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"Other ways of knowing and doing": Globalizing social science knowledge in higher education

Mousumi Mukherjee
O.P. Jindal Global University, India: *mmukherjee@jgu.edu.in*
Nandita Koshal
O.P. Jindal Global University, India: *nkoshal@jgu.edu.in*

This special issue is the outcome of an international research symposium with the same title, "Other ways of knowing and doing": Globalizing social science knowledge in higher education", organized by the Centre for Comparative and Global Education at the International Institute for Higher Education Research and Capacity Building, O.P. Jindal Global University, India, during December 2017, in collaboration with the Oceania Comparative and International Education Society, Indian Ocean Comparative Education Society, World Council of Comparative Education Societies and the UNESCO-Chairs in Community-based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education.

Keywords: decolonizing research; participatory methodology; southern theory; decolonial thinking; Indigenous intellectuals; global intellectual history; India

INTRODUCTION[1]

The concept note of the international research symposium, "Other ways of knowing and doing": Globalizing social science knowledge in higher education[2], was inspired by the *Comparative Education Review* special issue "Toward a postcolonial comparative and international education" co-edited by Keita Takayama, Arathi Sriprakash, and Raewyn Connell (2015). The symposium was also inspired by the work of contemporary Indian historian of science and philosopher Dhruv Raina (2016). He argued for engaging in "other ways of knowing and doing" that may "raise new problems and suggest new methods and topics of inquiry" because of the limitations of the institutionalized modern Western science, and for "mainstreaming indigenous knowledge" systems with an "ideological commitment to sustainable development" (p. 267). The symposium, therefore, aimed to bring together scholars and intellectuals from India in conversation with other scholars in the world also working in the field of comparative and international

[1] **Acknowledgements:** We are deeply grateful to all the sponsors of the international research symposium for their support, particularly to the Oceania Comparative and International Education Society for the Fellowship and Networking Grant. We are thankful to all the valuable contributions for this special issue. We are also grateful to the past and the present editorial team of the *International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives* for continuing their commitment to publish this special issue in the middle of changes to their editorial team and a global pandemic.
[2] See: https://www.worldcces.org/international-research-symposium-sonepat-india-11-12-dec-2017.html

education, who are seeking to globalize social science knowledge creation in higher education.

HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

As defined by an expert in the field of comparative and international education, Erwin Epstein (2008), comparative education is "the application of the intellectual tools of history and social sciences to understanding international issues of education" (p. 373). However, though the scholars in the field have been mindful of contextual differences, the field's knowledge base has been highly unequal, as argued by Philip Altbach (1991), Past-President of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES). Likewise, Mukherjee (2019) notes that the "application of the intellectual tools of history and social sciences" referred to by Epstein has been a mostly Euro-American-centric understanding and knowledge of history and social sciences. However, the understanding of such history and social sciences have been evolving in recent years with the advent of critical bi-lingual and bi-cultural scholars in the field of comparative education. Therefore, in 2019, Regina Cortina, in her Presidential address at the CIES annual conference in San Francisco, argued for "decolonial thinking and research paradigms that contest North-South hierarchies in knowledge in order to promote equality and justice in local and global communities" (p. 463).

Much like Darder (2015, 2018) and Cortina (2019), as a "critical bicultural educational researcher" drawing on insights from her own empirical field research in India, Mukherjee (2017, 2019) argued how her "double consciousness" as a transnational "bi-cultural" researcher was useful in establishing intercultural dialogue and a relational participatory approach in conducting institutional ethnography and knowledge creation. This subjective identity as an "embodied knower" was methodologically powerful "in establishing intercultural dialogue in research and in seeking out subaltern voices during fieldwork" (Mukherjee, 2019, p. 10). Further, it proved to be useful in "doing Southern theory" (Takayama, Heimans, Amazan, & Maniam, 2016) by engaging with the critical writings of 19th century Bengali intellectual and education reformer, Rabindranath Tagore, for both analytic (ideological) and hermeneutic (affective historical) engagement with data gathered from the field.

The above discussion emphasizes that the "knowing" and "doing" of comparative education as a field of research has been changing in recent years with the faster processes of globalization and the increasing mobility of scholars around the globe and concurrent scholarly engagement of bi-lingual and bi-cultural academics in the field of comparative education. This is occurring even though the flagship journals in the field of comparative education continue to be published from the "English speaking" world, the academics from the global South, educated in the Universities of the global North, and those academics belonging to the marginalized population of the global North, carry with them a "subaltern sensibility" (Darder, 2018) for "knowing and doing" (Hall & Tandon, 2017; Park, 2017; Raina, 2016) research incorporating "local histories", "indigenous languages and cultures" (Cortina, 2010) and "subaltern knowledges" (Mignolo, 2000). This rich resource has the potential to actually enrich knowledge creation in the field of comparative education by expanding the "intellectual tools of history and social sciences to understanding international issues of education" (Epstein, 2008, p. 373).

"OTHER WAYS OF KNOWING AND DOING"

For this special issue, five papers by six scholars,[3] out of the 20 presented at the international research symposium in India, were selected for publication. These papers conceptually engaged with the writings and work of Indian social thinkers. The papers draw on the theoretical and pedagogical work of Tagore regarding "decolonization of the mind", on the work of Gandhi regarding "decolonization of the heart", on the work of B.R. Ambedkar regarding "decolonization from social inequality", on the work of Savitribai Phule on "decolonizing care and gender" in education, and on the work of Rajesh Tandon regarding "decolonization of the political process and knowledge creation". Unfortunately, the paper analysing Savitribai Phule's work in India with regards to the spread of public education for girls, expanding the concept of care from home to school, had to be withdrawn by the author from this special issue due to the very serious caring challenges many women academics are facing now in the context of COVID-19 pandemic and global lockdowns. We look forward to publishing and reading her paper in some future issue of the journal.

The four papers published in this special issue efficaciously engage with the philosophies of Indigenous intellectuals from India, decolonizing epistemologies and methodologies for participatory knowledge creation. The papers suggest alternative possibilities of knowledge creation and decolonizing pedagogies for social change through the critical theoretical lenses and methodological approaches of intellectual thinkers and educational reformers from India, who were themselves products of the education of the "global North" and "Southern sensibilities" as colonial and postcolonial subjects.

Sanjukta Dasgupta, in her paper on Rabindranath Tagore, explores how Tagore repudiated the British school curriculum and education in India during his contemporary times. He believed that it colonized the human mind and suppressed its ability to question and think critically. Tagore's reforms in the education system primarily focussed on "decolonizing the mind". His emphasis on the Socratic mode of instruction that triggered intellectual curiosity and his criticism of rote-learning and conventional modes of teaching paved the way for the evolution of a cosmopolitan citizen, who was truly international but at the same time embedded in the local context. While for Tagore the pedagogic focus was centred on decolonizing the mind and, thereafter, coordination of the heart and the hand, for Gandhi, reform stemmed from "decolonization of the heart".

As Ratna Ghosh explains in her paper, Gandhi, who was equally influenced by both Western and Indian philosophies, had an educational approach, *Nai Talim* (literally meaning New Education), that focussed on reformation of "heart, head and hand" (3Hs) through "learning by doing" and "cognitive, spiritual and moral" development. Gandhi saw education as a means to unshackle social prejudices and mind-sets that stemmed from deep-rooted religious beliefs and social conventions. This was reflected in his encouragement of women's participation, his promotion of gender diversity and equality, and uplift of lower castes and outcaste *Dalits* (oppressed), whom he called *Harijans*.

Ironically, while Gandhi himself advocated for "decolonization of the heart", he could not unshackle his own mind from certain restrictive thoughts and belief systems and he was often accused of this by his fellow countrymen, lawyer, and chief architect of the Indian Constitution, Dr B.R. Ambedkar. For Ambedkar, educational reforms and knowledge

[3] One of the papers is co-authored by two scholars

production involved renouncing the feeling of "otherness" that was often directed at the students and children of lower castes in India. Ambedkar advocated for "decolonization from social inequality" and a move towards social democracy through imbibing the principles of "equality, liberty and fraternity". The Civic-Learning approach of education that he advocated had "social justice and social diversity" as its cornerstones. He firmly believed that this new approach was crucial for a newly independent country, which was becoming politically and economically democratic, but remained socially undemocratic. The paper by Nidhi S. Sabharwal informs more about this approach as implemented in schools and how it has played a crucial role in bringing an element of social justice in the education system.

Even on the concept and question of democracy, Gandhi and Ambedkar had different views. While Ambedkar proposed a more centralized planned structure of political economy, which is the current structure of the Indian nation state, Gandhi favoured a more decentralized approach embedded in the belief that power and democracy should follow a bottom-up approach, believing that only then would it be more participatory. The paper by Sukrit and Kaustuv is a testament to how involving Indigenous communities, learning from them, and making them part of the governance allows for the "decolonization of the political process and knowledge creation", thereby moving away from a process that is heavily borrowed and influenced by Western nation-states. The methodology for research literature on community development and adult education has evolved since 1975, with Bud Hall and Fals Borda's work (Hall & Tandon, 2017). Since 1982, this decolonizing community-based participatory research methodology has also been practised and promoted widely by the New Delhi-based civil society organization, Participatory Research in Asia, founded by Rajesh Tandon, who is the UNESCO Co-chair in CBR and social responsibility in higher education along with Bud Hall (Labigne, 2010).

DECOLONIZING VERSUS GLOBALIZING SOCIAL SCIENCE KNOWLEDGE

In an interview given to the Journal of South Asian Studies, postcolonial Indian social theorist, Ashis Nandy called for a need to "start afresh in vernacular languages, in vernacular theoretical formations and formulations," while highlighting the limitation of his own "writings because [his] work, to a large extent, is related to the colonial experience. [His] writings, partly, are a reaction to it" and postcolonial studies is a "by-product of Western intellectual effort" (Bilal, 2014, p. 726). Scholars across various disciplines and fields of research are increasingly arguing for "decolonizing the academy" both in the Global North and the Global South.

However, as the above quote from Ashis Nandy's interview highlights, this process will not be easy. We cannot deconstruct/decolonize our own hybrid postcolonial subjectivities. Even leading postcolonial thinker, Spivak (1999) acknowledged the fact that major works of European philosophy and social theory are useful intellectual tools, even as they tend to exclude the subaltern voices and thought processes of intellectuals of the Global South from their discussions. Moreover, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (first published in 1989) demonstrated, through their theoretical account of a wide range of postcolonial texts in English, that these texts were a radical critique of Eurocentric notion of language and literature as the "empire writes back"! (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2002).

The four articles in this special issue demonstrate that, even if we engage with the theoretical and methodological work of Indigenous intellectuals in English translation, it can still open-up a rich repertoire of knowledge for all of us. Hence, rather than deconstruction and decolonization, we argue for "globalizing social knowledge in higher education" by learning about "other ways of knowing and doing". We concur with the methodological draft for a global intellectual history and reconstruction of a global comparative perspective as a way forward in the twenty-first century, as proposed by Herbjørnsrud (2019). We hope that you enjoy reading these four papers and expand your epistemological horizon of "knowing and doing" from a global comparative perspective with a situated understanding of local histories and by engaging with the critical work of Indigenous intellectuals from India and countries around the world.

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Texts of Tagore and Tagore as text: A framework for diversity and inclusion in the twenty-first century

Sanjukta Dasgupta
Calcutta University, India: *dasgupta.sanjukta@gmail.com*

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) is primarily known worldwide as the first Asian poet to receive the Nobel Prize in literature, in 1913. He lived and died in colonial India as a British subject. However, any engagement with studies of Tagore would reveal that, despite his outstanding achievements in creative writing and music, he deserves to be remembered as the only poet of international standing who not only founded a self-funded university, but also designed a curriculum which radicalized traditional institutionalized education in colonial India. This essay endeavours to explore Tagore's re-imagining of the process of institutionalized instruction and the objectives of education. Undoubtedly, the concepts and models of the teaching-learning process outlined by Tagore bear the stamp of a poet-philosopher who tried to distance himself from the public educational sector, epitomized in colonial times as the formidable University of Calcutta, under British administration. Historically, Tagore's Visva-Bharati University at Santiniketan, obviously a private sector enterprise, is regarded as a unique experiment in inclusive education that debunks rote learning and fragmented knowledge, though its viability in the 21st century is open to debate.

Keywords: Diversity; inclusion; Tagore; texts; India

INTRODUCTION

The 1929 prospectus of Rabindranath Tagore's university, Visva-Bharati, stated:

> College students are expected to become familiar with the working of existing institutions and new movements inaugurated in the different countries of the world *for the amelioration of the social condition of the masses* [emphasis added]. They are also required to undertake *a study of international organizations* [emphasis added] so that their outlook may become better adjusted to the needs of peace. (Nussbaum, 2012, p. 84–85)

In the era of globalization, in 2019, how many of our universities have included in their prospectus such a paragraph on social outreach, global politics, and the crucial importance of peace, as was found in the prospectus of Rabindranath Tagore's Visva-Bharati University almost 90 years ago, in colonial British administered India?

A litmus test in terms of a comparative study would be to cite the recently reconfigured National Policy of Education outlined by the education sector of the Indian government. Though the policy draft stated the rich heritage of ancient Indian systems of education, quite conspicuous by its absence is the total lack of any mention of Rabindranath Tagore's alternative system of education, initiated in Tagore's Patha Bhavan school and Visva-Bharati University. Expectedly, therefore, motivating aspirational signifiers crucial for nurturing young minds, such as freedom, creativity, research, and critical thinking beyond the pedagogical stereotypes, are not addressed at all in the recently revised national policy of education.

Interestingly, the concluding paragraph of the National Policy of Education 2019 draft indicates, beyond doubt, that the government of India's controlling mechanism of education targets, through the regulatory bodies of the education sector, prioritizes mechanized socio-economic progress and utilization of human capital:

> The National Education Policy 2019 provides a framework for the transformation and reinvigoration of the education system in order to respond to the requirements of fast-changing, knowledge-based societies while taking into account the diversity of the Indian people, their traditions, cultures, and languages. It seeks to ensure that human capital, the most vital form of capital that would fuel the necessary transformation, is secured and strengthened. Highest priority is accorded to the task of ensuring universal access to an education of high quality and breadth that would support India's continued ascent, progress, and leadership on the global stage—in terms of economic development, social justice and equality, environmental stewardship, scientific advancement and cultural preservation, and help develop and maximise our country's rich talents and resources for the good of the individual, the country, and the world. An education system built on the premises of quality and equity is considered central to sustainable development, achieving success in the emerging knowledge economy and society, for socio-economic mobility, and for building an equitable, just and humane society. (p. 35)

Quite noticeably, as a result, Rabindranath Tagore's ideas and activities still offer a unique standpoint for thinking beyond the constraints of the controlled knowledge economy and the euphoria of nationalisms. In the study of Tagore's literary and non-literary texts, it is possible to track how artistic practice, analytical thought and educational institutions can be linked to move us beyond the myopia of nationalism, creating a space to rethink and even disrupt the increasingly powerful homology in which home, family, language, and nation have come to stand for each other to divide not unify. The emerging need is to address perspectives on global education while underscoring the culture-specific and region-specific needs of local education. Perhaps, this is what the concept note of this conference identified: "It aims to decentre/decolonize our minds from an obsession with the West and Western knowledge, culture, theories and epistemologies in conducting social science research and knowledge production". One, however, must guard against one obsession replacing another. The approach should be balanced, holistic, and inclusive, rooting out politicized exploitation of regional pride and prejudice.

TAGORE AS TEXT: A HISTORIC OVERVIEW

A brief review of the history of the beginnings of Tagore's institutions is imperative for a clear understanding of the programmatic paradigm shift that Tagore introduced in his institutions. According to the Visva-Bharati Santiniketan prosepctus (2019):

> In 1863, on a 20 Bigha plot at the site of the present institution, Debendranath Tagore, the poet's father, had built a small retreat for meditation, and in 1888 he dedicated, by a trust deed, the land and buildings, towards the establishment of an Asrama where seekers after truth, irrespective of their formal religious affiliations, sect, creed and caste, could come and meditate in seclusion; a Brahmavidyalaya and a library. Rabindranath's school Brahmacharyasrama which started functioning formally from December 22, 1901... From 1925 this school came to be known as Patha-Bhavana. (p. 6)

It was with the founding of Visva-Bharati, Tagore's dream university representing the world in one nest, that Tagore entered the most challenging stage of his mission in life. He supervised it till the end of his life, nurturing it like a parent or a gardener nurturing a sapling, addressing the macro issues of sustainability and fundraising entirely on his own, and, quite remarkably, not seeking guidelines or funds from the British government in India. Visva-Bharati brought in teachers from all parts of the world, both from the East and West, creating an island that celebrated the confluence of cultures where German, Chinese, Japanese, British, and Bengali scholars, writers, teachers, and artists worked side by side, creating a multi-disciplinary space of creativity, cultural inter-exchange and exchange of ideas and skills. In 1991, Satyajit Ray wrote about Santiniketan: "Santiniketan opened my eyes for the first time to the splendors of Indian and Far Eastern art. Until then, I was completely under the sway of Western art, music and literature. Santiniketan made me the combined product of East and West that I am" (Sen, 2005, 115).

In Satyajit Ray's assertion, we hear the voice of the local cosmopolitan and a validation of the dream of the founder of the university, who had to travel all around the globe to raise funds to sustain his university, mostly by writing and delivering series of lectures despite indifferent health. Uma Dasgupta (2009) states:

> For a while, Tagore was witness to his Visva-Bharati offering hospitality to the world. In the 1920s and the 1930s scholars, painters, musicians, economists, agriculturists, and medical experts from different parts of the world gathered on the soil of Santiniketan and Sriniketan to join hands with the local populace in their common goal of learning and creating and serving without national barriers. (p. xxxiii)

Rabindranath Tagore invited artists and scholars from other parts of India and the world to live together at Santiniketan daily to share their cultures with the Visva-Bharati University, maintaining its multifarious global and local networks. The constitution of the university designated Visva-Bharati as an Indian, Eastern, and global cultural centre whose goals were (Visva-Bharati Santiniketan, 2019, p. 2):

1. To study the mind of Man in its realization of different aspects of truth from diverse points of view.
2. To bring into more intimate relation with one another through patient study and research, the different cultures of the East on the basis of their underlying unity.

3. To approach the West from the standpoint of such a unity of the life and thought of Asia.
4. To seek to realize in a common fellowship of study, the meeting of East and West and thus ultimately to strengthen the fundamental conditions of world peace through the free communication of ideas between the two hemispheres.
5. And with such ideals in view to provide at Santiniketan a centre of culture where research into the study of the religion, literature, history, science and art of Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Zoroastrian, Islamic, Sikh, Christian and other civilizations may be pursued along with the culture of the West, with that simplicity of externals which is necessary for true spiritual realization, in amity, good-fellowship and co-operation between the thinkers and scholars of both Eastern and Western countries, free from all antagonisms of race, nationality, creed or caste and in the name of the One Supreme Being who is Shantam, Shivam, Advaitam.
6. The objectives of the University shall also include harmonizing the cultures of India, the East and the West by, among other things, the admission of students and appointment of adhyapakas from various regions of India and various countries of the world and by providing incentive thereof.

In terms of curriculum, Tagore advocated the Socratic method of argument and interaction, a dialogic mode, in teaching. Rather than studying national cultures for the wars won and cultural dominance imposed, Tagore initiated a teaching system that analysed history and culture for the progress that had been made in breaking down social and religious barriers:

> *The school was a conscious repudiation of the system introduced in India by the British rulers* [emphasis added], and Rabindranath initially sought to realize the intrinsic values of ancient education in India. The school and its curriculum, therefore, signified a departure from the way the rest of the country viewed education and teaching. Simplicity in externals was a cardinal principle. Classes were held in the open air in the shade of trees where man and nature entered into an immediate harmonious relationship. Teachers and students shared the single integral socio-cultural life. The curriculum had music, painting, dramatic performances and other performative practices. Beyond the accepted limits of intellectual and academic pursuits, opportunities were created for invigorating and sustaining the manifold faculties of human personality. (Visva-Bharati Santiniketan, 2019, p. 6)

Such an approach emphasized the innovations that had been made in integrating individuals of diverse backgrounds into a larger framework, and in devising the economic policies which emphasized social justice and narrowed the gap between rich and poor. Art would be studied for its role in furthering the aesthetic imagination and expressing universal themes. This liberating, inclusive approach towards diverse races, cultures, lands, languages, and people was beyond the comprehension of hardcore traditional pedagogic practices outlined by the British system of a rigid curriculum that fostered rote learning for the natives in the many British colonies. Traditional teaching methods were not about triggering intellectual curiosity, but concentrated on selective conditioning of the mind urged to accept stereotypes as indestructible monuments of

timeless wisdom. No wonder, "Tagore hated every school he ever attended, and he left them all as quickly as possible. What he hated was rote learning and the treatment of the pupil as a passive vessel of received cultural values. Tagore's novels, stories, and dramas are obsessed with the need to challenge the past." (Nussbaum, 2012, p. 70)

Tagore's travels to various parts of the world were largely lecture tours aimed at fund raising for his university. This must be the sole example in human history that a poet did not only donate the entire Nobel Prize money for the university but would travel around the world and deliver lectures to sustain the university. He severely deplored the practice of institutionalized, fragmented knowledge and memorized notes, and a corresponding lack of new ideas and imagination that seemed to paralyze students instead of making them blossom.

In a letter to an unidentified correspondent referring to the resolution adopted by Calcutta University to introduce vernacular languages at the postgraduate level, while supporting the resolution that the vernacular language was more effective as a tool of communication and empathy, Tagore outlined his reservation about educational institutions. Referring specifically to Bengali language and literature taught at Calcutta University, Tagore wrote in 1918:

> But I have found that the direct influence which the Calcutta University wields over our language is not strengthening and vitalizing, but pedantic and narrow. It tries to perpetuate the anachronism of preserving the Pundit-made Bengali swathed in grammar-wrappings borrowed from a dead language... The artificial language of a learned mediocrity, inert and formal, ponderous and didactic, devoid of the least breath of creative vitality, is forced upon our boys at the most receptive period of their life (Das, 1996, Vol. 3, 743).

A FRAMEWORK FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

In his alternative configurations of imparting formal and informal education at Santiniketan, Tagore initially conceived a school for children (Patha Bhavan) who would become sensitized about world history and culture, and would be urged to imagine a world beyond the restrictive barbed wires of nationalism. But that was just the beginning. Uma Dasgupta (2009) stated:

> The mind that conceived Santiniketan school did not remain complacent with just those beginnings... Within two decades of the existence of the Santiniketan school, he announced that Santiniketan was "a sapling that would grow into Visva-Bharati, a widely-branching tree". Visva-Bharati would be an international university of higher learning for studying and understanding the cultures of 'East and West' (p. xxix).

After Rabindranath was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913, he was invited to numerous countries all over the world, held Maghmela[1], and, as a result, he was exposed to a large part of the world and its people. By 1917, the range of his experience and the restlessness of his exploration led to his own self-clarification regarding the idea of a centre of Indian culture at Santiniketan. The centre, as conceived by him, was to provide:

[1] A festival that was organized by Tagore at his school and university campus in Shantiniketan

> [F]or the coordinated study of the different cultures... music and the fine arts are among the highest means of national self-expression... in the proposed centre of our culture, music and art must have prominent seats of honour... This centre should not only be a centre of the intellectual life of India but the centre of economic life as well. Participating thus in all the major spheres of Indian life, the institution would attain a representative character and enter into an encounter with the rest of the world. (Visva-Bharati Santiniketan, 2019, p. 6)

Tagore was always skeptical about the fragmented education churned out by the British administered Indian universities. In his essay, "the Centre of Indian Culture", Tagore outlined his understanding of what he considered to be a complete education:

> [O]ur education should be in full touch with our complete life, economical, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual; connected with it by the living bonds of varied co-operations. For true education is to realize at every step how our training and knowledge have an organic connection with our surroundings. (Das, 1996, vol 2, p. 469)

Therefore, for Tagore, complete education would be possible when there was a need to bring together all cultures, races, gender irrespective of geographical locations. Visva-Bharati university would be able to provide this sort of inclusive education, according to Tagore. He stated without ambiguity, "So, in our centre of learning, we must provide for the coordinated study of all these cultures—the Vedic, the Puranic, the Buddhist, the Jain, the Islamic, the Sikh and the Zoroastrian. And side by side with them the European—for only then shall we be able to assimilate the last" (Dasgupta, Chakravarti, & Mathew, 2013, p. 487).

> The inclusive motto of the Visva-Bharati University was this statement in a Vedic text "Yatra visvam bhavatyekanidam (where the world makes a home in a single nest).
>
> On 23 December 1921, Visva-Bharati became a registered public body which adopted a constitution of its own. The aims and objects as set forth on the occasion have since then remained the objectives of Visva-Bharati.
>
> In 1922, the Department of Higher Studies became Uttara Vibhaga to be renamed Vidya-Bhavana in 1925. Hindu philosophy, medieval mysticism, Islamic culture, Zoroastrian philosophy, Bengali literature and history, Hindustani literature, Vedic and Classical Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Chinese, Tibetan, Persian, Arabic, German, Latin and Hindi formed its areas of study and research.
>
> Vidya-Bhavana was the manifestation of the ideal of the proposed centre of comprehensive studies in the cultures of the East and the West. The centre was viewed principally as a community of scholars, Indian as well as foreign, who would be engaged in the creation and dissemination of systematized and philanthropic reasoning. The concern was epistemological. (Visva-Bharati Santiniketan, 2019, p. 6)

Santiniketan attracted a number of scholars inspired by Tagore's re-invention of educational methods. Leonard Elmhirst acted as private secretary to Tagore between 1924 and 1925 and, inspired by Tagore's work, co-founded Dartington Hall in Devon England in 1926. It is a significant factor that a pattern of dissent against colonial education system meted out to the 'natives' by the British administration was not just propagated by Tagore, who referred to the importance of vernacular languages and

bilingualism, but seemed to be often strikingly similar to the critique of the British education system in Ireland that the Irish nationalist leader Patrick Pearse described as a murderous mechanism of control and power. In his essay, "Murder Machine" published in the *Irish Review* in 1913, Pearse stated:

> Modem education systems are elaborate pieces of machinery devised by highly-salaried officials for the purpose of turning out citizens according to certain approved patterns. The modem school is a State controlled institution designed to produce workers for the State and is in the same category in which a dockyard, or any other State-controlled institution which produces articles necessary to the progress, well-being, and defence of the State are included. We speak of the "efficiency", the "cheapness" and the "up-to-dateness" of an education system just as we speak of the "efficiency", the "cheapness" and the "up-to-dateness" of a system of manufacturing coal-gas. (Pearse, 1916, p. 6)

The concepts of the teacher as a "transformative intellectual" who can "give direction to history" and the definition of education as "a practice of freedom" describe and define the educational endeavour of Pearse in a way that had not been previously attempted. Commentators such as Tolstoy, Pearse, Tagore, the Elmhirsts, Curry, and Russell gave practical expression to their reservations by establishing schools located outside mainstream provision (Walsh & Lalor, 2015, p. 595–617). They, thereby, signaled their dissatisfaction with the education system of the time, and their desire to provide an alternative model. The antecedent of their position is undoubtedly classical humanism and, by scrutinizing the act of education in relation to interested parties, such as the state, they highlighted and insisted upon the integrity of learning as inherently valuable, regardless of outcomes.

While appealing for donations for running his unique bilingual school, Pearse assured potential donors that his school was "modern in the best sense", offering an education that was "wholly Irish in complexion and bilingual in method. The attempt has been a notable success". He stated:

> Apart from its Irish standpoint, our College is distinguished from other secondary schools and colleges in Ireland by the appeal which its ideals make to the imagination of its pupils, by its objection to the cramming system, its viva voce teaching of modern languages and, in short, its linking of the practical with the ideal at every stage of its work. (McGreevy, 2016)

Tagore was aware of various experimentations in the European education sector and, inspired by these innovations, Tagore's own initiatives in revising and transforming the process of education in colonial India were ground-breaking in many areas. He was one of the first in India to argue for a humane educational system that was in touch with the environment and aimed at the overall development of the personality. Santiniketan became a model for vernacular instruction and the development of Bengali textbooks; as well, it offered one of the earliest coeducational programs in South Asia. The establishment of Visva-Bharati and Sriniketan led to pioneering efforts in many directions, including models for distinctively Indian higher education and mass education, as well as pan-Asian and global cultural exchange.[2]

[2] From the very beginning Rabindranath tried to foster a self-sufficient social life along with new values of creative as well as participatory culture. The most joyful expressions of the community are the festivals which at different times of the year celebrate the cycle of the seasons and the diverse manifestations of

Noticeably, following the examples of Tagore, John Dewey, Froebel, and other like-minded educationists, such as Martha C. Nussbaum, advocated an approach of inclusive learning; she states that, instead of concentrating on world history as a theatre of war, battles, and civil war, "when a culture's history and economy are studied, questions should be raised about differences of power and opportunity about the place of women and minorities, about the merits and disadvantages of different structures of political organizations" (Nussbaum, 2012, 89).

Rabindranath Tagore, by his efforts and achievements, is part of a global network of pioneering educators, such as Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori, and Dewey who had stressed the need to create non-authoritarian learning systems appropriate to their respective surroundings. In fact, Maria Montessori visited Visva-Bharati and appreciated Tagore's efforts. So, Nussbaum states, "world history and economic understanding then must be humanistic and critical if they are to be at all useful in forming intelligent global citizens, and they must be taught alongside the study of religion and philosophical theories of justice" (Nussbaum, 2012, 94).

THE TEXTS OF TAGORE

If intellectual and cultural freedom were the overt agenda of Tagore's formulation of an alternative system of education free of pedagogic shibboleth and intellectual myopia, as defined repeatedly in his many essays on education practices, his literary texts also made a bid to push against the boundaries by reaching towards cultural and intellectual de-territorialization. So, referring to Tagore's novel, *Gora*, Gayatri Spivak (2013) stated that when Gora decides to drink water brought in by the Dalit woman, Lachmiya, he truly breaks free, not through a shift in epistemic self-positioning but empirical assertiveness.

The conclusion of *Gora*, therefore, illustrates how humanities and social sciences, traditionally clubbed together as "arts" are interlocked in its intertextuality and critical diversity paradigm that are integral to intersectionality studies. After Gora learns that he was an Irish orphan, nurtured in a Hindu home, he addresses, Anandamoyee, his surrogate mother as his only mother, and states, "You have no caste, no-caste-judgement, no contempt—you are nothing but the image of our good! You are my Bharatvasha, indeed." (Spivak 2013, p. 303). Yet, as a cultural critic, Spivak categorically stated that, though Gora ends with a call to the Dalit domestic worker, Lachmiya, Tagore "builds nothing on it". Whereas, citing Mahasweta Devi's protagonist, Mary Oraon, the central character in "Shikar", Spivak comments that,

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Nature. Dances and songs presented on such occasions draw as much upon Rabindranath as other cultural resources of all parts of India. The community comes together in these festivals and, for the young students in particular, it is an unobtrusive process of cultural enrichment. Cultural events and festivals are a legacy from the inception of the institution. The open-air devotional service that is held on 7 Poush (on or about 23 December) every year under the Chhatim tree where Maharshi Debendranath once meditated is an occasion of particular significance for the institution since it is the foundation day of the Asrama. In accordance with the trust deed, a mela (fair) popularly known as the Poushmela is held to mark the occasion. Another three-day village fair, called Maghmela is held early in February every year at Sriniketan. 'Vasanta Utsav' (Spring Festival), Briksaropan (Tree Planting Ceremony) and Halakarsana (Ploughing) are not just festivities but are curricular activities contributing to the core courses on Tagore Studies and Environmental Studies. (Visva-Bharati Santiniketan, 2019, p. 8)

"Mahasweta takes the hybrid and puts a machete in her hand. Daughter of the rape of a Christian tribal domestic worker by a white imperialist displaced at Independence, Mary—has a Christian name as Gora has a Hindu—corrects the failure of decolonization by the solitary exercise of a wild justice, a re-inscription of aboriginality" (Spivak 2013, 315).

Interestingly, *Ghare Baire*, published in 1916, was severely criticized by Marxist critics such as Georg Lukacs, who described the novel as a "petit bourgeois yarn of the shoddiest kind" and "at the intellectual service of the British Police" (Sen, 2015, p. 109). Tagore's third political novel, *Char Adhyay*, published in 1936, was a critique of the swadeshi movement and armed struggle. The social novels, on the other hand, were gender-centric. However, in all these fictional narratives, Tagore's inclusive spirit was crucial for disseminating unfettered knowledge, a passionate belief that led to his setting up his exclusive educational institutions to practice inclusive knowledge, is either latent or manifest.

So, Gora metamorphoses from a bigoted, Hindu fundamentalist to a liberated and secular individual, in the true spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakum—"the world is one family". Gora discovers his identity and self as he asserts, "I am Indian today. In me today there is no conflict among Hindu, Muslim and Christian society" (Spivak, 2013, p. 26).

Moreover, in her caveat about the parasitic epidemic of internet culture and the threats of globalization that romanticize artificial intelligence, post-human discourse, programmed robotic responses that become paradigmatic, Gayatri Spivak stated in her book, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, that "linguistic diversity can only curb the global. In the ferocious thrust to be 'global', 'the humanities' and the 'qualitative social sciences', 'comparative' at their best, are no longer a moving epistemological force. They will increasingly be like the opera, serving a peripheral function in society" (Spivak, 2013, p. 26). Rabindranath Tagore would have agreed with Spivak's observations and caveat, as it is obvious that both these public and transformative intellectuals ardently believed that intellectual and cultural freedom were essential for consolidating the inclusive spirit of universal humanism.

My central argument is that in Tagore's work we find a radical effort to think beyond nationalist and gendered ideologies to create a truly international but, at the same time, local field of practice through holistic education and democratic approaches, which can be described as cosmopolitan nationalism, and underpins inclusive practices. Tagore clearly outlined that local Bengali cultures, agricultural practices, international artistic and ecumenical educational practices should be understood as fundamentally interconnected, offering an alternative to real-politick, rote learning, and utilitarian moral reasoning. Such an alternative gestures towards a rethinking of gender, family, and nation. In the early twentieth century, Tagore had provided a blueprint for holistic education while he interrogated fragmented knowledge. So, in his essay that focusses on the ideal of education in India, Tagore wrote:

> Education can only become natural and wholesome when it is the direct fruit of a living and growing knowledge... our education should be in full touch with our complete life; economical, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual; and our educational institutions should be in the very heart of our society, connected with it by the living bonds of varied co-operations. For true education is to realize at every

> step how our training and knowledge have organic connection with our surroundings. (Dasgupta, 2009, p. 148).

In order to decolonize the hegemony of Western knowledge paradigms, in the global South, specifically India, Tagore's overt agenda regarding an alternative education system can be used to formulate interdisciplinary studies, cross-cultural studies, transdisciplinary studies, intersectionality studies and critical diversity studies, leading to an inclusive approach enabling fortification of knowledge systems often disturbed by systemic fissures and ruptures. As is obvious, it is through cross-cultural comparativist engagements that binaries and monoliths that consolidate canons can be replaced by inclusive knowledge paradigms and policy.

If such initiatives are not taken, the horrifying end result of our rote learning will destroy creative freedom, creative imagination, and leadership in the world of ideas. Tagore describes in graphic detail the tragic consequence as the end result of such myopic education in his well-known fable, "The Parrot's Training" (*Tota Kahini*). The parrot which flew and sang all day was thrust into a golden cage, encapsulated platitudes of the past were thrust into its throat, and its wings clipped. The narrative reads like a Spielberg movie script, grotesque and sarcastic, animated further by Tagore's signature poetic insight:

> *The nephew said, ``Your Majesty, the bird's education is now complete.''*
>
> *The King asked, ``Does it still jump?''*
>
> *The nephew said, ``God forbid.''*
>
> *``Does it still fly?''*
>
> *``No.''*
>
> *``Does it sing anymore?''*
>
> *``No.''*
>
> *``Does it scream if it doesn't get food?''*
>
> *``No.''*
>
> *The King said, ``Bring the bird in. I would like to see it.''*
>
> The bird was brought in. With it came the administrator, the guards, the horsemen. The King felt the bird. It didn't open its mouth and didn't utter a word. Only the pages of books, stuffed inside its stomach, raised a ruffling sound.
>
> Outside, where the gentle south wind and the blossoming woods were heralding spring, the young green leaves filled the sky with a deep and heavy sigh.

(Tagore, 2004)

Therefore, without embarrassment about breaking free from normative practices defining the purpose of education, such as being job-oriented, skill-developers linked to the corporate industries, the 2019 prospectus of Tagore's Visva-Bharati University, states with confidence that:

> Visva-Bharati is a pilgrimage for education and culture. It reflects the Tagorean ethos of making a complete human being. It is a hallowed place of learning cradled in a serene environment in the lap of Nature, where Rabindranath founded a school for children at Santiniketan, and it was around this nucleus that the structure of *an unconventional University* [emphasis added] developed through careful planning

> and meticulous execution of those ideas and ideals. (Visva-Bharati Santiniketan, 2019, p. 6)

CONCLUSION

The education sector, from primary schools to the universities, with its dedicated register of economic profits and private education industries—actively encouraged to link to corporate sectors, will undoubtedly find Tagore's educational ideology unworkable and unrealistic. Expectedly, therefore, from the time Tagore's Visva-Bharati University became a central government funded university, it has conformed to the normative practices followed by all state government aided and central government aided educational institutions. Henceforth, in Visva-Bharati, the teaching-learning process prioritized the importance of university degrees and requisite scores and grades for targetted job procurement. As a result, pursuit of knowledge for the nurturance of a critically informed, liberated mind has been increasingly side-lined as redundant, utopian and irrelevant in the era of globalization.

Also, with its emergence from the esoteric private sector to the exoteric public education sector, Visva-Bharati Central university at Santiniketan no longer replicates Tagore's idealistic priorities regarding education as a nurturing platform for an inclusive internationalist outlook, derived from a systemic training in the humanities and performing arts. The hegemonic control of economic and cultural globalization has resulted in Visva-Bharati surrendering to the compulsions created by the rapidly changing times, where job-oriented education is highlighted as the sole priority. In the twenty-first century, it is perhaps ironic to consider that the Tagorean paradigm of an "unconventional University" should be regarded as a supreme viable project, where the teacher in the role of a friend, philosopher and guide is regarded as a "transformative intellectual" and education is defined as "practice of freedom" in the registers of empiricism, epistemology, and ontology.

Yet, the process of experimentation in the education sector, globally and locally, will inevitably be an ongoing process in terms of spatio-temporal and geo-political attitudinal shifts regarding education as a highly profitable industry. Already, in the public education sectors, experiential learning has emerged or perhaps re-emerged as a viable innovative process of instruction that activates intellectual curiosity and creativity. The newly configured processes for such sophisticated experiential learning instead of rote learning, however, can be historically traced back to the outstanding instructional practices that characterized Tagore's exclusive curriculum at Visva-Bharati at Santiniketan, before it received national recognition as a public sector university, funded by the central government of India.

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Gandhi, the freedom fighter and educator: A Southern Theorist

Ratna Ghosh
McGill University, Canada: *ratna.ghosh@mcgill.ca*

The concept of Southern Theory is a response to Northern sociological theory, which is considered to be incomplete because it does not consider global dynamics, which would include the life-experiences of people of the South and the impact of socio-cultural changes brought about by colonialism and globalization. Raewyn Connell introduced the term Southern Theory to emphasize the intellectual power and political relevance of social thought emanating from formerly colonized countries. The term Southern Theory can be confusing, overarching theories that incorporate new ideas that would represent the experiences of unequal development are imperative in a globalized world. The ideas of non-violence and moral togetherness that Gandhi represented are discussed in this paper along with his education experiments and theories. Being radical, his educational ideas were not accepted in India after independence because the country needed to "catch-up" with the development of industrialized countries after centuries of colonial subjugation. But his profoundly different ideas of achieving social/political change through non-violence, and his ideas on education for working towards a social order free from exploitation and violence, represented local needs and a new way of looking at society and education.

Keywords: Interdependence; peace; education; non-violence

SOUTHERN THEORY[1]

The emerging term Southern Theory assumes a "fundamental division between the global South and the North" (Munck, 2016). It is a recognition of the ethnocentrism in the social science disciplines (sociology, history) (Patel, 2014). It is a response to contemporary social science theories arising out of Europe because they are not universally applicable and do not reflect the experiences of societies around the globe (Philips, 1992). Societies outside the European/North American sphere have been identified as "cultures to be studied" by anthropologists (Munck, 2016) rather than for enquiry into the social, moral and cultural upheavals arising out of colonialism and globalization.

This paper begins with a brief discussion of Southern Theory and its assumptions and points to some contradictions in the concept. It will touch on some of the challenges to

[1] This paper is partially based on the themes and ideas about Gandhi elaborated in Ghosh (2019).

the contemporary meta-narratives that have been used in academic writing and the counter-narrative challenges that have come from different theories, such as postmodernism, post-structuralism, and postcolonialism (subaltern studies). The paper will then discuss how people like Gandhi and Tagore had original ideas that are particularly relevant to their societies. In describing Gandhi's work, we see how his focus was to get rid of colonialism and, particularly, colonialism of the mind through Western influence and industrialization, and how his educational ideas did not match the needs for reconstructing a new India. The paper concludes with a discussion of the relevance of some of Gandhi's ideas related to peace in the world and for global citizenship education today.

To make a geographical break in theoretical development is both confusing and controversial. It is confusing because the question arises of whether Southern Theory constitutes the ideas of educational reformers from the Global South or the ideas of those who write from the Global North, but are originally from the Global South. The term itself was introduced by an Australian sociologist, Raewyn Connell, in 2007 to refer to sociological ideas emanating from the geographical South because Northern sociological theory is incomplete. They do not apply to all areas of the world, since such theories do not consider global dynamics which would include the life-experiences of people of the South and the impact of socio-cultural changes brought about by colonialism and globalization. The geographical break is controversial because other theories, such as postmodernism, postcolonialism (inspired originally by the work of Edward Said), and poststructuralism (without going into their contributions and failures), all challenged "modernist Western knowledge construction, representation, and truth claims" (Hickling-Hudson, Mathews, & Woods, 2004, p. 4) that are involved in the complexities of decolonization as well as with the consequences of contemporary forms of globalization (Tikly, 2004). As Bhambra (2007, p. 880) put it: "the postcolonial revolution . . . points to what is missing in sociology: an engagement with difference that makes a difference to what was initially thought".

In particular, Subaltern Studies (initiated in the 1980s by Ranajit Guha), starting from a concern with the reconstruction of the worlds of subaltern experience (peasant movements), was given a global reach when it focused on the deconstruction of the various ways in which colonial power had been used. Spivak was influential in arguing "for a more post-structuralist scholarship, attentive to the textual construction of power, and the discourses of domination" steering Subaltern Studies to acknowledging "the centrality of gender and race (and, in the Indian context, caste)" (in *Ranajit Guha,* 2016). Subaltern historians (Chatterjee, 1993; Pandey, 1997) were concerned with a critique of Eurocentrism which saw the Western historical experience as the norm. As has been pointed out, Subaltern Studies was the first academic project that "helped crack the structures of academic orthodoxy wide open" (*Ranajit Guha,* 2016). Moreover, theorists, such as Paolo Freire (1970) from Brazil, have greatly influenced critical pedagogy in the West. The French West Indian psychoanalyst Franz Fanon's (1961) work on the social, cultural and psychological consequences of colonization and decolonization has not only inspired academic discourse but has also inspired national liberation movements in several parts of the world. Homi Bhabha's (1994) concepts of hybridity, mimicry, difference, and ambivalence deal with the ways colonized people negotiate with the power of the colonizer. So, it is not that there have not been theorists

from the South but their work is only recently emerging as a powerful challenge to existing models of socio-historical analysis.

Globalization and its most recent manifestation, the COVID 19 pandemic, highlight the "histories of interconnection that have enabled the world to emerge as a global space . . . (And) any new understanding of the global cannot simply be asserted" but needs to address the deficiencies and limitations of what has already been emphasized (Bhambra, 2014, p. 155). As Anne Hickling-Hudson and her colleagues (2004) suggest, we should consider how to combine our resources rather than fragment ourselves by debates that do not get to the heart of our shared concerns.

The question arises as to why it is that influential ideas like that of "writers as diverse as al-Afghani in the Islamic Middle East, Chatterjee and Tagore in Bengal . . . and Sun Yat-sen . . . in China" to quote Raewyn Connell (2007, p. 14), are not part of quotidian scholarship in the North? One reason could be that Said (1979), Bhabha (1994), Guha (1993), Spivak (1988), Chatterjee (1986), Pandey (1997), Freire (1970), Fanon (1961) (to name only a few) were all scholars who studied and wrote from the North and published in Western journals and through Western publishers. Philip Altbach (1971) pointed out that, since the 1970s, the neocolonialism through which countries of the North have maintained power in intellectual publishing, not to mention some other problems such as domination of English (and to some extent French) language in publishing, put vernacular writings at a disadvantage in the countries of the South.

Several writers have observed that the impact of colonialism reaches far beyond the economic and political spheres. Theorists like Fanon (1961), Freire (1970), and Albert Memmi (1965) considered the colonization of the mind as the most insidious condition of being oppressed. In India, Rabindranath Tagore, like Fanon, "thought much about the deformation of the mind brought about by colonial education" (see, Ghosh & Naseem, 2003). Tagore's education outlined an approach of liberating the minds of people in colonial India but has profound relevance for education today (Ghosh, Naseem, & Vijh, 2010). Although he was the first Asian to get the Nobel Prize, he is less well-known in the West compared to Gandhi. As Amartya Sen (1997) points out, despite his enduring presence in West Bengal and India "his near total eclipse in the rest of the world" is partly due to his image in the West as a "remote spiritualist". The Nobel Prize in Literature 1913 was awarded to Rabindranath Tagore "because of his profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse, by which, with consummate skill, he has made his poetic thought, expressed in his own English words, a *part of the literature of the West*" (emphasis mine) (*The Nobel Prize*", n.d.). That is ironic because Tagore was proudly Indian and wrote in his own language, which was Bengali. He renounced the knighthood that had been conferred on him by the British because "badges of honour make our shame glaring in the incongruous context of humiliation" suffered in the Jallianawala Bagh massacre in Amritsar, Punjab in 1919 (Dutta & Robinson, 1997).

Like Gandhi, Tagore found colonialism humiliating. Both Tagore and Gandhi thought of colonization of the mind as the worst effect of colonization, and education as a means of liberating the minds of people. Ashis Nandy is perhaps most influential in his observation of the deep-rooted impact of colonialism on the cognitive and affective domains of the colonized. Nandy has attempted, in *The Intimate Enemy* (1983), to analyze Gandhi's cultural-psychological sensitivities to colonization's "civilizing mission":

> The appeal of Gandhi's vision to the ordinary Indian was that it looked grounded simultaneously in India's high culture and its vernacular traditions... Gandhi was... a constant reminder of (1) how the Enlightenment vision had been used to justify virtually all the major forms of Satanism of our times – from the four-continent slave-trade to the creation of three new White continents through conquests and genocide; and (2) how all major forms of organized dissent in the West have justified their violence by turning to social evolutionism and sundry theories of progress which remain racist, ethnocidal and provincial at their core (Boni, n. d.).

GHANDI'S EARLY YEARS

This paper will go briefly over how Gandhi's ideas, very different from dominant Western ideas on society and education, brought non-violent resistance to British colonial rule and how he was largely responsible for Indian independence. As Nandy points out (Gopalakrishnan, 2017), Gandhi was influenced by India, where he grew up, but he spent his formative years, from 23 to 44 years old, in South Africa. His concept of *Satyagraha* emerged at a mass meeting in 1906 in South Africa, a country which had apartheid (institutionalized racial segregation). Gandhi himself faced racism when travelling in a first-class compartment from which he was thrown out and which spurred him to stay in that country and fight for the rights of Indians there. Yet he has been accused of racism against Black South Africans although he is also credited for inspiring the anti-colonial movements there. Several people have pointed to Gandhi's racist beliefs. In an interesting article titled, *Was Gandhi a racist?*, Adavi, Das, and Nair (2016) write that Gandhi changed his attitudes towards race after attending The Universal Races Congress in London in 1911:

> Within a span of seven years after his return to India in 1914, Gandhi transformed from being a supporter of the British Empire into a staunch anti-imperialist. This transition opened Gandhi's eyes to the relation between power and knowledge, and specifically, between imperialism and racism as well as imperialism and culture. Gandhi's anti-imperialism extended from politics to aesthetics.

What made Gandhi extraordinary, Adavi et al say, is that he "transcended these irrational prejudices". Scholars have noted the great contradictions that existed simultaneously in his ideology and which have had repercussions in post-independent India. There are two areas in particular where this is evident: his conception of women and his views on the caste system in India. He made women an integral part of the freedom movement, but he advocated separate roles and responsibilities for them. Similarly, while he fought ceaselessly against the evils of untouchability, he did not challenge the caste system itself. In fact, he almost never mentioned it in his writings. He defended the "traditional hierarchies of caste and gender" (Rao, 2014, p. 294) which are the foundations of inequality in Indian society. Nanda (2012) points out that he rejected the idea that untouchability was part of Hinduism, he believed in the caste system although his ideas on the caste system also changed with time. He was rooted in the context of his time. Tagore, who disagreed with many of his ideas, such as the caste system, saw him at the same time as a person with extraordinary abilities and gave him the name "Mahatma" (great soul).

Born into a middle-class, staunch Hindu family from a traditional vegetarian community, his family strictly followed the caste hierarchy and practised "untouchability". Although the *Constitution of India 1950* legally abolished

"untouchability" after Independence, the practice of ostracising lower castes whose occupations entail "polluting activities" by denying them access to the facilities used by caste Hindus still continues in many parts of India. Caste position is determined by birth and cannot be changed. Gandhi was influenced by his religious upbringing and had many prejudices in his early years, but, with time, he "underwent an intellectual moulting and his transformed world view altered his own perceptions" (Adavi et al., 2016). Gandhi earned his law degree in London and was challenged by B. R. Ambedkar on his ideas of caste. Gandhi was a caste Hindu (he belonged to the Vaishya or Baniya caste) and Ambedkar was from an 'untouchable' caste but, like Gandhi had been admitted to the Bar in London and also had degrees from Columbia University in the US and a DSc from London University. Ambedkar did not agree that the reason for the poverty and oppression of the "untouchables" was economic, rather he believed that their subjugation was due to their identity and low self-esteem and that education was the only way to reverse that phenomenon. Ambedkar, known in India as the chief architect of the Indian constitution, was a brilliant Southern Theorist who is almost totally unknown in the West.

Today, the genius of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is known around the globe for leading the greatest non-violent, anti-colonial struggle in history, and his ideas of non-violence and *Satyagraha* are emulated by many. Gandhi saw the colonizer as the oppressor, and freedom for him was not only political but, more importantly, it was freedom from ignorance, vulnerability and fear, freedom of the self from the ego through service to society at the individual level.

GHANDI'S IDEAS

Gandhi was influenced by both Eastern and Western thinkers as well as by several religious writings, such as those of the Buddha, Mohammad, and Christ (and was especially affected by the *Sermon on the Mount*). He read Socrates as well as Hindu philosophy from the *Gita* and the *Upanishads*. His ideas were a complex mix of the social experiences of his position in colonial India and apartheid South Africa, and the influences of several philosophies and ideologies. His ideas, including his theories on education, were shaped by a firm belief in God, the dignity of human life, and dignity of labour. Albert Einstein is known to have pointed out that Gandhi 's great contribution to our time was his determination to moralize politics. Gandhi believed that moral values, such as love, truth, and nonviolence, applied to both one's private and the various areas of public life (such as politics or business). Religion and love were important and he was categorical that violence was never the answer but that non-violent force may be necessary. He was totally against violence: "an eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind".

His core principle was *Ahimsa* or non-violence, but he is known for *Satyagraha*, which in Sanskrit means 'holding on to truth' that was his mass passive resistance movement against colonial rule, as well as for *Sarvodaya* or welfare for all. The ideals of equitable distribution of wealth, the dignity of labour and communal social structure based on an agricultural economy were influenced by John Ruskin, born exactly two hundred years before in 1719 and author of *Unto This Last,* which transformed Gandhi's life (Gandhi, 1940). Like Ruskin, Gandhi believed in a hierarchical order (e.g. the caste system) but worked for the upliftment of the untouchables and oppressed people within the existing social order.

Another book which left a lasting impression on Gandhi was Leo Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, which was banned in Russia and was published in Germany. Tolstoy and Gandhi corresponded for several years. He was the source of the non-violent resistance and inspired Gandhi's ideas about peace and justice. Although strongly influenced by Tolstoy's idea of non-violence, the two differed in political strategy. Unlike Tolstoy, who was a pacifist and suggested self-denial (following Christ), Gandhi was for political involvement. Guided by the Bhagwad Gita, Gandhi went beyond non-violence to self-realization through non-violent resistance against the British government in the form of boycotts, sit-ins, strikes and demonstrations, and fasts for which he was famous. To him, non-violence was an act of courage, not of fear. He did not think of non-violent resistance as passive, because civil disobedience or non-cooperation was not merely opposition but a process of reconstructing society through love and the search for truth: it was pro-active rather than reactive.

EDUCATION

Gandhi is not known for his ideas on education, although he experimented with different models of schooling in South Africa even before he did in India, and published extensively on education. For him, education was an integral part of reconstructing India. His ideas on education were thought to be too idealistic and impractical to be accepted in post-independent India, whose natural development had been impeded with two and a half centuries of colonial subjugation and, at independence, there was an urgent need to modernize and industrialize.

In South Africa, Gandhi experimented with two models of education. The Pheonix Settlement was established to try communal living. All persons living in the farm received equal wages no matter what they did, and education was achieved through manual work. The aim was to struggle against inequality in a society based on *Satyagraha* or non-violence in the face of injustice and the racist laws in South Africa. After three years, he left the establishment in the hands of one of his sons and started the Tolstoy Farm. There, he introduced vocational training of both boys and girls between the ages of six to sixteen in co-educational classes. The students worked on the farm and had about two hours of book learning daily taught in the mother tongue through unconventional methods. He also introduced spiritual training and the students participated with their fellow students in their respective religious observances. He aimed at holistic development through manual labour to develop the ideals of social service and moral citizenship in children. This became the focus of his *Satyagraha* movement in protest of discriminating laws against Indians in South Africa. Tolstoy Farm was disbanded three years later but it had served as an ideal laboratory for his ideas on education. Upon his return to India, he started the Sabarmati Ashram to continue experimenting in education and it runs to this day. Built on his educational philosophy of *Sarvodaya*, the aim of the Ashram is the child's full and holistic development to achieve the well-being of everyone.

Gandhi had several publications on education (*The Problem of Education*, 1932). He regularly wrote about educational matters in his weekly English newspaper, *Young India*, and another weekly newspaper, *Harijan*, published in English, Hindi as well as in his mother tongue Gujarati.

His ideas (Gandhi, 1940) on education were radical and focused on self-realization and self-knowledge, with the aim of serving society: "true education lies in serving others" (Rajput, 1998). Gandhi focused on Indigenous content which would be relevant to the lives of students because he saw Western education as imprinting the image of the oppressor on the minds of Indians. He focused on craft around which education should be given. His ideas were outlined in *Nai Talim* (basic education), an alternative model of mass elementary education proposed in 1936. He suggested a curriculum for mass elementary education following the spiritual principle that knowledge and work are not separate.

Gandhi's views on basic education for all ages were greatly influenced by his philosophies of *Satya* (truth), and *Ahimsa* (non-violence). His philosophy included a firm belief in God. He had felt the absence of spiritual knowledge in his own education and did not agree with secular education. However, he did not insist on any organized religion or religious belief to be part of education. A staunch Hindu himself, he nevertheless believed that other faiths contained their own value. They were to be respected and were worthy of study. To him, religion was "service of humanity . . . The term 'religion' I am using in its broadest sense, meaning thereby self-realization or knowledge of self" (Gandhi, 1940, p. 47).

Nai Talim was not only aimed at political freedom from the colonial power but freedom of the colonized mind, freedom from fear: "Education is that which liberates" (Gandhi, 1946). To achieve a nation-state which was based on moral laws, it was essential to have Indigenous education and remove the stronghold of modern Western industrial civilization, which Gandhi saw as involving violence against people as well as against nature. Gandhi was a humanist and he saw truth, love, and non-violence as the means towards achieving a humanistic society. Love is not only an essential ingredient of a child's education but a child should learn that hate can be conquered by love. In its philosophy, content, and method of teaching, it was a radical change, emphasizing apprenticeship and manual skills, and mother tongue as the medium of instruction. The Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India described Gandhi's concept of basic education in 1956: "Basic education as conceived and explained by Mahatma Gandhi, is essentially an education for life and, what is more, an education through life. Its aims are creating eventually a social order free from exploitation and violence." (Pandey, 1997, p. 182).

Gandhi believed that the teacher should be directive and act as a role model for the students while serving as a living example to impart a spiritual education. The life and character of the teacher were important in modelling moral training which his educational experiments had shown him. He did not give much thought to the economic aspect of the teacher and assumed that the crafts would bring in enough money to make the schools self-sufficient (Adams, 2009).

The teaching method he advocated was "learning by doing" or experiential learning, which many educators such as Dewey and Tagore also advocated. The focal point was "crafts" (e.g. spinning) for self-sufficiency which was not merely for production but for developing the intellect (Deshmukh, 2010). Tagore, too, favoured craft education but that was not his focal point. Gandhi was totally against the focus on the 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic) for the majority of children who were disadvantaged in India. Rather, the development of the whole child was more than cognitive development because spiritual and moral development was more important than intellectual and

vocational training. So, he emphasized the 3Hs: heart (character development and moral training), hand (practical skills), and the head (mind). Seeing the danger in widening the gap between those who were schooled and those who were not, Gandhi focused on manual labour for all students to develop in them the dignity of labour. With the majority of people living in the villages, he wanted to involve the life of the community with popular education – formal and informal – through mass political participation.

With its focus on crafts, manual training for all, Indigenous content, and languages, and non-conventional methods of pedagogy, *Nai Talim* was a major departure from the Brahmanical tradition of earlier education in India as well as from the colonial model of education. Gandhi's proposal for basic education was rejected by the National Planning Committee members who did not think that the broad education that would be necessary to teach various academic subjects to build a new India after decades of colonial rule could be done through vocational education. But Gandhi's main focus was independence from colonial rule and, therefore, education for him was to be the practice of freedom. To him, freedom meant not only political independence but liberation from Western values imparted through Western education and culture. Gandhi was jailed often for his non-violent resistance to colonial authority and spent altogether about seven years in prison.

Gandhi has been criticized for his "puritanical, conservative and pacifist thinking" (Pathak, 2016), considered to be against progress and development, and detrimental to postcolonial India. Ambedkar (1971) questioned Gandhi's fight for the rights of Indians while, domestically, the caste system in India was (and continues to be) a matter of extreme injustice. Gandhi did not succeed in ending the social inequalities of the caste system that has now become entrenched in a spiralling complexity of inequality and quotas. Nor did he include women as equals, even though he brought them into the freedom movement. Partha Chatterjee (1993) pointed out that mainstream politics in the public realm did not articulate gender politics during Gandhi's time. However, this is arguably not a legitimate explanation of Gandhi's attitude towards either gender or caste because he did go outside the box in his defiance of British imperialism. Gandhi simply did not attempt to make structural changes to the oppression and the degradation experienced by women and the lower castes in the educational environment and society in India.

So, there are several contradictions in Gandhi's message. But the significance of his message of non-violence is for peaceful development and change, for an ethics of care and moral togetherness in a fractured world (Ghosh, 2017). Connell (2007) points to Gandhi's "highly sophisticated response to colonialism" as having most successfully "cracked the code of British imperialism" (p.187). By "cracking the code" Gandhi indeed proved the key argument Connell makes that "colonised and peripheral societies produce social thought about the modern world which has as much intellectual power as metropolitan social thought and more political relevance" (p.xii).

Gandhi's ideas have de-centred ideas of power and dependency and shown that non-violence and moral togetherness can be instruments of change. If peace, rather than power and domination, is really what countries around the world aim for, then global theories would need new concepts to re-cast theories of culture and society. Yet, the North-South divide endures (Arrighi, Silver, & Brewer, 2003) because decolonization and different degrees of industrialization have not reduced the underlying gap, and

global hierarchies of inequality and influence tend to reproduce themselves (Munck, 2016) even though there are recent signs of shifts in power. Unprecedented natural disasters like tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes, wildfires, and, currently, COVID 19 do not see political borders and affect all areas around the globe, and have underlined human vulnerability and interdependence so that we must think of our place in the globe rather than in a nation-state. The definition of what it means to be a super-power has changed, and less powerful countries have shown, for example, that they are more successful in managing the pandemic than those whose might could not conceal their vulnerabilities resulting in huge losses. This has made it imperative to develop alternative ways of seeing the world with humility and humanity in decolonized spaces free of oppression and inequality, as Gandhi suggested.

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Caste relations in student diversity: Thinking through Dr Ambedkar's perspective towards a civic learning approach in higher education

Nidhi S Sabharwal
Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration: *nidhiss.01@gmail.com*

The chairman of the drafting committee of the modern Indian Constitution, Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar, emphasized that education cultivates democracy in society, strengthens the roots of democracy, and brings about social transformation. The social transformation includes a way of life that will promote liberty, equality, and fraternity, which are Dr Ambedkar's "key elements of an ideal society". This paper discusses the implications for higher education campuses for achieving an ideal society in light of the emerging evidence on peer group formation around identities and issues of discrimination associated with caste in the context of increasing student diversity. The paper also emphasizes the important role of a civic-learning approach to higher education; meaning an active engagement with values of liberty, equality, and fraternity. There is a shared belief that higher education has a great potential to be a social laboratory for civic learning and to inculcate democratic values and foster peaceful interactions among members of diverse groups.

Keywords: B R Ambedkar; higher education; caste; student diversity; socially excluded groups; civic learning; India

INTRODUCTION

Ambedkar, the chief architect of the *Constitution of India 1950* and the one who led the social movement to secure human rights of the oppressed in the Indian caste system, believed that education cultivates a culture of the practice of democratic values in society, and brings about social transformation. For Ambedkar, social transformation included a way of life that promoted values of liberty, equality, and fraternity in consonance with principles of democracy. He considered these three values as key elements of an ideal society (Ambedkar, 1936). According to Ambedkar, the real remedy to social problems was social reconstruction as understood as a participatory and pluralistic experience, replacing social relations governed by a caste system with one based on democratic values of equality, justice, freedom, and fraternity.

Ambedkar (1936) was much influenced by his teacher in Columbia University, John Dewey (1916), who believed in the transformative role of education for establishing a

democratic social consciousness. Thus, Ambedkar identified education as a key instrument of liberation from the oppressive structures of Hindu caste-patriarchy, as well as for the reconstruction of a new social order. This paper presents the relevance of the philosophical and educational views of Ambedkar in light of contemporary challenges related to caste being encountered in higher education institutions (HEIs).

It is argued that caste- and untouchability-based forms of practices and inter-relations on higher education (HE) campuses not only result in access inequalities to basic human and social rights but also causes prejudice, and a lack of fellow feeling and empathy amongst students from diverse social groups. This, in turn, raises barricades against the potential role of HEIs to function as a laboratory to nurture democratic skills for participating in a pluralistic socio-cultural society. In addition to preparing students to become effective workers, as is by and large the current focus of HE (Thorat, 2013), we believe that HE can increase its social relevance and its role in the creation of a democratic society if it also works to address the caste problem.

This paper will first discuss the educational views of Ambedkar on the influence of the caste system on inequalities in access to human rights and how it leads to an absence of a sense of fellow feeling based on humanity. By extension, such absence leads to a negative impact on social solidarity and democracy. The discussion will then present current empirical evidence on the persistent problems suffered by social groups who are historically positioned lower in the social order in the caste system and who attempt to access the HE system. The final section of the paper considers the possibilities of a civic-learning approach in HE from the perspective of Ambedkar in and for contemporary times.

UNDERSTANDING THE CASTE SYSTEM THROUGH AMBEDKARS' THEORETICAL LENS

Ambedkar (1987a) viewed the caste system as a social system that was the source of mass-illiteracy and denied people the opportunity to protest if they suffered wrong-doing. Historically, the caste system divided people into groups, called "castes" in which the civil, cultural, educational and economic rights of each individual is pre-determined or ascribed by birth and made hereditary. The assignment and entitlement of rights among castes were unequal and assigned in a hierarchal manner – the rights reduced the lower in the hierarchy, resulting in social exclusion and the denial of equal access to rights and entitlements (Thorat & Newman, 2010).

Ambedkar located the problems of the lower castes in the historical denial of basic human rights, including civil, cultural, religious, educational, and economic rights; the denial being rooted in the oppressive social order and in the social code being practised against the lower castes, with prescribed penalties (social and economic ostracization) for breach of the codes in order to preserve the social order. The caste system, as an institution, creates prejudices which made members of the society observe the distinctions of high and low/clean and unclean. Ambedkar believed that the hardships and disabilities inflicted on the lower castes by the social system were so rampant and effective that it was as if they were being imposed by the law of the State.

Above all, Ambedkar believed that the denial of rights to education to the lower castes and untouchables, "was the most cruel wrong" (1987a, p. 126). In his essay on Philosophy of Hinduism (Ambedkar, 1987b), he asked:

> But why make one person depend upon another in the matter of his vital needs? Education everyone must have. (p. 69)

Ambedkar (1936) also believed that the denial of educational rights resulted in the lack of consciousness that one was suffering injustice:

> The result of the denial of educational rights is that no one is conscious that low condition is grounds for grievance; the consciousness is that no one is responsible for the condition; the group reconcile to eternal servitude and accept it as inescapable fate. They could not think out or know the way to their salvation. They were condemned to be lowly and not knowing the way of escape and not having the means of escape, they became reconciled to eternal servitude, which they accepted as their inescapable fate. (p. 63)

The group that was most wronged, and on whom the entire burden of the caste system fell, were the scheduled castes (formerly called "untouchables") who were placed at the bottom of the caste system. Untouchables suffered from a final handicap, that of "untouchability", in the graded assignments of rights in the caste system, making them even distinct among the "lower castes". Ambedkar noted that untouchability is not merely considered in the literal sense of the term, where pollution takes place by touch, but also has a notional sense of impurity justified by the religious system of belief. The notional form of untouchability involved forced non-association and, in turn, lack of participation in various spheres of society, culture, and economy (Thorat & Sabharwal, 2015).

Ambedkar (1936) argued, in his essay on the annihilation of caste, that:

> Not only the untouchability arrested the growth of personality of untouchables but also comes in the way of their 'material well-being'. It deprived them of certain civil rights. The untouchable is not even a citizen. Citizenship is a bundle of rights such as personal liberty, personal security, right to hold private property, equality before law, liberty of conscience, freedom of opinion, and speech, right of assembly, right of representation in country's government, and right to hold office under the state. The untouchability of untouchables puts these rights far beyond their reach. (p. 256)

Equal rights, legal safeguards and affirmative action

Ambedkar (1948) insisted foremost on access to equal rights as a necessary institutional condition for control over economic and productive resources. He argued that not providing access to equal citizenship rights was a denial of citizenship rights, and is rooted in the denial of basic human rights essential for the growth of human beings. He viewed access to equal rights as citizenship rights and bestowing political and educational privilege on the untouchables was a way to social equality. Ambedkar incorporated "equality before law" (GOI, 1950) as a constitutional provision overturning the customary rules of the caste system.

Ambedkar advocated for a general framework which involved the acceptance of the principles of non-discrimination, legal abolition of untouchability (GOI, 1955), and enactment of legal measures to prevent violence and caste-based atrocities (GOI, 1989).

Importantly, Ambedkar ensured the recognition of the problem, particularly recognition of the educational and economic 'backwardness' of the low castes. In view of the historical exclusion and isolation of the lower castes, Ambedkar advocated for the nation-state to become responsible for the protection of the interests of the 'scheduled castes' (SCs), ensure their fair access to economic and social spheres, and take measures to uplift them through affirmative action policies and pro-active measures to ensure their due share in nations' growth and development.

As a result, the government of India, based on various constitutional provisions employed legal safeguards against untouchability-based discrimination and caste-based atrocities. In addition, the government has initiated affirmative action measures in the form of a reservation policy in the legislature, public employment, higher education and other government spheres, like public housing, to improve the economic and educational status of the untouchable castes. Affirmative action policies have also been developed for other lower castes and groups; that is the scheduled tribes (STs) and the other backward classes (OBCs), which have suffered exclusion in one form or the other. The OBCs are *shudras* or the lower castes, but not untouchables in the caste system. The STs include ethnic and indigenous groups that have suffered from physical and social isolation.

Annihilation of caste, nurturing fraternity and the role of education

Ambedkar emphasized that political power gained through representation in the legislature cannot be a panacea for all the ills inflicted on the lower castes and untouchables. Political power must be rooted in the form of society free from rigid social barriers and founded on democratic attitudes of mind. Ambedkar stressed that democratic attitudes involved individuals treating each other as equals, being prepared to provide the same liberty claimed for oneself to others, and developing a fellow feeling for one another as the pre-requisites of a democratic society and for sustaining equality, liberty, and collective social life.

On 25 November 1949, in an Assembly debate, Ambedkar said:

> We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. These principles of liberty, equality and fraternity are not to be treated as separate items in a trinity. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy. Without equality, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things. It would require a constable to enforce them. (p. 64)

He appealed for a new social order based on the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity, and incorporated these values in the constitution of a free India. Ambedkar (1936) called for the annihilation of caste because he viewed it as a great hindrance to both economic reform and social solidarity. He asserted that caste was not based on the

division of labour but was a division of labourers. Ambedkar (1987c) observed that one of the unique features of the caste system was the spirit of isolation and exclusiveness. Isolation and exclusiveness make the caste group anti-social and inimical towards one another. It is the spirit of isolation and exclusiveness which brings about an anti-social spirit and, in turn, is the worst feature of the caste system.

For creation of a unified proletariat, he argued, it was important for mental attitudes and feelings towards fellow workers to be based on foundations of equality, fraternity, and, above all, justice. Along with inter-caste marriages, Ambedkar saw education as one of the means for building up and re-constructing the society based on reasoning, as opposed to anti-democratic traditions of the caste system.

Fraternity, or fellow feeling, was particularly a value that Ambedkar drew on and considered the moral responsibility of education in nurturing it. In the context of India, he defined fraternity as a sense of common 'brotherhood' of all Indians – of Indians being one people. It was essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards fellow citizens. He considered fraternity to be the principle which gave unity and solidarity to social life; in other words, for the *social endosmosis* necessary for the creation of a democratic form of society. For Ambedkar, democracy was not merely a form of government, it was also primarily a mode of associated living and conjoint communicated experience (1952a). Ambedkar viewed fraternity as another name for democracy, where many interests could be consciously communicated and shared. He prioritised the value of developing a fellow feeling, or feeling of common humanity, amongst those who constitute the nation-state for the unification and protection of common citizenry, their social elevation and establishment of social democracy.

It was education that Ambedkar considered as an instrument for developing fraternity among caste groups in India. He saw education as the weapon of social change. He recognized education as the mechanism through which democratic attitudes could be transmitted and nurtured in people. Ambedkar was of the view that education would help people work out their own political destiny, pruning the useless and preserving the useful in their societies. Drawing from his teacher, John Dewey, Ambedkar (1936) observed, for instance, that:

> Every society gets encumbered with what is trivial, with dead wood from the past, and with what is positively perverse. As a society becomes more enlightened, it realizes that it is responsible not to conserve and transmit the whole of its existing achievements, but only such as it makes for a better future society. (p. 79)

Ambedkar emphasized that education is an instrument that cultivates democracy in the society by providing skills for associated living, secular ethical thinking, and enhancing capabilities to engage in a democratic way of life. Along with political independence, Ambedkar urgently called for the reform of the social order because not to do so, he cautioned, would result in persistence of social problems associated with the caste system in varying forms across diverse spheres of the society in India.

In light of the widely recognized transformative role of HE to train young people in democratic values (UNESCO, 1998), the objective of the rest of this paper is to present the problems currently faced by the socially excluded groups, such as the SCs, OBCs and the STs in HEIs in India and how HE is dealing with the tensions caused by an increase in student diversity. The response of HE to the identified problems will

influence its potential to re-build Indian society based on the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity that Ambedkar emphasized.

METHODOLOGY

The empirical findings described in this paper draw from research on social inequalities in HE by Sabharwal and Malish (2016), which employed a mixed methods approach to gain a holistic understanding of the HE experiences of students and faculty members from socially excluded groups in India. The study employed a HE multi-institutional case study approach of 12 HEIs across six states: Bihar, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, located in the eastern, western, southern and northern parts of India – that is, situated across different spatial zones.

A pragmatic triangulation, mixed-methods research design (Creswell & Clark, 2007) was used, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected and combined to arrive at the research findings. Quantitative data was collected to reveal the differences between experiences of diverse groups of students, while qualitative data helped to reveal the drivers of social exclusion and processes involved in causality. Quantitative data was collected through a detailed questionnaire-based survey of 3,200 students selected from the 2nd year of undergraduate and post-graduate courses. Qualitative data was collected from 70 focus group discussions with students and 50 solicited diaries from students, and 200 in-depth interviews with teachers, administrators, and decision makers in the case-study HE institutions.

PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED BY STUDENTS

In India, along with rising social demand for education, increasing school participation rates and expanding educational supply options, a range of affirmative action measures have contributed towards improving social diversity in student composition (Varghese, Sabharwal, & Malish, 2018). Measures such as the reservation policy, scholarships, and relaxation in admission requirements have resulted in HEIs in India expanding their access to students who have traditionally been under-represented in HE, such as the SCs, STs, and the OBCs. In addition, there are clear state directives (related to regulations against discrimination) to HEIs for institutionalizing protection of students from discrimination (UGC, 2012).

Student composition has moved from being homogenous - largely composed of upper caste – urban male – to a more diverse student group belonging to rural background and socially excluded groups, and to women (Sabharwal & Malish, 2016). In 2016, the student social composition in HE in India comprised 6% STs, 15% SCs, 42% OBCs, and 38% higher castes (NSSO, 2014). In other words, traditionally disadvantaged social groups comprise the single largest group, making up more than 60% of total enrolments.

While more students from traditionally socially excluded background are going to HEIs, a CPRHE study (Sabharwal & Malish, 2016) shows that exclusionary practices prevalent in the society (see also, Borooah, Sabharwal, Diwakar, Mishra., & Naik. 2015; Thorat & Newman, 2010) are reproduced and reflected on HE campuses. The evidence indicates caste to be a source of separation in teacher-student relationships and peer-to-peer interactions. Experiences with caste-based patterns in teaching-learning

relations and division in peer groups based on caste identities result not only in marginalization of students from the socially excluded groups on HE campuses, but also in the preservation of separate class-consciousness amongst diverse groups.

Caste-based patterns of teaching-learning relationships

Empirical evidence generated through focus group discussions and the student survey showed that students from the disadvantaged social groups expressed a strong feeling that they did not receive adequate academic support and were ignored in classroom transactions. While physical segregation in terms of classroom seating was no longer in practice, caste-based segregation reflected through the amount of attention, support, and guidance received from teachers was prevalent. For example, the correlation analysis of the survey question: "I receive adequate academic support compared to rest of the students", showed that students from the SC group felt that they did not (Pearson r= -0.37, p=0.05), while higher caste students felt that they received academic support, (Pearson r=.062, p=0.01). Likewise, while students from the SC group indicated their teachers did not encourage students to respect different beliefs (Pearson r= - 0.45, p=0.05), higher caste students indicated the opposite (Pearson r= 0.65, p = 0.01).

The focus group discussions revealed that students from the SC and ST group felt ignored in two aspects. First, they felt the curriculum did not have an adequate representation of experiences and symbols of subaltern groups and was over-represented with examples of the life, world, and cultural practices of dominant social groups. Second, they felt that classroom transactions were dominated by the socially excluded groups being portrayed in a deficit way, resulting in a feeling of being marginalized. On the feeling of being marginalized in the classrooms, one student in the group discussion noted, "many times during teaching if teachers are using examples from Hindu scriptures/texts then they accept the responses from higher castes students. They don't consider our responses or argument because they think we don't have knowledge of Hindu rituals."

Positive correlation coefficients for both SC and ST students (for SC group, Pearson r = 0.042, p=0.05; for ST group, Pearson r = 0.051, p=0.01) also indicate that they felt teachers from their own background gave them more attention than other teachers. Interviewed faculty members who belonged to the SCs and STs acknowledged that they encouraged students to meet them to discuss their personal issues. However, it is to be noted that a significant majority of teachers of case study institutions were from the upper castes (Sabharwal, Henderson, & Joseph, 2020). In addition to caste-based patterns of teaching-learning relations, the beliefs of most faculty members were rooted in the ideology of merit, and considered that an increase in student diversity as a result of the reservation-based policy (and not merit) was causing a decline in the overall "quality" of HE. This attitude left students from the socially excluded groups less integrated into the teaching-learning process, and left them with a feeling of not being welcomed by their teachers or their institutions.

Campus culture embedded in caste norms

Outside classrooms, the nature of campus culture was found to be deeply embedded in caste-based stereotypes and beliefs, which shaped the attitudes and behaviours of faculty members, administrators and peers, influencing their interactions with the

students from the socially excluded groups. Similar to the beliefs of the faculty members, dominant beliefs of the upper caste peers of the socially excluded groups (SC/ST/OBC) were negative towards the reservation policy and its social justice justification. In addition to hostility towards reservation-based provisions, extra-curricular activities, in which students from disadvantaged social groups participated, faced stigmatization. As a result, social divisions in friendship, lack of inter-group formations for activities on campuses, and the absence of informal interactions with teachers were not uncommon.

For example, students across campuses formed their friendship groups (friends with whom they interact with most often) largely based on their caste, ethnicity, and regional backgrounds. Peer groups were influenced by the position of peers in the caste hierarchy with higher castes mostly interacting with each other and not with the students from other social groups. Only 9% of the higher caste students reported that their best friend was from the SC group. The data suggest that SCs also mostly form their friendship groups within their own caste (37%) or with the OBCs (22%); interestingly, the identity-based peer-group formation among the SCs was found to be a consequence of fear of discrimination and exclusionary behaviour from others and acted as a supportive mechanism against a non-inclusive institutional environment. In the case of higher caste students, this was due to same group preference, helping to maintain groups exclusivity, which was considered as a virtue.

Importantly, the student union, which is an important social space outside the classroom, experienced caste-related fissures. Such unions, in our sample of HEIs were either not allowed to be formed by the administrators with a restriction on student election, or, where they existed, student elections were contested on the basis of caste. This represents an extreme form of peer-group formation based on group identity with serious negative implications on capacities to develop civic-mindedness, leadership skills, facilitation of access to resources offered by the institutions, and the creation of a sense of belonging.

Challenges faced by students from the socially excluded groups were accentuated by unsupportive administrative structures and weak implementation of institutional mechanisms, such as the equal opportunity cells, which are meant to support and protect their interest. Ineffective implementation of such administrative mechanisms and lack of inter-group interactions resulted in students from the socially excluded groups being less likely to participate in orientation programmes and engage in extra-curricular activities, clubs, and societies, thus furthering their marginalization and resulting in their poor performance.

Implications of caste-based discriminatory practices on HE campuses are a systemic denial of equal academic and social learning opportunities and rights to democratic participation of disadvantaged groups in campus life. Prejudiced attitudes and peer groups formed on the basis of identities are indications of separate class consciousness and an absence of fellow feeling which, in turn, is a barrier to achieving the *social endosmosis* required for solidarity*,* including broader goals of social transformation through HE.

The potential of the civic learning approach in HE will be discussed next, taking into account Ambedkar's argument that the role of education should be to foster democratic attitudes and a change to the social system.

A CIVIC LEARNING APPROACH IN HE

The above analysis suggests that community-determined values, often contradictory to democratic norms, influence behaviour and actions of groups on HE campuses. Group disparities, exclusionary tendencies, and group divide across caste identities are a consequence of behaviour based on customary values that are largely shaped through informal learning and socialization in the family and society. These behaviours are contrary to the democratic values that Ambedkar prioritized. Against the background of pieces of evidences of prejudice and exclusion, this section turns to a construction of the civic learning approach in HE.

In addition to formation of human capital and developing productive workers, it is now increasingly recognized that HE has the potential to cultivate democratic norms of behaviour and develop a sense of civic identity (Rubin, Hayes, & Benson, 2009). Late adolescence and early adulthood, that is, the college-age of students, are unique times when the nature of experiences affects the emerging sense of identity and when personal and social identity is formed (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999). Colleges can be spaces that support young adults through this identity development stage.

Research literature suggests that HE, through civic learning, can develop citizens that have the capacity to live and act in a diverse socio-cultural world (Hurtado, 2003). Civic learning equips students with the competencies to consider each other as equals and respectful of diverse view-points; it equip students with the means to solve conflicts and differences of opinion in a non-violent manner (Thorat & Sabharwal, 2013). Education for civic learning and democratic engagement has received positive policy attention in the US (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2011) and Europe (Hoskins, Villalba, & Saisana, 2012; Kerr, Sturman, Schulz, & Burge, 2011).

The civic-learning approach in HE involves teaching the values of liberty, equality, fraternity, and social justice by making them part of the curriculum and developing pedagogical approaches to teach such values. Foundation courses, which include lessons on issues of social group identity and justice, make students aware about the problems of society, such as the nature of discrimination involved in caste, ethnicity, and religion. Such courses are ways of enhancing students' civic capabilities. Content that explores the dynamics of privileges and disadvantages by using examples that incorporate subaltern epistemologies, experiences of the marginalized, and perspectives of a wide range of groups from a variety of cultures in the mainstream academic knowledge is considered important to sensitize students to the problems of the meta-narratives that dominate the curriculum and to challenge it (Banks, 1996; Bowman, 2010; Chang, 2002).

Ambedkar firmly believed in the power of knowledge in shaping the thinking of students, and their subsequent actions. On 24 December 1952, while addressing the annual gathering of the students of the Rajaram College, Kolhapur, Ambedkar said: "Knowledge is the foundation of a man's life and every effort must be made to maintain the intellectual stamina of a student and arouse his intellect". He advised students to develop their thinking power and make use of the knowledge they had gained (Ambedkar, 1952b, p. 487). Building the knowledge-base of students with the curriculum content imbued with the rights-based approach and social justice

perspectives is the first step to enhancing the capacities to follow and base their action on democratic values.

Simultaneously, pedagogical methods which create conditions for positive inter-group interactions, promote multi-cultural (caste) friendships, and increase communication among diverse groups of students are equally important to improving democratic skills of engagement. Mixed-peer groups for academic tasks, intergroup dialogues and community-based learning that motivate students for collective action to solve public problems are pedagogical practices that have been documented to have a positive impact on civic learning (Antonio, 2001; Gurin et al., 2002; Pike & Kuh, 2006). In 1953, as a way to strengthen university-community partnerships, Ambedkar suggested a community-based activity which involved students interacting and educating the masses to act on the basis of rational thinking, and developing dispositions conducive of social connectedness. Ambedkar said, in May 1953, "The time has come when small groups of students must go to the masses and teach them to lead a rational life". (Ambedkar, 1953, p. 494).

By creating a civic learning environment, colleges can help students acquire knowledge, abilities, skills, and habits of mind that foster multicultural competencies for working and interacting with people who represent diverse cultures and perspectives, and participating in citizen actions that bridge the gap between the ideals in the constitution and lived realities. Importantly, the purpose of cultivating such democratic values is to promote equitable, non-discriminatory and just HE campuses. In the context of evolving social milieu on HE campuses and for civic learning to be an integral part of HE, education for civic learning will need to move from the margins and constitute the core of the curriculum and teaching. At present, existing programmes, such as the National Service Scheme, courses on human rights and gender, are fragmented and implemented selectively (Thorat, 2013).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper explored Ambedkar's educational and philosophical perspective on the traditional caste system and the potential role of education in rebuilding the social order to achieve a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality, and fraternity as the principles of life. Empirical evidence discussed in this paper show that HEIs, which are expected to play a transformative social role, resist changing themselves. Study findings showed that the intellectual structures and practices of institutions were rooted in the traditional caste system and values of meritocracy, which lead to social separation on HE campuses.

There is currently a greater diversity in student composition on HE campuses, which is the result of economic and political developments. However, what is missing is educational efforts to construct diversity in a positive way that reflects democratic inclusion and participation, in which the plurality of differences is not only tolerated but appreciated and valued. The paper proposed re-constructing existing learning approaches from the perspective of Ambedkar to respond to the needs of diversity and participation in the pluralistic democracy. The civic learning approach provides possibilities and hopes to constructively address and critically reflect on diverse experiences in increasingly socially heterogeneous HE campuses.

A glimmer of hope on the expectation from education to respond to challenges of our times is reflected in the current draft of the new education policy in India (MHRD, 2019). While it does not directly address the issue of caste experience in connection with HE, it considers prejudice and bias based on gender and social status as a potential axis of exclusion, and calls for training teachers and sensitizing learners on notions of respect and dignity for all. This educational approach symbolizes an intention of movement towards democratic inclusion in education and connects to Ambedkar's idea of an active struggle against an oppressive social order and inclusive participation of disadvantaged groups in all areas of social life.

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Knowledge and participation: Empowering Indian urban poor to access public services

Sukrit Nagpal
Society for Participatory Research in Asia, India *sukritnagpal@gmail.com*
Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay
Society for Participatory Research in Asia, India: *kaustuv.bandyopadhyay@pria.org*

The paper focusses on three aspects of our work with the urban poor: utilization of participatory research methodologies to elicit local knowledge in forms that do not require traditional education; building capacities to create active organized citizenry through catalysing Settlement Improvement Committees, which are representative bodies (involving youth, women and men) of the urban poor aimed at advocating interests of the community, and planning for collective positive action; and enabling communities and their organizations to utilize technology-enabled mobile surveys to collect their own data, leading to the demystification of technology and allowing for utilization of data for planning (for individual and community-level action), monitoring the implementation of these plans, as well as seeking access to services from state actors. This paper was presented in an International Research Symposium on "Other ways of knowing and doing", organized by the O.P Jindal Global University. The symposium was an opportunity to discuss the utilization of technology combined with participatory methods for the production of knowledge, and catalyzing social change actions by the urban poor in selected Indian cities.

Keywords: participatory research; urban poor; participatory settlement enumeration; local development

INTRODUCTION[1]

In the post-World War II period, developing countries experienced an "expert"-driven, top-down development model based on the imported concepts of centralized planning. This model resulted in schemes and polices that were often found to be irrelevant to the needs of people. Importantly, these schemes were dependant on huge external funding and failed to connect with the requirements of local communities, who took no ownership for interventions. In the 1970s, a plethora of experiments began in which people were put at the centre of development planning, implementation and monitoring

[1] The authors wish to acknowledge the valuable comments and guidance of Dr Rajesh Tandon, founder-president, PRIA. Dr Anshuman Karol, Ms Nilanjana Bhattacharjee, and PRIA field teams, who have worked extensively to make the ECRC project a success and allowed us to use the key lessons and learnings in this paper.

(Chambers, 1983; Cohen & Uphoff, 1974). At the same time, a number of adult educators began to question the relevance of dominant social research methodologies and argued that traditional researchers, by treating people as passive objects of research, ignored the significance of popular knowledge. This reinforced the role of knowledge as an instrument of power and control. Soon, it became evident that the development practice, which thought of the local community as ignorant and incompetent, often missed out using local knowledge, experience and creativity. A new framework began to take shape that propagated people-centred participatory development (Fals-Borda, 1988; Tandon, 1993, 2002).

As participatory approaches took centre-stage, civil society organizations gained traction in their work with the poor towards the alleviation of poverty. For many organisations, the meaning of poverty underwent a fundamental change. Writing about the Human Settlements Programme at the IIED, Satterthwaite and Mitlin (2013) observed:

> Until 1995, the term poverty was not associated with ways of improving housing and living conditions, or with infrastructure and service provisions for the poor. Till the 1990s, the addressal of poverty meant understanding civil and political rights, encouraging the formation of community organizations, and stressing on strong, accountable and democratic governments and legal systems that supported the needs of low-income groups. (p. xii)

For developing countries in the global South, this shift represented a nuanced understanding of informal settlements. According to recent data, these settlements, comprising of slums, unauthorized colonies, urban villages, and resettlement colonies, are home to between 36 and 47 per cent of India's urban population. Residents of these settlements typically either lack access to infrastructure services or make do with substandard facilities, such as dirty, dysfunctional and overburdened community toilets, overflowing and uncovered drainage systems, limited waste collection facilities, and erratic street lighting. Such abysmal infrastructure also creates additional expenses related to health care and generates additional, time-consuming work for residents , especially for women.

In the quintessentially weak tenure security of these settlements, governments have found a reason to abstain from the provision of basic infrastructure services. This is exacerbated by the lack of social security available to these residents. Local governments often lack authentic up-to-date data on the status of infrastructures and services in informal settlements. The lack of trained human resources is an additional issue that persists. There is also an overlap in agencies that are responsible for implementation and maintenance, thereby creating a lack of accountability and responsibility. The urban poor have also remained vulnerable due to a lack of organizational leadership and intermediation capacities as well as inadequate access to information and resources to become active and independent agents of change.

The Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA)[2] used citizen-centric approaches to address these gaps through the "Engaged Citizens, Responsive City" (ECRC) project supported by the European Union (EU). The ECRC was a four-year intervention,

[2] Established in 1982, Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) is the global centre for participatory research and learning. It is based in New Delhi, India.

focussed on strengthening urban poor civil society to participate in planning and monitoring infrastructure, especially, sanitation services. The project spanned three cities in India (Ajmer in Rajasthan, Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh, and Muzaffarpur in Bihar) and engaged with low-income residents, middle-class citizens, elected councillors, related government departments and bodies, traders and market associations, civil society, academia, sanitation workers, and the media. The intertwining of diverse stakeholders was an attempt to holistically improve sanitation in the city.

The core tenet of the project was to promote decentralized participatory planning and empower communities with critical data concerning their settlements. Data is a critical requirement when seeking interventions from urban local bodies (ULBs), government agencies and parastatals, but is usually scantily available at the granular level. Data sources like the Census of India are difficult to utilize for local planning because the collection is decennial, and information at the level of the ward, colony, and slum is not easily available. Thus, the project attempted to create a set of data that was owned by the community and utilizable for monitoring the availability and quality of infrastructures and services at the local level as well as highlighting shortcomings in the prevalence of social security identity for residents.

The ECRC used participatory research methodologies to design instruments for data collection and analysis and dissemination of findings. The urban poor communities in various informal settlements were organized, trained and provided with support to engage in the planning and monitoring sanitation infrastructure and services, as well as with the ULBs and other state institutions.

USING PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH AS A STRATEGY TO AMPLIFY THE VOICES OF URBAN POOR

PRIA conducted two surveys in each city. The first survey, referred to as "Participatory Settlement Enumeration" (PSE), was administered to all houses in informal settlements, allowing for the creation of settlement and household specific data. In the three cities of Jhansi, Ajmer, and Muzaffarpur, 250 settlements were surveyed. Apart from a strong focus on sanitation and infrastructure services, the surveys focussed on individual social security entitlements, such as possession of birth certificates, electoral identity cards, Aadhaar[3] cards, educational data, and occupation. The PSE utilized community-based participatory research approaches, which strengthened organizations of the urban poor and helped these local organizations collect their own data. These surveys empowered communities with data that could be used to inform authorities which services and infrastructures had limitations, and the status of social security. The data could also be used to monitor and reflect upon improvements. This paper restricts itself to experiences derived from this process.

To create a holistic understanding of the sanitation infrastructure in the city, PRIA also rolled out a more detailed city-wide sample survey, inclusive of all the municipal wards in the city. Referred to as the Participatory City Sanitation Survey, it was administered

[3] Aadhaar is a verifiable 12-digit identification number issued by Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) to the resident of India and used for accessing all the entitlements.

to 100 households in each ward. The households were systematically sampled and represented a mix of informal settlements and colonies. PRIA believes that municipalities alone cannot solve the ever-increasing problems of Indian cities. The project thus aimed to transcend highlighted deficiencies in sanitation services and engage with multiple stakeholders, including Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) in colonies, market committees, professional associations, media, and academia to explore solutions to problems of urban sanitation services.

Both survey initiatives were also in line with the objectives of the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U)[4] and acted as an assessment of the ground realities in the three cities. Findings provided critical feedback and played an essential role in the monitoring and evaluation of government schemes as well as the implementation of plans.

The government's focus on cities and the belief that these provide a higher quality of life is often confused with improvement in the conditions of the urban poor. While it is true that our knowledge about cities has increased, our knowledge of urban poverty and the living conditions of the residents of informal settlements is severely lacking, especially outside of Tier I cities[5] in India. Invisibility renders a large chunk of India's urban population powerless across the numerous (largely under-enumerated) informal settlements in India. Counting and estimation is often the first step of public policy, yet, many urban informal settlements and their inhabitants remain unaccounted for in urban planning and governance.

The approach of "development through people's participation" is rarely utilized by ULBs in India. Urban poor are the most affected because illiteracy is incorrectly assumed to indicate a lack of knowledge. Caste and class barriers play a role as well. For informal settlements, especially, it is usually inferred that planning priorities (if any) can be set without consulting residents, or taking note of housing and work, and infrastructure services.

It is not the governments alone that are at fault. Many non-government organizations (NGOs) working with marginalized communities exclude them from research processes, and, therefore, conduct research about the people and not with people (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). As a result, despite often being well-intentioned, strategies and objectives identified by external experts fail because their plans and methods are overly ambitious, miscalculated, and do not meet the needs of the people. Repeated exposure to such experiences leads to the disillusionment of residents and a feeling of betrayal by external organizations.

Resilient communities cannot be built without considering the needs and preferences of the community. A fundamental aspect of participatory research is to ensure that it is conducted directly with the immediately affected persons. The aim is to reconstruct (in ways the modern state deems useable) their knowledge and ability while moving towards a goal of empowerment. It is thus important to deem these individuals as co-

[4] Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) is one of the flagship national programmes of Government of India. It was launched in 2014 to improve the sanitation infrastructure and service in India. Swachh Bharat Mission – Grameen is implemented by the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation under Ministry of Jal Shakti and Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban is implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

[5] Indian cities are classified in six size-class categories based on population size.

researchers and ensure that the tools and methods utilized are considerate and represent the marginalized whose views are seldom sought, and whose voices are rarely heard.

In this scenario, organized collective action is an important prerequisite for facilitating people-centred and people-controlled development. Community organization is the foundation on which further activities are based that help increase people's capacities to participate fully and gain a degree of control over their lives. This is possible only if research methods are made a part of the process.

Participatory research believes in the role of local knowledge of which a pivotal step is community buy-in. When a community surveys, evaluates, and monitors itself, ownership is built and data is authentic. Unlike in third party data collection, there is a reduced sense of fear since surveyors are not only inhabitants of such informal settlements but are also aware of local contexts, formal and informal arrangements, as well as the quality of services and infrastructure. Communities gain confidence when they generate their own data and utilize it to seek services from the state.

A STEP BY STEP APPROACH TO EMPOWER THE URBAN POOR

The tools used to organize and empower communities are touched upon here. These were utilized in conjunction with the survey process.

1) Citywide identification and mapping of informal settlements

A process of mapping and listing of informal settlements was organized in each city, through which settlements were physically identified and plotted on a map. Basic information regarding the legal status of the settlement was acquired as well. This exercise began with gathering secondary data and records but PRIA's team did not restrict this process to settlements that were recognized by governments and state authorities.

This decision was taken to ensure citywide coverage. Listings made by government authorities are often incomplete, dated, and end up missing those in the most precarious of conditions. For example, in Jhansi, District Urban Development Authority (DUDA) records suggest the presence of 57 informal settlements whereas PRIA's mapping process identified 75 such settlements. In Ajmer, PRIA worked with 125 informal settlements whereas the official listing mentions 87 settlements.

Discrepancies are due to a number of reasons. First, data is collected and updated infrequently, as per the government's requirements. Second, scholars have noted that, throughout Indian cities, Census 2011 suggests reduced presence of slum households in cities. The census placed slums into three categories: "notified slums" and "recognised slums" form the first two categories; and the third category, "identified slums" required at "least 300 residents or about 60–70 households of poorly built congested tenements, in an unhygienic environment usually with inadequate infrastructure and lacking in proper sanitary and drinking water facilities". By comparison, the National Sample Survey 65th Round defined slums as a cluster of 20 or more households, a third of the definition provided by the Census 2011. This "cut off" is rather significant. It suggests that the slums that are "missed out" are likely to be the most vulnerable and formed through repeated cycles of eviction, which break large slum clusters. These evictions

see particularly low levels of state resettlement. As a result, the likelihood of them being spatially clustered in the city (as either homeless residents or in deeply vulnerable, scattered accommodations such as clusters of households along a railway line, behind a stadium, in open spaces) is very high. These smaller, less organized clusters have lowered abilities to mobilize political or other patronage to gain access to services (Bhan & Jana, 2013).

The mapping process also provided for a first level interaction with communities. It helped with the identification of active citizens and leaders in the community along with other Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and social institutions operating or active in the settlements. In addition, field teams interacted with relevant stakeholders in the city, such as ward councillors and other elected representatives. This provided an understanding of the socio-political, economic and institutional contexts in which the programme was being implemented. By interacting with a host of stakeholders and using the Rietbergen-McCracken and Narayan (1997) Stakeholder Analysis tool, it was also possible to gain information about who would be affected (positively or negatively) by the outcomes of the project or programme, who could influence the achievements of the programme outcomes, and which individuals, groups, or agencies need to be involved to achieve these outcomes.

2) Facilitating Participatory Urban Appraisals (PUA)

Bringing people to the centre of development by incorporating the element of participation in development projects recognizes the fact that social reality is a complex phenomenon with multiple interpretations possible. Therefore, the interpretation of people about their own reality is to be treated as the most authentic interpretation. This also becomes the foundation for privileging local knowledge (Chambers, 1992, 1997).

PRIA adapted and used PUAs[6] as a methodology for community organizing, although it was often used for research purposes. One of the foremost methods utilized is the transect walk, which helps form a spatial understanding of the settlement by identifying its location, geographical spread, housing conditions, and availability of services. These walks help build rapport with the community and allow observation through the eyes of local people. The empowering aspect of the walk lies in the fact that control lies with the community. Field teams in the ECRC often conducted multiple transect walks in each settlement. Depending on the group, who the walk was conducted with, and the time of the day, teams were able to explore varied regions of the settlement and create individual narratives as well as gauge community perspectives. This is essential since single transect walks are limited to a single time and can only showcase situations and features that are thought of as essential or important by those with whom the walk is being conducted. However, conducting such walks repeatedly often provides contradictory or contested information which is important to correlate with other methods.

The second type of PUA utilized is Participatory Social and Resource Mapping. This process allows teams to work with community members to generate a social and resource map to gather information on the spatial layout, locations of houses, and infrastructural facilities. This process also mapped landmarks, roads, intersecting railway tracks, as well as places of local importance, such as mosques and temples.

[6] Methods derived from PRAs but titled PUAs because of the focus on urban.

Public areas, such as parks, service points, such as hand pumps and ration shops, are also accounted for. The first significant difference between a social map and a regular map lies in the fact that it is made by local people and not by "experts". PRIA teams facilitated the process of mapping by requesting inputs from community members and ensuring close coordination between them. As community members often differed in their opinions, it was easiest to use a pencil so that divergent factors could be taken into account. As a larger number of individuals got involved, maps were often re-drawn.

A social map depicts aspects that are important for the community. An effective mapping process would help teams understand social stratification, demographics, settlement patterns, and infrastructure. Additionally, the process laid the stepping stone to the establishment of a forum for community members (NIRD, n.d.).

The third method used was the timeline, which provided a historical perspective and helped understand the nature of changes that took place in the settlement. This method captures the chronology of events as recalled by local people and is a useful tool to bring on board diverse opinions. The tool often highlights events, which are perceived as important by the community. It can be used to generate discussions on issues that pertain to the project and develop a rapport with the community. PRIA team used timeline tool to explore the history of the informal settlements – when did it come to existence, who were the early settlers, incidents of evictions threats, and other socio-political dynamics over the years.

3) Organizing Settlement Improvement Committees (SICs)

The methods and processes described above were aimed at the creation of a community-based organization (CBOs). These steps are pivotal because communities are organized around day-to-day issues that create hindrances in their lives.

In this case, we refer to community organizations as non-statutory organizations that are initiated through the project and driven by the community. Project initiated committees have specified norms for formation and membership to ensure greater representation of the community (Tandon & Jaitli, 1998). In the ECRC, these organizations are known as Settlement Improvement Committees (SICs). These are local organizations that advocate for the interests and needs of the urban poor. SICs act as bridges between the service providers and the community. They speak in unison about the communities' needs and rights. They are the focal points through which external stakeholders can connect with the communities.

The project facilitated the formation of 250 SICs in three cities. These SICs were developed and managed by nominated residents of the settlements with each SIC having a total of 8-15 members as the core members. The project consciously emphasized a larger involvement of youth and women as member of these committees.

The formation of these organizations was aimed at providing a safe space for discussion and reflection on the settlement's problems; these entities helped identify and prioritize community needs and find solutions for the needs through close coordination and by working with other institutions. The need for a "safe space" is an important prerequisite for participatory research methods since they require a great willingness on the part of the participants to disclose their personal views of the situation, their own opinions and experiences. SICs aim to create spaces where individuals can voice their dissenting

views. These spaces are essential for the process of knowledge production as they show a new and different (often unique) take on the subject and enable the discovery of new aspects. The aim of this safe space is not to create a conflict free space but rather to ensure that conflicts can be viewed as adding to knowledge. It is important to keep in mind that social responses to problems by a group of people are not necessarily the same as the total of individual responses of people acting singularly or alone (Hall, 1975). The provision of these spaces and the collectivization of individuals bring different capacities, knowledge, beliefs, and ideas that strengthen the SIC and the idea of unity.

For organizational entities like SICs to function well (and beyond the project), trust must be allowed to develop. The goal is to create long-term, honest relationships (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). When facilitating the formation of SICs, it is vital to ensure the engagement of all households in the settlement. To ensure the sustainability of the organization, barriers of caste, class, gender, and age must be broken.

Post formation of SICs, field teams provided support through a series of handholding activities. Regular meetings were held with each SIC to understand the nature of their problems and priorities as well as ideas on how to solve these issues. In parallel, PRIA prepared profiles of each SIC member to assess the level of capacity building required. Based on this, training programmes were designed to create an understanding of the role of the SIC as well as the rights of residents inhabiting these informal settlements. As SICs advanced, core members were nominated to participate in orientations held by PRIA. These orientations furthered their understanding and built on their knowledge while providing for leadership development, articulation of problems, and role of state agencies.

4) House listing

One of the first requirements of a large-scale survey was house numbering or house listing. This process acts as a stepping stone to surveying. PRIA's teams found that a large number of houses in informal settlements were not provided addresses by state agencies. The house numbering process needs to ensure each household bears a systematically assigned number. Additionally, the process needs to be collaboratively executed with SIC members. To ensure proper participation, training was provided to them and the process explained. House numbering instilled a sense of ownership in the community and residents since many had never had house addresses before. Numbering houses in a systematic manner also granted a sense of importance and fulfilment.

5) Co-designing the survey questionnaire

Questionnaires designed without the community's involvement are one-sided in nature. Participatory research regards people as sources of information and as having bits of isolated knowledge. In traditional research methods, the community are neither expected nor assumed to be able to analyse a given social reality (Hall, 1975).

Alienated research, which treats respondents as sources of information, has little likelihood of creating the active and supportive environment essential for change. Research under the ECRC wanted to ensure that those familiar with the problem, and whose lives are affected by it are not taken out of the process of change. It was therefore important to ensure that research provided easy links to the subsequent action.

After preparing a draft questionnaire, PRIA's team held multiple interactions with SIC members to ensure all parameters were covered. PRIA was keen to involve communities from the design stage and, based on these exchanges, questions were modified and options added.

The administered questionnaire was divided into the sections (see Figure 1) for ease of filling out and analysis. While the thrust of the questionnaire was to gauge the level of sanitation facilities in the city, it has also captured basic information about households, which is often important for correlation analysis.

The Participatory Settlement Enumeration (PSE) survey contained five forms. As depicted in Figure 1. The first form was the registration form and allowed enumerators to choose from a list of settlements categorized by wards. Considering the similarity in the names of settlements, this step made sure the correct ward and "slum" were being chosen. The form was also used to capture basic details of the respondent. The second form focussed on the structure of the household, ownership, income, religion, and caste. The third form captured information about members living in the household. For each member, age, gender, education, and occupation were captured. This form also noted the availability of Aadhaar, Voter ID, Ration Card, and birth certificates. The fourth form captured information regarding sanitation facilities, namely toilets, drainage, bathroom, sewerage, as well as grievance redressal. A fifth form was used to capture pictures, GPS coordinate, and to end the survey.

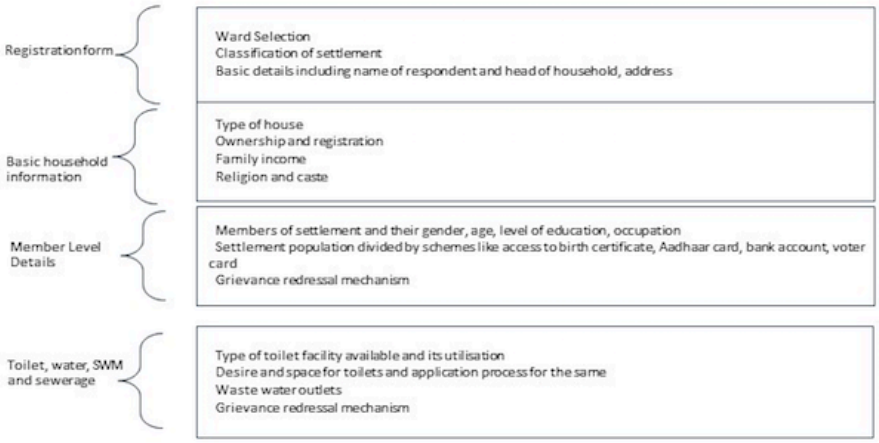

Figure 1: Flow of Participatory Settlement Enumeration Survey

6) Selecting and training the enumeration team

A semi-structured training was hosted for the community enumerators selected from the youth residing in various informal settlements. These youth, identified through PUAs, played a crucial role in the SIC formation process. As the project advanced, all settlements covered in the city were divided within these community enumerators. They became part of PRIA's field team, and their presence made communities feel more

comfortable. That apart, as co-researchers, they contributed to the formulation of questions and, later, to interpretation of data.

A major advantage of involving these enumerators in data collection processes is that they have first-hand knowledge of the field. Since they belong to the settlements being surveyed, they understood the way people thought and could obtain higher quality responses.

However, their involvement also meant divergent levels of understanding and knowledge. Choice of data collection method was critical. A comprehensively developed mobile application allowed the use of visual aids, inbuilt checks to complement their knowledge and ensure authentic data (Bergold & Thomas, 2012).

The training session introduced the participants to the questionnaire, followed by an intensive discussion on the rationale and logical flow of various questions. Once an understanding of the questionnaire had developed, the participants were taken through the customized mobile application designed to capture the enumerations. Following this, the key areas of monitoring and verification of the enumeration were discussed. Additionally, understanding of smartphone-based enumeration was discussed. This focused on basic aspects, such as the use of GPS, power management, and data connections.

These trained enumerators and the PRIA team hosted a half-day orientation session for some SIC members who were keen to work along with enumerators to conduct enumerations in their own settlements. Many enumerators and SIC members had never utilized a smartphone before, and an additional step was, thus, to demystify the technology.

7) Validating and using the survey findings

Once data was verified to the satisfaction of the survey coordinator and administrator, it was validated by the SIC. For each settlement, generated charts and tables were discussed with the SIC, which was asked to indicate anomalies. Dated and incorrect information was modified as per changes on the ground. This process kept the community engaged and participating in ensuring that the data reflected the status of their settlements. The validation process allowed various perspectives to flow into the possible interpretation and allowed communities to get a holistic understanding of their settlements. This serves as the second round of verification, post which the data file is finalized.

These processes are important for multiple reasons. First, relevant interpretations emerge when research is embedded in social contexts where community voices get prominence. Second, despite being rigorous and thorough, one-time surveys can oversimplify social realities. To some extent, constant verification, validation and updating allowed for better depiction of social change.

Survey results become the backbone on which SICs can approach municipalities for service provisioning and infrastructural improvement. Once the data is available, SICs discuss the findings and decide what areas to prioritize. The ability and opportunity to analyse their own realities, stimulated residents and brought forth creative solutions and ideas. Using this data, SICs have been able to request for the building of toilets (both

community and individual), construction of drainage and sewerage, as well as the provision of Aadhaar and electoral identity card.

The SIC members, with support from PRIA's field teams, shared a copy of each settlement's data with the municipality and ward councillor. These findings represent the settlement as a whole and showcase service deficiencies, which councillors are able to use to pitch for improvements. In addition, individual settlement reports are consolidated and analysed for a citywide picture.

LESSONS LEARNT

The invisibility of a large section of urban poor in the governance of Indian cities is primarily reinforced by their undercounting in the official census and surveys. These surveys are often undertaken by the government officials or third party contractors who are oblivious to the existence of many informal settlements or many households within the informal settlements. The restrictive definitions of slums contribute to the exclusion of urban poor, thereby making them ineligible for entitlements, therefore: "Approaches to inclusive and resilient urban development that utilize data from profiling and enumerations led by the urban poor, will be more inclusive and integrated—and, if they take into account the priorities identified by these processes, are likely to be more resourceful as well" (Dobson, Nyamweru, & Dodman, 2015).

When the urban poor themselves undertake the enumeration of their own settlements and households, chances of exclusion are far less. The ECRC initiative of PRIA demonstrates that this deliberate or erroneous exclusion of the urban poor can be tackled effectively by involving the urban poor in the enumeration process. Livengood and Kunte (2012) observed that the fact that the mapping is undertaken by community-based organizations does not mean it is inherently participatory. Participation of all is achieved by bringing all interested stakeholders into the project through the grassroots network and allowing them to ask questions, contribute ideas, and make decisions.

This participatory self-enumeration process is best done by the organized communities. The natural leaders from within the community—women, men, and youth—lead the process. The inclusive nature of the organization ensures that interests and concerns of all sections of the community are taken on board while designing the survey. The organized community and its leadership equipped with findings from the survey engages with state authorities and other stakeholders to access services and entitlements that are due to them.

The self-enumeration approach is an effective alternative to professionally administered surveys. Not only does self-enumeration build the capacities of the poor, but it also builds new knowledge controlled by the community, and upsets "the prevalent knowledge hierarchy, putting communities in a better position to negotiate with governments and outside agencies" (Livengood & Kunte, 2012, p. 83.

The ECRC initiative was designed to create SICs, which would lead the enumeration processes. However, often, it would be the enumeration process itself that would strengthen these bodies that played a vital role in co-designing the questionnaire, house listing, collecting and analysing data, and preparing settlement level service improvement plans. The plans were then shared, and negotiations were held with the

elected councillors and officials of municipalities. The commitments received from the municipalities were then followed through by the SIC leadership. The entire process helped the communities elevate their confidence and exact accountability from the elected and non-elected officials. This contributed to enhanced access to services and entitlements at the individual and community levels.

Introduction of technology can be a great help in a large-scale enumeration process. It can bring, over time, efficiency as well as dramatically reduce the chances of error and omissions if it is conducted by trained people. However, it also risks exclusion of community-led initiatives and might lead to the appropriation of data and community's knowledge. This is particularly relevant in situations in which the digital divide is pronounced. Nevertheless, if the facilitating agency demystifies the technology and creates opportunities for training of community members, it can be an empowering experience for the community. The ECRC initiative deliberately invested in building capacities of the community members, particularly the young women and men, to utilize mobile-based survey tools. It enhanced the inclusivity and quality of data collected from the community households. More importantly, young people developed digital skills which they could use for the rest of their lives. Livengood & Kunte (2012) had similar observations where projects that enable the urban poor to adopt advanced mapping techniques and GIS technology have been shown to create more transparent processes and facilitate participatory decision-making. The municipalities in these three cities, where the ECRC project was implemented, can engage these trained young people in future surveys and enumerations.

CONCLUSION

Although the draft of this paper was written in the pre-Covid 19 time, the pandemic alerts us again to the importance of ground–generated data and empowered local committees. As governments struggle with limited and outdated data, the requirement for committees, such as SICs, along with rich data is heightened. These factors could play a pivotal role in highlighting the needs of the most vulnerable and deprived groups, which are often left out of the safety net cast by the government.

By building collective capacities of the urban poor and generating data to create partnerships between communities and local governments, the activities described in this paper set the stage for a more participatory approach to building urban resilience. Resilience cannot be built by one actor alone—neither the government nor NGOs—but through working actively with marginalized communities who actively define vulnerabilities and collectively strategize to reduce exposure to hazards and stratagem their capacity to adapt (Dobson et al, 2015).

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