities. *"The social impact of the marginalization of Muslims was first felt when Muslim women had difficulty in accessing medical services[11],"* state the authors.

Reverse migration, religious bias against Muslims, poverty, fear of loss of control, and the devastating effects of the second COVID-19 wave in India have been rightly flagged by the authors as contributing to the reversal of progress made to end child marriage in India, especially among historically oppressed and marginalized communities. The authors also flag that the central government's increase in the legal marriageable age of girls from eighteen to twenty-one, while well-intentioned, might be misplaced. Unless the distance between the government and its services with the people who need it the most is bridged, the laws will only remain effective on paper.

Chapter Ten, which looks at the child domestic workers in Ethiopia serves as a sobering reminder of the consequences that arise when child labor laws and other intersecting issues are disregarded

[9] *https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/10-million-additional-girls-risk-child-marriage-due-covid-19#:~:text=NEW%20YORK%2C%208%20March%2020 21,analysis%20released%20by%20UNICEF%20today.*
[10] *https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/documents/1783/Child_marriage_in_India_law_guide_and_directory.pdf*
[11] *https://thewire.in/communalism/rajasthan-muslim-woman-baby-dies-doctor*

amidst the ongoing pandemic. The Biruh Tesfa for All program serves as the site of research for this chapter. This program operates for extremely marginalized and disadvantaged girls in poor urban areas of Ethiopia, with adult female mentors trained to facilitate sessions on basic education and life skills for the children forced to work. Under the Labor Law in Ethiopia, the chapter states, children under the age of fifteen are prohibited from working and those aged fifteen to seventeen are considered young workers.

Like the Senior Woman Teacher (SWTs) from Chapter Four (Okudi, 2020), these mentors have the space to negotiate with the employers and families of the girl domestic workers, once again demonstrating the excellent reach of decentralizing response needs. "...beneficiaries and mentors from this study described such programs as giving child domestic workers hope and a positive outlook for a better future."

While the significance of prevention and support programs for child domestic workers cannot be overstated, the current reality is that such initiatives remain limited in scale and fragmented. Consequently, their ability to effectively reach and assist the vast number of marginalized girls engaged in domestic work is uncertain. This chapter is an excellent primer for practitioners and policymakers looking to study and improve the reach of protective and preventative programs for young women and girls in marginalized communities the world over.

Chapter Eleven is the only piece in this volume that centers on individuals who openly identify as transgender women and centers around the program and policy needs of individuals outside mainstream sexual and gender identities.

The participants included transgender women from eighteen to twenty-five years of age in Thailand and included students as well as full-time and part-time workers. Through the interviews, five prominent themes surfaced: the adverse economic repercussions of COVID-19, heightened tensions experienced during self-quarantine, discrimination encountered in online learning, the breakdown of relationships due to the pandemic, and challenges in accessing hormone treatment.

Already stigmatized and discriminated against, the pandemic and lockdowns only meant limited economic and career opportunities for those already in the margins. This also started a domino effect starting from shrinking job and financial opportunities, which led to worsening healthcare, which led to diminishing mental and psychosocial health and isolation.

What is also interesting to note is the effect the lockdowns had on relationships: *"The state quarantine has not only affected economic lives but has also resulted in the separation of many couples who still have no legal status because their union is not recognized in law."* This chapter has highlighted the imperative for human rights movements pertaining to the LGBTQ+ community to enhance inclusivity and advocate for improved social support and rights-based inclusion.

Conclusion

There is no clear or easy answer, as the contributors of the book point out— the progress made before COVID-19 wreaked havoc was hard-earned over decades, and the pandemic has only exacerbated inequalities based on gender, religion, caste, economic status, and geography. But the need of the hour, this volume and the chapters reiterate, is to acknowledge that exclusion leads to vulnerability and exploitation.

In addition to the challenges highlighted by the contributors, it is important to recognize the important work being done by organizations like the grassroots nonprofits supported by Shadhika to

combat gender injustice. By providing educational opportunities and investing in community-based grassroots leadership, Shadhika aims to break the cycle of exclusion and vulnerability that can lead to exploitation. Shadhika believes education is the most effective vehicle for women and girls to move out of chronic disenfranchisement and towards self-determination.

An important aspect that enables this work, something pointed out by the authors in the preface, is to apply a decolonized and intersectional lens within global development and turn to community leaders to lead the way for development work. This has helped organizations like Shadhika draw from the wisdom and experience of leaders on the ground to respond to emerging dynamic and contextual needs.

This book is a must-read for gender justice and development scholars and practitioners who want to understand the effect of the pandemic on young women and girls through the loss of or effect on education. It is also a great resource to understand the psychological and psychosocial effects of the pandemic on girls.

❑ ❑ ❑

Call for Research Papers!

The **Regional Centre for Urban & Environmental Studies** is pleased to invite contributions for **Urban World** in the form of articles and research papers from researchers, authors, publishers, academicians, administrative and executive officers, readers on : **Urban Governance, Planning and Development.**

Articles could be between 2000 to 4000 words. They may contain compatible tables, charts, graphs, etc. We reserve the right to edit for sense, style and space. Contributions may be e-mailed in digital form as a Word file to the Director, RCUES, Mumbai.

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ROUND & ABOUT

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Climate Change Update

The Union Minister of Earth Sciences, Shri Kiren Rijiju gave reply to a question in Lok Sabha on 2nd August, 2023 in respect of the status of climate change in India. The reply was given out as Press Release by the Press Information Bureau. Replies to parliamentary questions constitute authoritative on the matter they relate to. Same is reproduced below:

Impact of Climate Change upon the Indian subcontinent

Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) in 2020 has published 'Assessment of Climate Change over the Indian Region', which contains a comprehensive assessment of the impact of climate change upon the Indian subcontinent. The highlights of the report are as follows:

1. India's average temperature has risen by around 0.7 deg. C during 1901-2018.
2. Frequency of daily precipitation extremes (rainfall intensities >150 mm per day) increased by about 75% during 1950-2015.
3. The frequency and spatial extent of droughts over India has increased significantly during 1951-2015.
4. Sea-level rise in the North Indian Ocean occurred at a rate of 3.3 mm per year in the last two and half decades (1993-2017).
5. Frequency of Severe Cyclonic Storms over Arabian Sea has increased during the post monsoon seasons of 1998-2018.

India Meteorological Department (IMD) routinely monitors Climate over Indian Region and brings out yearly publication viz. "Annual Climate summary". IMD issues monthly climate summary. Annual climate summary includes information about the temperature, Rainfall and extreme weather events occurring during the concerned period.

This information was given by the Union Minister of Earth Sciences, Shri Kiren Rijiju in a written reply in the Lok Sabha today.

Reference: Ministry of Earth Sciences [Posted On: 02 August, 2023]. (https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1945036)

Sanitation Worker Invited as Chief Guest at Independence Day Event (2023) in Tamil Nadu

Sanitation has had steady improvement during the past two decades mainly on account of the legal framework that has emerged in the form of statutory rules. These developments also include removal of stigma attached to the sanitation work and its workers in the field. It has now been fully realized that they are doing precious work so useful in the overall life of the citizens, and in the context of the fundamental rights they are entitled to the human dignity as others. Now instead of sweeper, we call housekeeping assistant, etc. Indian Railways has notified the list of such designations, as other government organizations have done. Garbage handling is now waste management. It is gratifying to note that this year a conservancy worker Manjula, in her mid-40s and a conservancy van driver Anbarasan, jointly hoisted the national flag at the premises of Urbaser Sumeet, a private company engaged in waste management, in Chennai.

(Reference: Times of India, Mumbai dated 16 August, 2023).

NATIONAL GREEN HYDROGEN MISSION AND MAHARASHTRA STATE GREEN HYDROGEN MISSION

Environment protection and environment amelioration are the avowed objectives of Governments all over the world, because of the hazards of pollution affecting human health. Now a new dimension is added to these objectives namely the objective of reducing greenhouse gases emissions and thus, tackling climate change, which is a danger staring at the face of humanity, with its dire consequences, many of which are already manifest.

Search for the alternative energy to the fossil fuels started in the early 1970s on account of the energy crisis that was felt globally because of a temporary blockade by the oil producing countries. Green hydrogen is one of the alternative sources of energy.

What are the uses of green hydrogen in India?

Hydrogen can be utilized for long-duration storage of renewable energy, replacement of fossil fuels in industry, clean transportation, and potentially also for decentralized power generation, aviation, and marine transport. Replacing fossil fuels with green hydrogen will dramatically reduce emissions from industries such as steelmaking, refining, and chemical production. Green hydrogen can also serve as a substitute for traditional natural gas-derived hydrogen in industries like fertilizer production.

(Reference: eia https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/hydrogen/use-of-hydrogen.php#:~:text=..)

1. National Green Hydrogen Mission

Green Hydrogen is produced using electrolysis of water with electricity generated by renewable energy. The carbon intensity ultimately depends on the carbon neutrality of the source of electricity (i.e., the more renewable energy there is in the electricity fuel mix, the "greener" the hydrogen produced). India has set its sight on becoming energy independent by 2047 and achieving Net Zero by 2070. To achieve this target, increasing renewable energy use across all economic spheres is central to India's Energy Transition. Green Hydrogen is considered a promising alternative for enabling this transition. Hydrogen can be utilized for long-duration storage of renewable energy, replacement of fossil fuels in industry, clean transportation, and potentially also for decentralized power generation, aviation, and marine transport. The National Green Hydrogen Mission has the following objectives:

- Making India a leading producer and supplier of Green Hydrogen in the world
- Creation of export opportunities for Green Hydrogen and its derivatives
- Reduction in dependence on imported fossil fuels and feedstock
- Development of indigenous manufacturing capabilities
- Attracting investment and business opportunities for the industry
- Creating opportunities for employment and economic development
- Supporting R&D projects

(https://www.india.gov.in/spotlight/national-green-hydrogen-mission)

The National Green Hydrogen Mission aims to provide a comprehensive action plan for establishing a Green Hydrogen ecosystem and catalyzing a systemic response to the opportunities and challenges of this sunrise sector. The recently launched mission, with an outlay of Rs.19, 700 crores, will facilitate transition of the economy to low carbon intensity, reduce dependence on fossil fuel imports, and make the country assume technology and market leadership in this sunrise sector. The target is to reach an annual production of 5 MMJT by 2030. The targeted production capacity will bring over Rs. 8 lakh crore in total investments and will result in creation of over 6 lakh GREEN HYDROGEN MISSION - Expected to reduce ₹ 1 lakh crore worth of fossil fuel imports and nearly 50 MMT per annum of CO2 emissions by 2030

On 4th January 2023, the Union Cabinet approved the National Green Hydrogen Mission with an outlay of ₹ 19,744 crore from FY 2023-24 to FY 2029-30. The overarching objective of the Mission is to make India a global hub for production, usage and export of Green Hydrogen and its derivatives.

The following components have been announced as part of the Mission:

I. Facilitating demand creation through exports and domestic utilization;

ii. Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition (SIGHT) programme, which includes incentives for manufacturing of electrolysers and production of green hydrogen;

iii. Pilot Projects for steel, mobility, shipping etc.;

iv. Development of Green Hydrogen Hubs;

v. Support for infrastructure development;

vi. Establishing a robust framework of regulations and standards;

vii. Research & Development programme;

viii. Skill development programme; and

ix. Public awareness and outreach programme.

The expected outcomes of the Mission, by 2030, are as follows:

i) India's Green Hydrogen production capacity is likely to reach 5 MMT per annum, contributing to reduction in dependence on import of fossil fuels. Achievement of Mission targets is expected to reduce a cumulative ₹ 1 lakh crore worth of fossil fuel imports by 2030.

ii) Nearly 50 MMT per annum of CO2 emissions are expected to be averted through production and use of the targeted quantum of Green Hydrogen.

This information was given by the Union Minister of Renewable Energy & Power Sh. R.K. Singh in the Lok Sabha on 16 March, 2023.

(Reference: PIB Press Release dated 16 March, 2023).

2 (a) India's First Hydrogen Fuel Cell Bus Service to Hit the Roads in Leh

This is the heading of a news item appeared in the Times of India, Mumbai edition dated 19 August, 2023. It says: "New Delhi. India's fist hydrogen fuel cell bus service will start in Leh with the first of its kind commercial trial of the futuristic technology on public roads in the high altitude cold desert of Ladakh. The project is being implemented by India's largest power producer NTPC, which is supplying five hydrogen fuel cell buses to the Leh administration for intra city service. The state run company has also built a re-fuelling station and captive solar plant of 1.7 megawatt.

The buses are being sought from Ashok Leyland through a global expression of interest. The first bus reached Leh in August, 2023. The project comes within three years of PM Modi announcing in his 2020

Independence Day speech a vision of a carbon-neutral Ladakh. The project stands out on two counts. This is the first time hydrogen fuel cell buses will be deployed commercially on public roads in India. It is also a first for the technology to be tested at altitudes above 11,500 feet and a rarefied atmosphere with less oxygen in the air.

2 (b) Aircraft with Hydrogen Fuel takes Flight

German hydrogen electric aircraft powertrain developer H2FLY has celebrated a significant milestone by conducting a pilot flight of an electric aircraft powered by liquid hydrogen. This pioneering achievement deemed a world's first, opens up new possibilities for zero-emission long-distance flights.

The HY4 demonstrator electric aircraft, piloted for the first time, utilized cryogenically stored liquid hydrogen instead of pressurized gaseous hydrogen storage.

(Reference: Fossbytes, 9 September, 2023- https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=699713705530010&set=a.644458231055558&type=3&sfnsn=wiwspmo&mibextid=Na33Lf)

3. Maharashtra State Green Hydrogen Mission

Maharashtra State has also embarked on State Green Hydrogen Mission. The State Policy was declared on 4th July, 2023. The Press Release inter alia says that "the demand for green hydrogen in the state is presently 500 kilo tons annually. We aim to touch 1.5 million tons of this renewable energy in future.

Broad features of the State Policy

- To make state leader in green hydrogen and its derivatives ecosystem
- Production target of 500 kilo tones per annum of green hydrogen by 2030
- Cabinet sanctions Rs.8562 crore funds.
- Maharashtra budget announced an investment of Rs.75,000 crore in green hydrogen, green ammonia, solar and wind energy for 2023-24

Amendments to the Energy Conservation Act, 2001 (2010 and 2023)

The Energy Conservation Act, 2001 was enacted to provide for efficient use of energy and its conservation and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. The said Act provides for establishment and incorporation of the Bureau of Energy Efficiency and confers certain powers upon the Central Government, the State Government and the Bureau of Energy Efficiency to enforce measures for efficient use of energy and its conservation.

2. The Energy Conservation Act, 2001 was first amended in the year 2010 to address various new factors which emerged with the development of the energy market over a period of time and to provide for more efficient and effective use of energy and its conservation.

3. After amendments made in the Act in 2022, the amendment Act came into force on January 1, 2023.

Reasons for Amendment: In order to provide measures for complying the commitments made by India with UNFCCC, the Act has been amended now, the additions of the following provisions:

(i) facilitate the achievement of "Panchamrit"— as five nectar elements presented by India in COP-26 (Conference of Parties -26) in Glasgow, 2021;

(ii) Promote renewable energy and development of domestic Carbon market to battle climate change;

(iii) Introduce new concepts such as Carbon trading and mandate use of non-fossil sources to ensure faster de-carbonization of Indian economy and help in achieving sustainable development goals in line with the Paris Agreement and various other actions related to climate change.

4. On 12 December, 2022, while speaking on the floor of the Rajya Sabha, Shri R.K. Singh, Union Minister of New and Renewable Energy Singh said that India is a leader when it comes to renewable energy. The Ujala scheme (Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All, which distributes LED bulbs across households in the country) has resulted in a reduction of 105 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, and saved 129 billion units of energy, Singh said. In 2015, India had pledged in COP21 in Paris that by 2030 we will reduce the emissions intensity of our economies by 33-35% – we have already reduced it by more than 30% and we are only in 2022, he said. "That is why in renewable energy and climate action and clean energy, India is the undisputed leader,"

5. The new provisions include prescribing minimum consumption of non-fossil energy sources as energy or feedstock by the designated consumers. This will help in reduction of fossil fuel-based energy consumption and resultant carbon emissions to the atmosphere. Similarly, a need is also felt to provide legal framework for a carbon market with the objective of incentivizing actions for emission reduction leading to increased investments in clean energy and energy efficiency areas, by the private sectors.

6. Thus, the amended Energy Conservation Act, 2023, inter alia, seeks to—

(a) Mandate use of non-fossil sources, including Green Hydrogen, Green Ammonia, Biomass and Ethanol for energy and feedstock;

(b) Establish Carbon Markets;

(c) Bring large residential buildings within the fold of Energy Conservation regime;

(d) Enhance the scope of Energy Conservation Building Code;

(e) Amend penalty provisions;

(f) Increase members in the Governing Council of Bureau of Energy Efficiency;

(g) Empower the State Electricity Regulatory Commissions to make regulations for smooth discharge of its functions.

(Reference: Legislative Bill as was presented to Parliament and the Act passed by Parliament- https://prsindia.org/billtrack/the-energy-conservation-amendment-bill-2022. The Act as published in the Government Gazette is in public domain.

The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023.

The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 has been amended this year and the amended Act published in the Official Gazette on 4 August, 2023.

The name of the Act is changed to **Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam**

The purpose of reporting this amendment in the Urban World (a journal on urban and environmental studies) is that the first two objectives, as mentioned in the recitals of the amendment Act, are related to the environment. They are as under:

— "WHEREAS, the importance of forests is to be realized to enable achievement of national targets of Net Zero Emission by 2070 and maintain or enhance the forest carbon stocks through ecologically balanced sustainable development;

— AND WHEREAS, Nationality Determined Contribution targets of the country envisage creating carbon sink of additional 2.5 to 3.0 billion tons of CO2 equivalent by 2030.

India's Updated First Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement (2021-2030) August 2022 Submission to UNFCCC Government of India

The Commitments include the following (only two commitments are mentioned here)

1. To create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.
   [Forests are the natural carbon sinks. “Plants on land have taken up approximately 25% of the carbon that humans have put into the atmosphere” (earth observatory: nasa.gov/features/carbon. cycle)].

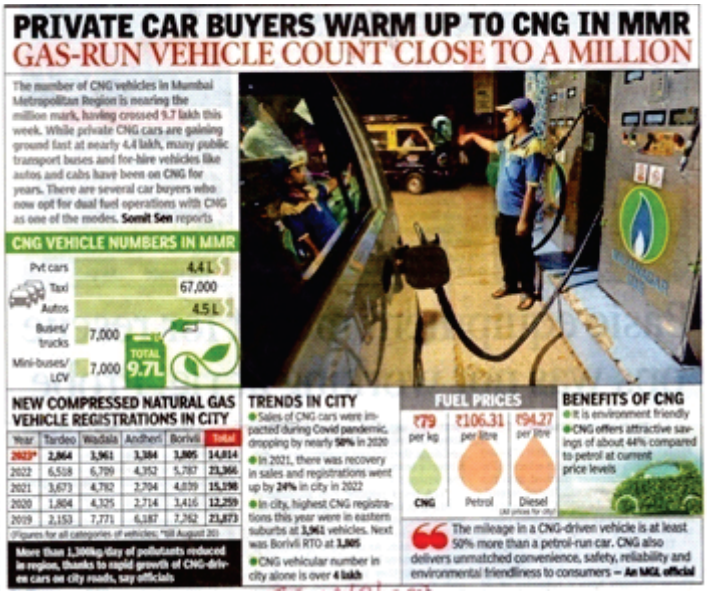
2. India reaffirms its commitment to the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. This update to India's existing NDC is a step forward towards our long term goal of reaching net-zero by 2070.

Increasing Number of CNG Vehicles in Mumbai Metropolitan Region

In this column, in a previous issue of the Urban World, (January-March, 2023) on the basis of the reports it was mentioned that Mumbai city had become one of the most polluted cities in India. The main reasons were a large number of construction works which generate pollution of Particulate Matter (PM 2.5), a deadly pollutant affecting lungs. As per the AQI reports the present concentration of PM 2.5 in Mumbai is 22.5 (µg/m³). PM2.5 concentration in Mumbai is currently 4.5 times the WHO annual air quality guideline value.

Reference: https://www.iqair.com/in-en/india/maharashtra/mumbai.

In the April-June 2023 issue various measures taken by the Mumbai Municipal Corporation were reported. But the hard fact is that so far this hectic pace of constructions all around the Mumbai will be there, the PM 2.5 pollution will persist. Another major reason of pollution in Mumbai is the presence of 42 lakh plus vehicles in the city. In this respect, we now have a report from the Times of India, Mumbai dated 22 August, 2023, mentioning the increasing number of CNG vehicles. The report inter alia says that there is an increasing trend in CNG vehicles in the MMR region including city of Mumbai. According to the officials, (as reported) the increasing number of CNG vehicles is reducing more than 1,300kg/day of pollutants on account of CNG vehicles. Together with increasing number of electric vehicles (6% annual increase on an average), it is hoped that pollution of Mumbai, in respect of pollution due to vehicles will abate to some extent. As far e-vehicles are concerned, since 2021-22, 7448 e-cars are registered in Mumbai.



PRIVATE CAR BUYERS WARM UP TO CNG IN MMR

GAS-RUN VEHICLE COUNT CLOSE TO A MILLION

The number of CNG vehicles in Mumbai Metropolitan Region is nearing the million mark, having crossed 9.7 lakh this week. While private CNG cars are gaining ground fast at nearly 4.4 lakh, many public transport buses and for-hire vehicles like autos and cabs have been on CNG for years. There are several car buyers who now opt for dual fuel operations with CNG as one of the modes. **Somit Sen** reports

CNG VEHICLE NUMBERS IN MMR

Pvt cars	4.4 L
Taxi	67,000
Autos	4.5 L
Buses/ trucks	7,000
Mini-buses/ LCV	7,000
TOTAL	9.7L

NEW COMPRESSED NATURAL GAS VEHICLE REGISTRATIONS IN CITY

Year	Tardeo	Wadala	Andheri	Borivli	Total
2023*	2,864	3,961	3,384	3,805	14,014
2022	6,518	6,799	4,352	5,787	23,366
2021	3,673	4,782	2,704	4,039	15,198
2020	1,804	4,325	2,714	3,416	12,259
2019	2,153	7,771	6,187	7,262	23,873

(*Figures for all categories of vehicles; *till August 20)

More than 1,300kg/day of pollutants reduced in region, thanks to rapid growth of CNG-driven cars on city roads, say officials

TRENDS IN CITY

- Sales of CNG cars were impacted during Covid pandemic, dropping by nearly **50%** in 2020
- In 2021, there was recovery in sales and registrations went up by **24%** in city in 2022
- In city, highest CNG registrations this year were in eastern suburbs at **1,961** vehicles. Next was Borivli RTO at **1,805**
- CNG vehicular number in city alone is over **4 lakh**

FUEL PRICES

₹79 per kg	₹106.31 per litre	₹94.27 per litre
CNG	Petrol	Diesel

(All prices for city)

BENEFITS OF CNG

- It is environment friendly
- CNG offers attractive savings of about 44% compared to petrol at current price levels

"The mileage in a CNG-driven vehicle is at least 50% more than a petrol-run car. CNG also delivers unmatched convenience, safety, reliability and environmental friendliness to consumers – **An MGL official**

World Electric Vehicle Day Celebrated

9th September is observed as the World EV Day.

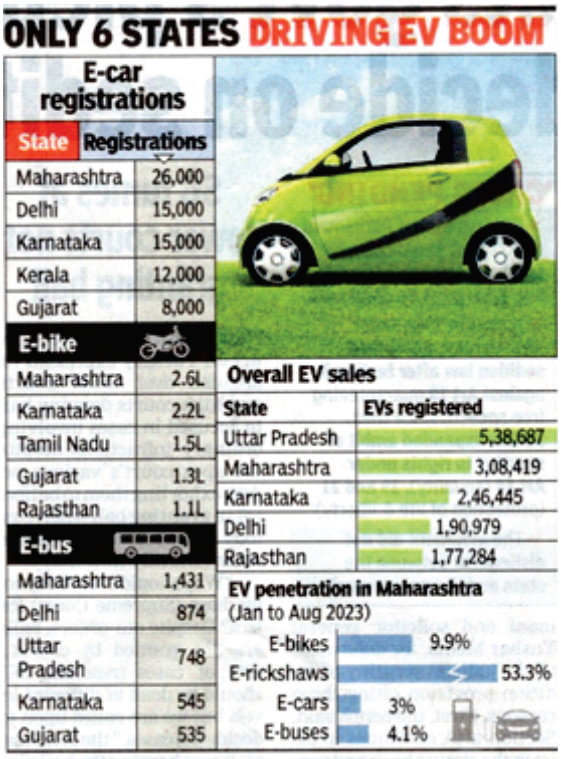
Now in its fourth year, World EV Day™ unites companies and individuals, policy makers and thought leaders, for a day of activations and announcements that continue to propel the e-mobility movement across the globe. (https://www.worldevday.org/about-wevd).

We're talking about September 9, which is more famously now conceived as the 'World EV Day'. The global automotive space celebrates the growing momentum of the EV industry, highlighting the need for sustainable mobility, free of tailpipe emissions. The whispers of the segment have started to transition into choruses, yet, remain restrained by marked challenges.

(https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/renewables/world-ev-day-electric-vehicle-startups-on-indias-mobility-...)

Electric Vehicles: As far e-vehicles are concerned, since 2021-22, 7448 e-cars are registered in Mumbai. The All India position is that registration of electric vehicles in India increased 209% in 2022 over the previous calendar year and their **total number touched 28.3 lakh till the first week of August, 2023**. In the past seven and a half months of the current calendar year 8.5 lakh EVs have been registered in States and Union Territories.

The accompanying table shows the position succinctly.



Promotion of EVs: For promotion of EV s, the government has introduced two schemes, namely the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) and the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric (FAME) scheme. The second phase of FAME focuses on supporting electrification of public and shared transportation through subsidies to electric buses, three-wheelers, passenger cars and two-wheelers.

(Reference for EVs – Times of India Mumbai dated 13 August, 2023).

National Smart City Award 2022

CATEGORY	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3
National Smart City Award	Indore	Surat	Agra
State Award	Madhya Pradesh	Tamil Nadu	Rajasthan & Uttar Pradesh
Built environment	Coimbatore	Indore	New Town Kolkata & Kanpur
Culture	Ahmedabad	Bhopal	Thanjavur
Economy	Jabalpur	Indore	Lucknow
Governance	Pimpri Chinchwad	Jabalpur	Udaipur
Mobility	Chandigarh	New Town Kolkata	Sagar (MP)
Sanitation	Indore	Kakinada	Ahmedabad

Smart Cities Mission was launched on 25 June, 2015, with the objective of providing core infrastructure, clean and sustainable environment and a decent quality of life to their citizens though the application of smart solutions. Though the Mission was to end on June, 2023, it has been extended by another year. Of the total proposed projects under the Mission 6041 (76%) projects of the total value of Rs.1, 10,635 crore have been completed and the remaining 1894 projects worth Rs.60, 095 will be completed by 30 June, 2024.

According to the (PIB) Press Release of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, posted on 25 August 2023 Indore has been adjudged the country's best smart city while Madhya Pradesh has received the state award. Surat and Agra won the second and third spots in the best smart city category in the Indian Smart Cities Award Contest (ISAC) under the Smart Cities Mission.

A list of awardees may be seen in the accompanying statement, which is a paper cutting from the Times of India, Mumbai dated 26 August, 2023. The press report inter alia says that a total of 845 nominations were received for ISAC for 2022 from 80 qualified smart cities. Of these, under the five awards categories, 66 final winners have been identified- 35 in project award, six in Innovation award, 13 in National/Zonal City award, five in state/UT award and seven in Partner Award categories.

The Hon'ble President of India will felicitate the winners of ISAC 2022 awards on 27th September 2023 at Indore, Madhya Pradesh

Reference: PIB press Release dated 25 August, 2023 -(https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1952144) & Times of India, Mumbai, 25 August, 2023.

New System Introduced in Air Pollution Monitoring

The National Air Quality Index (AQI) is used for reporting air quality parameters every day. It was launched on 17 October 2014 as an initiative under 'Swachh Bharat Mission. It is designed to act as 'One Number- One Colour-One Description' to judge the Air Quality for Common Man. It tells how clean or polluted the air is, and what associated health effects might be a concern for the public. The Central Pollution Control Board executes this nation-wide programme of ambient air quality monitoring known as National Air Quality Monitoring Programme.

The NAMP has been established with objectives to determine the present air quality status and trends and to control and regulate pollution from industries and other source to meet the air quality standards. It also provides background air quality data needed for industrial setting and town planning. There are six AQI categories, namely Good + Satisfactory, Moderately polluted, Poor, Very Poor, and Severe. The AQI shows eight pollutants (PM10, PM2.5, NO2, SO2, CO, O3, NH3, and Pb) for which short-term (up to 24-hourly averaging period). National Ambient Air Quality Standards are prescribed.

(Reference: PIB Press Release dated 17 October, 2014-(https://pib.gov.in/newsite/printrelease.aspx?relid=110654) and Site of CPCB-(https://cpcb.nic.in/Introduction/)

SAFAR Air was launched on 17 February 2015 at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology in Pune, Maharashtra. SAFAR is an acronym for System of Air Quality Weather Forecasting and Research, which was first launched in Delhi in 2010 during the Commonwealth Games. In 2015 it was extended to Mumbai and in Ahmedabad (2017). SAFAR chose to demonstrate its forecasting model in four different and contrasting micro-climates of Indian cities.

(Reference: safar.tropmet.res.in/ABOUT%20SAFAR-1-2-Details).

IITM's latest method Air Quality Early Warning System is the latest development in the field. SAFAR app used data from a smaller number of monitors and did not provide forecasts. Similarly, CPCB's daily air quality index is issued at 4 pm which averages out data from various monitors in the city, because of which hotspots would remain hidden. This new app besides measuring particulate matter, will also show the satellite images of cloud positions, and wind flow directions and also give data on temperature and humidity. This app will club two sets of analyses; as can be seen in the paper clipping from Times of India, Mumbai 29 August, 2023.

NOW, HOURLY UPDATES ON AIR POLLUTION
BECAUSE OF SAT IMAGERY, LOCAL READINGS
UPDATES EVERY HOUR
MODERN FORECAST
EARLIER PRACTICE

A New City is Coming Up in Mumbai Metropolitan Region

Mumbai Metropolitan Region is busting with huge development activities. The latest news is that the Mumbai Metropolitan Regional Authority, an special planning authority set up for the region by an Act, has recently announced setting up of a new city of the size of 350 sq.kms across the Mumbai city harbour where the MTHL bridge lands. MTHL is a bridge from Mumbai to Nhava-Sheva. MTHL, is an under-construction 21.8 km 6-lane access-controlled expressway grade road bridge, which will connect Mumbai with Navi Mumbai,. When completed, it would be the longest sea bridge in India. It is likely to be completed by December, 2023. It may be noted that along with Mumbai (about 600 sq.km), Navi Mumbai (344km) and under construction NAINA city (370 sq.km), this will be addition of a new city. The MMRDA Commissioner, Mr. Mukherjee said this in a press release, but he did not disclose further details of the proposed city. He said that the MMRDA is planning to make it among the few settlements in the country where infrastructure like transport connectivity is developed before the buildings come up. He further said that the New Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) and MTHL will each boost the national GDP by 1 per cent point, which will turn the New Mumbai region into a hotspot for economic activity.

(Reference: Times of India, Mumbai 16 September, 2023).

339 Died While Cleaning Sewers in last 5 Years

This is a heading of news in the Times of India, Mumbai 26 July, 2023 which raises many questions. India is making stupendous progress in various sectors. Technology has been developed for any process you name. In this scenario the continuing human death while cleaning sewers is a painful thing. The news item is based on a reply given to a question in the Lok Sabha by the Minister of State for Social Justice, Mr. Ramdas Athavale on 25 September on the floor of the House.

The sewers are known to be home to lethal gas which makes them death traps. It is a very sad state of affairs that such tragic things continue to occur. This shows that either the guidelines framed for this purpose are not sufficient and proper or their implementation is lethargic. This urgently calls for full mechanization of sewer lines and any negligence in observing the safety precautions should be viewed as serious crime on the part of the executing agency, the supervisor present on the scene and the contractor.

(Reference: Times of India, Mumbai dated 26 July, 2023. Comments are those of the columnist).

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