

Kant's Categorical Imperative in the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic is raging across the world in 2020. Some countries have been devastated by the virus while other countries have managed to minimise the loss of life. This article questions whether Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative may guide us in dealing with Covid-19. Two formulations of the Categorical Imperative are considered: the idea that we should act as we would want everyone else to act (Universalizability) and the concept that we should treat people as an end in themselves and not as a means.

The paper looks at the experiences of China, the USA, Taiwan and New Zealand and examine how they adhered to Kant's Categorical Imperative. It examines the initial response of each country, questions their approaches to managing the virus. It then considers their behaviour with respect to other countries and finally looks at the results of their actions. The paper argues that China and the USA both violated Kant's Categorical Imperative and suffered as a result. Taiwan and New Zealand both obeyed the Categorical Imperative and managed relatively well.

Keywords : Categorical imperative, universalizability, covid-19, human security, peace and solidarity

Introduction

The Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic is raging across the world in 2020. The World Health Organisation names the virus Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) whereas the disease is called Coronavirus or Covid-19 (WHO a, 2020). Some countries have managed relatively well while others have been overwhelmed. The last few decades have seen a huge increase in globalisation. Through more affordable international air travel, increased international trade and the internet, we have become more connected than ever before. However, this interconnectedness has also contributed to the rapid spread of Covid-19. The pandemic has changed the relationships between individuals and states. There have been tensions between states, between individuals, and even between some governments and their own people. Strangers and returning migrant workers are often being viewed with suspicion by those who

believe themselves to be virus-free. The concept of Insider and Outsider has been redefined in many cases. So Covid-19 has also changed the way the world looks at human security. The virus is challenging the security of the Individual and the State in a unique way. In traditional ideas of security, the state sought to secure its borders, thus protecting the civilian population. However, traditional border checks are unable to stop the spread of the pandemic. Individuals across the world have been infected and as a result the security of many states has been harmed.

From a philosophical perspective one might ask why some countries have been so much more successful than others. The following considerations are based on whether Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative may show a way to manage the pandemic. This article looks at impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in four different countries at the end of October 2020 and questions whether the more successful countries have been obeying Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperatives.

Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperatives

From a philosophical perspective some have questioned how the ideas of Immanuel Kant might provide a guide to appropriate behaviour at this time (Marshall, 2020; Dineen quoted in Humphreys, 2020). Kant was a German philosopher writing during the Enlightenment and time of Rationalism. The importance of science and reason were being stressed at this time. In 1785 he developed his Categorical Imperative, a rule to guide the ethical and rational behaviour of people (Kant, 1998). There are four formulations of the Categorical Imperative, though this article will discuss the two that are most relevant for this analysis. The first formulation of his Categorical Imperative is known as the Formula of the Law of Nature and states:

“Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law¹”

This is also referred to as Kant's concept of Universalizability. Essentially when we are judging the correctness of our own actions, we should ask ourselves “how would it be if everyone in the world were to act in the same way”. For example, if I wanted to steal something, I should consider how it would be if stealing were universal. Clearly, if everyone were to steal nobody would be able to retain anything and society would break down. Therefore, stealing violates Kant's Categorical Imperative of Universalizability. There were examples of a violation of this law during the early days of the pandemic. In many countries people rushed to buy all the toilet paper they could find. This caused a shortage of supplies (Moore, 2020). Eventually, some shops had to limit purchases.

Kant's concept of Universalizability is useful for assessing the ethics of an act. For example, buying toilet paper is clearly not immoral. However, if everybody buys all the toilet paper they can find, then there will be a shortage for those who arrive late.

The second formulation of the Categorical Imperative is known as the “Formula of the End in Itself” and states:

“Act as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in another, always as an end and never as only a means.²”

There were violations of this formulation during the pandemic. In Singapore, the state successfully brought the virus under control within its own citizenry. However, migrant workers were neglected and soon outbreaks among the migrants caused new spikes in the country. Migrants were arguably not treated as ends in themselves, but mere means. Ultimately this threatened the entire society (Tan, 2020).

The following discussion concentrates on four countries. It asks if those countries who obeyed Kant's laws managed the crisis more successfully. This article assumes that Kant's Categorical Imperatives are equally applicable to the actions of states as well as individuals. The pandemic is still ongoing, and the full impact of Covid-19 has not yet been experienced, so there will be further developments over time. This article looks at the situation at the beginning of November 2020.

Performance of Different Countries

This article considers the performance of four countries; two that have been heavily criticised for their actions during the pandemic (China and the United States of America) and two countries that have been widely praised for their performances (Taiwan and New Zealand).

Countries that have been criticized

According to a Pew Research Poll (2020) across 14 countries, 61% of respondents have a negative view of China's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic (Silver, Devlin and Huang, 2020). The only country that scored worse than China was the United States of America (USA), with 84% responding that the US had managed the pandemic poorly.

China

Initial response

China first started experiencing the virus in Wuhan in November and December 2019 (Allam, 2020; Taylor, 2020). However, local authorities spent much of December suppressing information about the virus. On Dec 30th Dr Li Wenliang informed his colleagues about the emergence of a new virus and he was forced to apologise, by the police, for spreading false information (Green, 2020). China initially suppressed information about Covid-19 and delayed in taking the virus seriously. This violated both formulations of Kant's Categorical Imperative. If every country were to suppress information, it would lead to an uncontrolled spread of the virus. This violates the formulation of Universalizability. The doctor and many of the early patients of Wuhan were treated as means and not as an end in themselves. If Kant had been followed there is a chance that the spread of Covid-19 could have been stopped or at least dramatically reduced at this stage. It was because the news was suppressed, that the virus was able to spread throughout China in January.

China's managing of the virus

On January 23rd the Chinese authorities placed Wuhan and surrounding areas in a strict lockdown. This quarantine was a clear sign that the Chinese government recognised the dangers of Covid-19. Once China took the Covid-19 spread seriously it

was able to control the spread through aggressive quarantines and a strong Test, Track and Trace system. China communicated effectively with the population and ensured that people obeyed the quarantines and other rules. China also encouraged the wearing of masks and social distancing. As a result of the actions taken, China was able to manage the virus within China. On April 8th Wuhan's lockdown officially ended. China was the world's first major economy to have recovered from the pandemic. The lockdown and aggressive response were necessary and obeyed Kant's two formulations of the Categorical Imperative provided that the people who were quarantined were treated as an end in themselves and not a means. These were actions that could be applied universally.

International Relations during Covid

Crucially, after January 23rd, China still allowed people to leave China and travel to other countries. By then, the virus had already spread throughout China (Wu et al, 2020; Sanche et al, 2020). Letting the virus spread internationally violated both formulations of Kant's Categorical Imperative. China had an opportunity to control the spread of the virus to other countries but did not act in time. This is not a radical idea. If a child in a family has an infectious disease the other children generally stay home from school. China treated the rest of the world as means rather than an end. China's behaviour also violates Kant's law of ethical Universal behaviour.

China's decision to allow international travel clearly had the most significant impact on the world. At the end of October 2020 over 44 million people around the world have tested positive for Covid-19 and over 1.1 million people have died.³ The Chinese government must have known (or at least very strongly suspected) that the virus had infected people throughout the country. In keeping with Kant's Categorical Imperative of Universalizability, China should have restricted travel to the rest of the world. In fact, China criticised those countries who introduced travel bans on Chinese people (Marlow, 2020). However, China itself introduced inward travel bans after it had managed the virus at home. At the World Health Assembly, the European Union, Australia and several other countries called for an independent inquiry into Covid-19. China strongly opposed the review and threatened Australia with economic boycotts (Karp and Davidson, 2020). This violates Kant's concept of Universalizability. Covid-19 has had a devastating effect on the world. It is essential that the origins and reasons for the spread are investigated to prevent future outbreaks.

An in-depth report by the New York Times (Gebrekidan et al, 2020) asserts that the World Health Organization (WHO) was pressurised by China to limit their investigations in China, in order to gain information about the virus source. The article alleges that WHO made concessions to China that ultimately harmed the effort to control the virus. This violates Kant's Categorical Imperative.

China engaged in some controversial actions while the rest of the world, was occupied with the pandemic. China introduced a strict new Hong Kong National Security Law that angered the UK (Williams J., 2020). China engaged in a border clash with Indian troops (Krishnankutty, 2020). China is also reported to have escalated disputes with Taiwan, Vietnam and Malaysia and other countries (Ford and Gewirtz, 2020). China's

actions have violated Kant's Categorical Imperative of Universalizability. Countries and individuals all experience good times and bad times. If everyone were to exploit the weakness of everyone else, this would make it much harder to trust people and states and would not be sustainable.

Result

Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center website (2020) reports 91,000 people were infected in China, with 4,700 deaths at the end of October 2020. This pales in comparison to the numbers who have been infected and died in many other countries. However, following China's post-Covid-19 behaviour, several countries took actions to counter China's dominance (Burns, 2020; Yip quoted in Wilson, 2020). China's reputation has been damaged around the world. It remains to be seen whether China suffers long-term harm because of its actions.

USA

The Covid-19 response of the USA has been dominated by President Donald Trump. Trump regularly violates the fundamentals of Kant's philosophy, as Kant believes in science and reason and Trump opposed these throughout the pandemic. There were failures by other parts of the US government and health agencies. However, Trump set the tone for the response. Some examples of behaviour that violated Kant's Categorical Imperative are given.

Initial Response

Trump delayed the response to the Virus and then deliberately played down the seriousness of the virus. This information has been widely reported (Campbell and Rush, 2020; Lipton et al, 2020; Gangel, Herb and Stuart, 2020; Allam, 2020; Taylor, 2020). The US was aware of the Covid-19 pandemic in early January. The first confirmed case in the US was on January 21st. On January 28th Trump was told that Covid-19 would be the biggest national security threat that he would have to face. However, from early on Trump sought to play down that pandemic. Bob Woodward's new book *RAGE* shows that in fact Trump knew on February 7th how bad Covid-19 was going to be, but he chose to ignore the warnings (Woodward, 2020). Trump consistently denied responsibility for any mistakes throughout the pandemic. By suppressing information about the seriousness of the virus Trump violated Kant's Categorical Imperative. Not taking responsibility for one's actions also violates Kant's Categorical Imperative.

How the USA managed the Pandemic

The USA has many of the world's leading medical organisations, including the Centre for Disease Control (CDC). Trump consistently undermined Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and other senior medical advisors and ignored their advice (Warren, Gangel and Stuart, 2020). In April, Jared Kushner, son-in-law and senior advisor to Trump, said that Trump made a conscious decision to ignore the best medical advice and focus on reopening the country and economy. (Warren, Gangel and Stuart, 2020).

In addition, Trump undermined the US response in many ways. He regularly refused to wear a mask and even politicised mask wearing (Victor, Serviss and Paybarah, 2020). Trump suggested trying medicines that had not been properly tested and he even suggested people consume bleach (BBC a, 2020). Trump blamed the high rate of Covid-19 cases on the large amount of testing that the US was conducting and suggested reducing the number of tests (Irfan, 2020). However, he and his staff received regular tests and when he contracted Covid-19, he was flown to Hospital by helicopter and had the best medical treatment available. Afterwards, he told people that they should not let Covid-19 'dominate' them (The Week.In, 2020). Ignoring the plight of those who had been unable to obtain medical treatment, he did not show respect towards them and their loved ones. His actions clearly violate Kant's Categorical Imperatives. If Trump's lies and actions were to have been made Universal, then the doctors would have considered injecting him with bleach. Instead he got the best medical care. Clearly his words and actions violated Kant's Categorical Imperative.

"Public statements by President Donald Trump, whether Oval Office addresses or early-morning tweets, have largely served to sow confusion and spread uncertainty (Campbell and Rush, 2020)." He frequently contradicted his scientific experts and political opponents. There was no attempt to unify the country through a clear and consistent communication strategy. Clearly this violates Kant's formulation of Universalizability. If people keep getting confusing and contradictory information, they will not know how best to protect themselves from the virus. Furthermore, no scientists will be able to assess which approaches are working most effectively.

Trump finally announced a National Emergency on March 13th. Individual states started declaring States of Emergency and locking down. Within the US, certain state governors tried to implement lockdowns and impose rules regarding mask wearing and social distancing. The Trump government opposed the actions of many of those states (Eban, 2020; Pilkington, 2020; Keaten and Yen, 2020, BBC b, 2020). Trump's opponents argue that he wanted to keep the economy going strong to improve his chances for re-election (Warren, Gangel and Stuart, 2020). This amounts to using people as a means to an end which violates Kant's other formulation of the Categorical Imperative.

International Relations during Covid

In the 2017 US National Security strategy document Trump declared that he has adapted an America First foreign policy agenda. Trump used the pandemic as an opportunity to attack China. Some argued that by blaming the "other", he sought to remove blame from himself (Keaten and Yen, 2020). During the Covid-19 pandemic, he accused the WHO of being influenced by China and announced that the US would withdraw from the WHO. These are not the kind of acts that should be made universal laws.

Results

The USA has around 4% of the world's population but has approximately 20% of the world's confirmed cases (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, 2020) (over 9.7 million cases and 235,000 fatalities). Economically the US has also suffered greatly. During Covid-19, the US experienced a downturn that Jerome Powell, Head of the US

Central Bank said was “the most severe in our lifetimes” (Powell quoted by BBC c, 2020). Significantly on November 3rd, Trump lost his re-election bid to Joe Biden. Many of those who opposed Trump cited his handling of the Coronavirus as a major factor influencing their vote against him.

Countries that did well

Taiwan and New Zealand have both been very successful at managing the Covid-19 pandemic. Taiwan had 200 days without a local transmission on October 29th, while several countries in Europe were experiencing a second wave (Graham-Harrison, 2020). Similarly, New Zealand too received considerable praise for its handling of the Covid-19 pandemic (Cousins 2020; Smyth, 2020, Ghebreyesus quoted in NZ Herald, 2020).

Taiwan

Taiwan is a self-governing democracy which generally remains isolated diplomatically and is not a member of the WHO⁴. Taiwan has been very successful at managing Covid-19, despite the fact that it is close to China and has direct flights to Wuhan and several other Chinese cities. The daily lives of most people and the economy have continued with little disruption.

Initial response

Taiwan acted very quickly and followed scientific advice. Taiwan became aware of the first warning from Dr Li Wenliang on December 30th through online monitoring. They were also aware of other atypical pneumonia-like cases in the city. On December 31st Taiwan sent emails to the WHO and the China CDC, warning of the cases in Wuhan. This contrasts starkly with the actions of the Wuhan Police Force which forced Dr Li to apologise.

Taiwan's management of Covid-19

Taiwanese health officials started boarding flights from Wuhan from December 31st to question passengers. People were asked to quarantine based on travel history and health issues. In January, Taiwan ramped up its response, keeping the public and others informed. This rapid response and the emails to the WHO and China CDC were very much in keeping with Kant's Categorical Imperatives. Taiwan had learnt its lessons from the SARS outbreak in 2003.

Taiwan's government communicated regularly and clearly with the population, with then vice-president, Dr Chen Chien-Jen, who has a PhD in Epidemiology from Johns Hopkins University, playing a leading role⁵ (Chen, C., 2020). Having an epidemiologist in a senior political role ensured excellent coordination between the scientists and politicians.

Taiwan later implemented a strict quarantine for all incoming travellers, using people's mobile phones to monitor their locations. Contacts of passengers from high-risk areas were also quarantined. However, medical supplies and food were given to those in quarantine. This treated people in quarantine as an end and not just a means.

Taiwan ramped up production of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and gave financial support to businesses and families affected by Covid-19, again treating people as ends in themselves. The Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) was activated on January 20th and they gave daily information on health and safety precautions (Chen, C. 2020). Early on Taiwan mandated the wearing of masks and the population complied. Taiwan banned the export of PPE initially and the government controlled the price of masks and ensured their distribution.

Taiwan's Digital Minister, Audrey Tang, focuses on Digital Democracy and on ensuring that the citizens trust the government and have access to accurate information (Chen, A., 2020). She and her colleagues were heavily involved in the Covid-19 pandemic ensuring that people knew where to access masks and letting people know how data would be used. There are data privacy issues around how Taiwan managed people's data, but overall, the approach has been successful and accepted by the population as they were kept informed of the need for the information. It is an approach that could be applied universally.

International Relations

Restricting exports of PPE early in the pandemic may have violated Kant's Categorical Imperative of Universalizability. However, doing so ensured an adequate supply, at a reasonable price, for their population. As was mentioned above, Taiwan is isolated diplomatically and not a member of WHO, so it was arguably understandable that they would focus on supplying their own population initially.

However, from early April, Taiwan began exporting millions of masks to countries around the world. Taiwan was also donating masks and other medical equipment to other countries at this time and formed international collaborations to work on diagnostic tools and treatments for Covid-19. Dr Chen stressed the importance of international collaboration and said that Covid-19 could only be managed with the cooperation of all countries.

Result

Taiwan has had 500 cases and only 7 deaths in a population of 23 million (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, 2020). Considering the closeness of Taiwan borders to China, the fact that it is isolated diplomatically and prevented by China from joining the WHO⁶, its performance has been remarkable. Taiwan reacted quickly, respected the science, kept the population informed and also collaborated with and supported other countries. It has been a model for an effective response to Covid-19 and performed very well during the pandemic, on all metrics. They obeyed Kant's Categorical Imperative and achieved success. If every country in the world had acted like Taiwan, it would have led to a far better outcome.

New Zealand

New Zealand is an isolated island country, with a relatively small population and has a geographic advantage in managing pandemics such as Covid-19. However, it is useful to examine how New Zealand managed the Covid-19 outbreak.

Initial response

New Zealand isolated location gave it the advantage of seeing how Covid-19 was unfolding in Europe and other countries. The government realised that the health services could not cope with a widespread pandemic. By March 25th, New Zealand introduced a national lockdown despite only having 102 cases of Covid-19 and no deaths. The New Zealand strategy was to go early and go hard (Jamieson, 2020). They aimed to eliminate Covid-19 in the country.

New Zealand's management of Covid-19

The New Zealand government, collaborated with scientific and medical advisors and brought in an effective Test, Track and Trace programme. After lockdown, when people visited various places, they were asked to scan the QR code of the place so that they could be traced in the event of a future outbreak.

Kant was a rationalist who stressed the importance of reason. He would certainly have approved of listening to the scientists. New Zealand worked together as a team and supported each other. They also put Public Health above the economy. These actions were very much in keeping with Kant's Categorical Imperative of Universalizability.

The Covid-19 response was led by the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Ms Jacinda Ardern, who has a bachelor's degree in Communication Studies (Ardern, 2020). Ardern made regular public speeches explaining the steps that the country was taking. Politicians and scientists worked together and put public health above the economy. Even though there was some opposition to the lockdown overall public support remained high. Ardern stressed the importance of the country uniting to fight Covid-19, they were a "Team of Five Million" fighting Covid-19. Ardern treated the population with respect and empathy. This was important in getting the people to cooperate.

By communicating with the public and showing concern for individuals the government treated people as ends and not means or economic components to be exploited. The regular communication also conformed with Kant's first Categorical Imperative of Universalizability. If you want people to cooperate you must explain why they are being asked to make sacrifices.

Ardern had been widely praised for her actions following the massacres at two Christchurch mosques in March 2019. This helped her build trust with the community.

The New Zealand Health Minister, David Clark, lost his job when he was seen to violate the lockdown rules (Perry, 2020). This was important to show the public that all people were to be treated the same and obeyed Kant's Imperative of Universalizability.

People returning to New Zealand were required to go into quarantine for two weeks. Initially the country paid for the cost. Charges were introduced in August, though there were exemptions.

International Relations

New Zealand cooperated with the WHO in assisting many small island nations in the South Pacific. (WHO b, 2020). New Zealand also took steps to prevent people bringing the virus to these small island nations.

Result

New Zealand has aimed to eliminate Covid-19 from the country. New Zealand had fewer than 2,000 cases by November 6th 2020, with only 25 deaths from Covid-19. New Zealand's government and people came together and managed the Covid-19 pandemic. They obeyed both formulations of Kant's Categorical Imperative and the country benefited as a result. Clear, coherent communication and Trust were key elements in New Zealand's approach. Ardern's excellent handling of Covid-19 was a significant factor in her re-election on October 17th (Hollingsworth, 2020).

Conclusion

This year has shown us the importance of Human Security and the devastation to public health and economies caused by a microscopic virus. We are more interconnected now than 100 years ago and as a result the virus spread more quickly than the Spanish Influenza pandemic of 1918. However, this interconnectedness can also help us to share medicines, protective equipment and ultimately vaccines. With that interconnectedness comes a greater responsibility to our fellow humans. In modern neurobiology there is a consensus that all species must learn to cooperate. Michael Tomasello et al (2009) argue that those species which can cooperate, and work together are the fittest and will survive. Both Taiwan and New Zealand had a cooperative approach and were willing to learn from past mistakes and modify their behaviour accordingly.

The Coronavirus is still raging around the world. Lessons are still being learnt, though there is some broad consensus over issues such as social distancing and mask wearing. The countries which have been most successful relied on a combination of factors: respect for science and reason, regular and clear communications, and a united approach.

Taiwan and New Zealand are islands and far smaller than China and the USA, and as such, had certain advantages. However, their performances have far exceeded those of China and the US and most other countries around the world. We need human solidarity more than ever. Following Kant's Categorical Imperatives certainly seemed to be a way of managing the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is significant that Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand obeyed Kant's Categorical Imperative, treated her population as ends and not just means and was re-elected. Donald Trump used his people as a means to the ends of his re-election though was voted out of office.

The importance of Human Security must be appreciated more than ever. Gandhi wrote that if we indulge in a vice, get sick and are cured, we must change the vice or behaviour that caused the illness (Gandhi, 1909). At the end of the day, the world will recover from Covid-19. However, this should be a wake-up call for humanity. If Climate Change continues there is no guarantee that humanity will survive environmental catastrophes. Human solidarity and cooperation are essential for our survival.

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Endnotes

1. Many religions have similar exhortations. Hinduism has a version of this law dating from around 3000, BC: "This is the sum of duty. Do not unto others that which would cause you pain if done to you" (Mahabharata (5:1517)). Christianity also has a similar concept: "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you" (The Bible, Matthew. 7:12)
2. This is compatible with the views of Gandhi who stressed the importance of the means and not just the end (Gandhi, 1909, P67).
3. This is probably a gross underestimate. The WHO estimates that approximately 10% of the world's population has had Covid-19, which would give a total of around 700 million people.
4. The People's Republic of China claims Taiwan as a province of China. The leadership of the Republic of China retreated to Taiwan after losing the Civil war to the Chinese Communists in 1949. The Chinese Communist Party has never ruled over Taiwan. Taiwan is not a member of the WHO and has been forced to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic using its own resources.
5. In fact, Dr Chen had been Health minister during the SARS outbreak.
6. China objects to Taiwan joining the WHO as China argues that Taiwan is a part of China and not an independent country.

Shrinking Urban Spaces and Challenges of Shared Heritage : The Varanasi Experience

Ankita Singh

Abstract

The continuing erosion of public space amidst the unbridled growth of cities is often considered a vital vector in aggravating socio-political disaffection and conflicts. This is more so in case of tier II and tier III cities which have traditionally lagged behind in modern urban planning and city administration. Urban public spaces are a significant part of the population to rejuvenate, recreate and reconnect. Public spaces not only help to promote physical and emotional health, especially of the young and old, but also facilitate inter community bonding and thus bring people together and enhance inclusiveness of cities. The ancient city of Varanasi which has traditionally nurtured the values of social community through its shared heritage, is an instructive case point to explore the current status of shared living heritage, witnessed mostly in its public spaces, and how it has impacted community peace and development over time. The *ghats, kunds, galisand nukkad* give Varanasi a unique identity serving historically as the places for interplay between people, communities, culture and activities. The study proposes to examine if the shared heritage in such an ancient city have given in to the pressure of urbanization or, have public spaces been made a part of the current development regime.

Keywords: Urbanization, publicspaces, shared heritage, communal harmony, peace building

Introduction

Urban population has increased globally, with 55% of world's population living in urban areas in 2018 and it is expected that 68% of world's population would be urban by 2050. It is also expected that just three countries together- India, China and Nigeria- are to account for 35% of the growth in world's urban population between 2018 and 2050, wherein, India is projected to add 416 million urban dwellers and would be home to about 58% of the total global population (World Urbanization Prospects, 2018). India's urban population has increased from 222 million in 1990 to around 460 million in 2019¹. Urbanization is, indeed, one of the biggest challenges today that both developing and developed countries of the world are facing equally. The challenges, however, may differ depending upon the country's level of development and other regional factors, like ageing infrastructure, demand and supply gap in service provisions, lack of core physical

and social infrastructure etc. (World Economic Forum (WEF), 2016). The figures discussed above show us a picture of tremendous urban growth in India which obviously poses serious challenges not just in terms of infrastructure but also affects the overall quality of life of urban dwellers. Cities are not just the 'engines of growth' but, also the centre of culture and diversity. The UN-Habitat III observed that urbanization is an endogenous source of sustainable development as well as a tool for social integration. Social infrastructure plays a vital role in broadening the horizons of urban dwellers and serving as a foundation for inter-cultural/inter-community/inter-religious mingling.

Infrastructures have emerged as a crucial aspect of studies in urban area (Latham and Layton, 2019). Whereas physical infrastructures include, water, sanitation and other basic provisions, social infrastructures are equally important in designing of the urban fabric. Social infrastructures have traditionally included health, education, parks and playgrounds etc. However, lately, there has been an extension to the concept of social infrastructure which, Klinenberg (2018) has inclusively defined as: 'Public institutions, such as libraries, schools, playgrounds, parks, athletic fields, and swimming pools, are vital parts of social infrastructure. So too are sidewalks, courtyards, community gardens, and other spaces that invite people into the public realm.' Needless to say, social infrastructure help facilitate essentials for cities to function as social spaces and provide basis for urban inhabitation. Furthermore, these are the places where people socialize and hence they become, in different ways- public spaces. Public spaces do not just comprise of a physical setting but are host of subjective meanings for its users which accumulate over time. Therefore, the meaning of public space actually lies in the provision that it provides and its usage by public. According to the UN-Habitat (2015), there is a remarkable increase in the number of cities that have managed to use public space as a key for urban development. UN Habitat has promoted the use of public space as an implementation strategy towards attaining the sustainable development goals.

Indian cities are growing exponentially to meet the ever growing requirement of its urban population. Today India's one billion plus population lives in 7935 towns and over 475 urban agglomerations which is approximately 31.16% of its total population (Census of India, 2011). As per the global statistics that surfaced with the World Cities Report (2016), India has rapidly growing cities like, Ahmadabad, Pune, Surat, Bengaluru, Chennai whose population are more than five million. It is indeed true that the growth of modern India is being driven by the big cities but the stress on tier II cities is not less and an increase in cities with million plus population could be seen as an example². Large population undoubtedly pose serious challenges in front of the government, urban planners and also the civic infrastructure, because mere growth in population does not guarantee overall development and therefore, questions related to 'quality of life' play significant role in determining the development of an urban area. Further, the changes in land-use, the needs and aspirations of urban populations and corresponding uncontrolled development is transforming the nature of historic urban areas and their settings.

With increasing urbanisation, there is a dramatic pressure on urban land which is resulting in shrinking of public spaces and is almost pushing the old legacies from

traditional core cities, to the brink. It is because of rampant urban growth that not only have the man made community spaces reduced, but there is also constant threat on natural landscapes which have acted as public spaces for ages. Shared heritage in ancient historic cities are one of the most defining elements of vibrant communities. Urban commons have defined the idea of liveability through the shared heritage or living heritage, both tangible and intangible.

The urban agglomeration of Varanasi has a spread of 115.27 sq. km. and is home to a total population of 1.43 million as per Census of India, 2011. The city is touted as one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities of the world. Recent archaeological excavations carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in 2014, near Rajghat area of Varanasi, led to the discovery of artefacts dating back to 1800 BCE. The city is considered as one of the *SaptaPuris*, i.e. one of the seven pilgrimage centres of Hinduism in India. Though it is one of the holiest cities for the Hindus, Varanasi is also home to a sizeable Muslim population. Also, Gautam Buddha delivered his first sermon here at Sarnath and hence, the city caters to a considerable number of Buddhist followers. There is also an institution of higher education i.e. Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, established with a view to educate “*the young Tibetan Diaspora and those from the Himalayan border regions of India, who have religion, culture and language in common with Tibet.*” Therefore, Varanasi is renowned for its varied religious expressions of traditional Indian culture through the means of art, literature, music, celebrations and festivals which have continued from generations after generations. Today, the city, in all its uniqueness, is representative of an urban space which is a blend of history, continuity, and traditionality. The city has an exquisite riverfront known as *ghats* which have a stretch of 6.8 kms and, have played a significant role in shaping the landscape of the city for years, becoming synonymous with the identity of Varanasi. The *ghats* and *kunds* (inland water bodies) have served historically as the places for interplay between people, communities, culture and activities. Public spaces in this city, range from *galis*(extremely narrow lanes), *nukkads*(informal street corners) to the *kunds* and *ghats*.

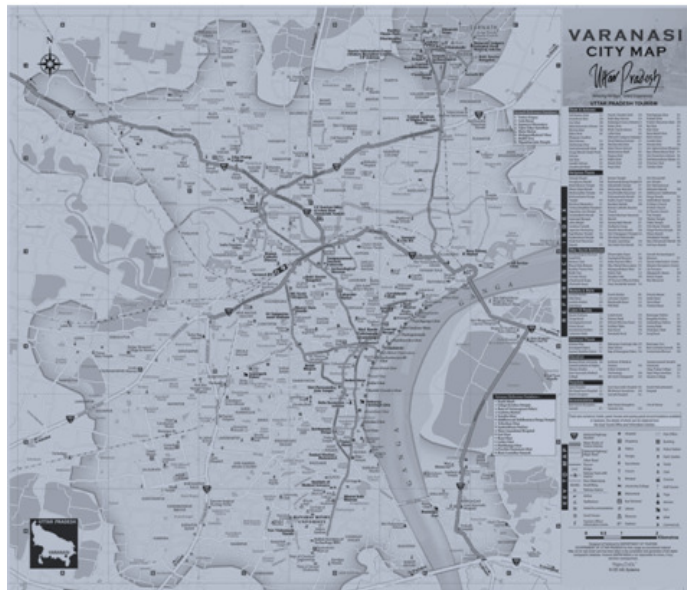


Figure 1: Varanasi City Map
(Source: Municipal Corporation of Varanasi)

This paper draws from the field visits taken up in Varanasi city with the motive to assess the age old spaces, the *ghats*, the *kunds*, the *galis*, the *nukkadshops*, etc., which have traditionally served as public spaces for people of this city and also, to understand the 'urbanizing' experience of Varanasi. Praharaj (2014) talks about the hierarchical layout of spaces catering the needs of people at various level of population in Varanasi: city level public space i.e. river banks of Ganga and the *ghats*, sub-city level public spaces i.e. the *kunds*, and the surrounding area, and neighbourhood-level spaces and streetscapes which constitute of small stalls and informal shops and *nukkads*. This could be referred to as Macro level urban spaces, that could be the city level; Meso level urban spaces which constitutes the sub-city level spaces and; Micro level urban spaces i.e. neighbourhood level spaces which were consciously turned into multicultural or pluralist spaces.

The major aim of the study is to address the following questions:

- Why are shared heritage sites important to city life?
- What is the linkage between shared heritages and communal harmony?
- How can the sites of shared heritage be a part of urban development regime ?

Methodology

Apart from an extensive review of literature, the methodology adopted for the study is based on ethnographic tools adopted for collection of information. Focus has been laid to understand why the spaces have degraded over time and how community led solutions can be evolved to develop and sustain such unique spaces. Various secondary databases has also been referred to analyse the demographic trends in the city and emerging trends in the use and evolution of a hierarchy of community spaces in the city. Analysis has largely been done keeping in view the following criteria:

- Shared heritage and its impact on community
- Accessibility of 'public' to the public spaces
- Conditional assessment of public spaces

The Varanasi Experience

Celebrated town planner and sociologist, Patrick Geddes talks about the urban heritage approach and argues, in his book *Cities in Evolution*, how urban heritage underpins urban development. According to him, "If town planning is to meet the needs of the city's life, to aid its growth, and advance its progress, it must surely know and understand its city." (Geddes, 1915). Urban



Picture 1: *Aarti* at Dashashwamedh Ghat
(Source: Google Images)

heritage is a social, cultural and economic asset. It is defined by historic layering of values that have been produced by successive and existing cultures. And, public spaces are the places for interplay between culture, activities, people and their way of life. These are the spaces where experiences are created, ideas are invented and tradition is continued. The hierarchical layout of spaces, as discussed above, have been observed and analysed. The characteristic of these spaces varies with the location and 'level' of the public space.

Macro level urban spaces

Public spaces at the macro level are the spaces which are present at a higher level of the settlement and reflect the core cultural unity of the region. This could be defined as the public spaces at the city level, i.e. the central places of the city. These spaces are of utmost importance to the settlement and come out as something to which the whole area can relate to, something which closely bonds them with their



Picture 2: Assi Ghat (Source: Google Images)

cultural and social identity. River bank of Ganges and especially the *Ghats* of Varanasi have been acclaimed as public places due to their existence since time immemorial serving the entire community of the urban spread. It is a classic example of evolved public space. Today the *ghats* are of immense attraction to the tourists and travellers. The locals enjoy the open space with equal delight and the place is usually bustling with religious, spiritual, artistic, recreational and commercial activities. This is one part of the city where there is no bar among caste, class or religion. Here, the city act as a community, which is beyond the social boundaries. All *ghats* are used for ritual activities. In the morning, people gather here for bathing and offering of prayers, in the afternoon people are busy carrying out rituals and the evening hours are for famous prayers- *arti*, offered to the holy river Ganges and enjoying boat rides. These *ghats* form as the most important part of public spaces. They are part of community life, that shapes lifestyle of local communities and thus become an indispensable aspect of the living heritage which is shared by the people of Varanasi, across religion.

Meso-level urban spaces

These are present on a smaller scale than the micro level spaces yet, form a major part of the cultural identity of a specific area. These *kunds* have a very distinct effect on the lives of people at the sub-regional level. More than their cultural, religious and built importance these *kunds* act as transition space which gives the people of an area a change of pace from their usual hectic schedule. They even act as places of cultural importance as all the important festivities and community gatherings are held

around these. These *kunds* represent the local communitarian culture and have found to be majorly religious in their outlook. Each of the *kund* visited so far has a temple- small or big, is flocked by people carrying out Hindu religious rituals in the morning. Also, at some *kunds*, people have been spotted taking walks, doing yoga & exercises. In evening, at some *kunds*, youngsters could be seen sitting out in open and reading, or just hanging around with friends. The physical condition of most of these *kunds* have found to be not so clean.



Picture 3: LolarkKund. People celebrating lolarkshashti (Source: Google Images)

Micro level urban spaces

Majority of streets in core and inner-city area of Varanasi are multifunctional. Apart from its basic use to provide space for the pedestrians they also make space for the small stalls and informal shops. These vibrant streetscapes make way for good interaction between different people without any extra effort. The corner tea-shop or *adhis*, the beetle store or *paanki dukan* etc. all act as open workshops. Traditional artists, painters, musicians, artisans all come across and exhibit their innovative acts and bring in their uniqueness, making these inner streets or *galis*, full of activities and people portraying a unique experience for visitors. Stories and myths are in the air when we talk of these organic streetscapes of Varanasi. These spaces are located in the quick vicinity and hence are frequently visited and extensively used by local community in comparison to the macro level urban spaces. The degree of interaction and bond among people are also higher due to increased frequency of meeting. It is a common sight to find people at these open spaces, at any given time of the day, to be discussing politics, entertainment, entertainment, local gossips, even food!



Picture 4: A Tea Stall or *adhi* (Source: Google Images)

Varanasi is one of those densely populated cities where urbanization has happened more in a trickle-down fashion and hence, when we look around, negotiating through the labyrinths in the city famous for its narrow lanes, we find the city spaces to be haphazard. In the lieu of rampant growth, encroachments have reduced the size of the public spaces at all the three levels and in many cases, are also wiping them out from the map. Lack of infrastructure for local community and tourists, lack of unawareness among the community, especially present generation, about the value of these spaces have coupled the issues relating to degradation and dilapidated condition of these resources.

Findings

· Shared heritage and its impact on community

Varanasi, often equated as the *Mecca* of Hindus, has also been home to other religions. Buddha delivered his first sermon here, Sant Ravidas was born here, it is also the birth place of Sant Kabir. The city is also home to the 21st *tirthankar* of the Jain community. Also, a considerable amount of Muslim population shares the celebrated culture of the city as much as the Hindus. End number of celebrations and festivals that take place in the city alongside the city specific public spaces, as discussed above, they together form an indispensable part of the city's living heritage. These festivals/celebrations range from the ritual of Ganga *aarti* to annual festival of *Urs*, *LolarkShasti*, *RathayatraMela*, *Gazi MiyankaMela*, *Ramlila* etc. Hence, the city takes prides in its Ganga-Jamuni culture, indicative of the confluence of different religions just like the two rivers, Ganga and Yamuna³. These traditions not only bring people together but, it also binds them in a strong urban fabric. People identify themselves as a community, before identifying with their respective religions.

· Accessibility of public spaces to the public

However, the rounds of field visits taken up has opened avenues for other aspects to be explored. For instance, if we look at the meso level public spaces in the city, we find that almost all the *kunds* have a temple on their precinct and that compels us to think, if the garb of religion in these 'public' spaces becomes a cause of exclusion for a section of population? Also, the dilapidating condition of these open spaces raises questions on the competence of authorities involved in the maintenance and preservation of these sites of lived heritages. There clearly seems a gap in integration of heritage through sectoral planning in the city. The ecological, historic, aesthetic, socio cultural, religious and traditional qualities of a city needs to be recognized, safeguarded and utilized effectively as a part of the urban development process. To maintain the delicate balance between conserving what represents the intrinsic character and value of a historic city, while, at the same time, allowing for the change that is required for the city to continue to live, would actually mean a wholesome and holistic development, which is the need of the hour in the case of Varanasi.

· Conditional assessment of public spaces

If we discuss the condition of macro level spaces, i.e. the *ghats* of the city, it has to be said that the situation has definitely improved as compared to what it was earlier.

The *ghats* have been beautified and special attention is being paid towards cleanliness on *ghats*. However, as discussed above, the scenario at major *kunds*, which serves as the meso level public space, is not so positive. The major issue seems to be the lack of awareness. The degrading quality of water given low or no maintenance, the poor quality of neighbourhood that results in slum like conditions and extremely limited municipal



infrastructure, all these reasons combined together, work completely against a healthy community space where people could gather to reconnect, rejuvenate and rejoice. At the micro level, in this context, the vibrant streetscapes of Varanasi and the mystic *galis* that give the city its distinctive flavour, seem to be losing their charm.

The over-enthusiasm in terms of absolutely unplanned development, illegal encroachments, haphazard planning which is bereft of cities core economic value, has led to missing this significant component of the inter community harmony, where intermingling is a routine and contributes crucially towards the nurturance of shared heritage.

Conclusion and Suggestions

In the context of India, historical evidences point towards vibrant urban civilizations, from the Harappan era city of Dholavira, the 18th century Jaipur to the 20th century Chandigarh, with town planning being practiced here for almost millennia. The uniqueness and diversity of India's historic cities and towns is not only about outstanding monuments but it is about the way in which the settlement has evolved in relationship to its natural surroundings and how it was planned, its traditional neighbourhoods, the water bodies, its streets, public spaces, its crafts traditions, artisans, communities and their pattern of living, as well as customs and beliefs. These play an important role for the imagining and articulation of space use and the built environment of traditional Indian cities.

In India, development of towns and cities focuses primarily on urban infrastructure as a result of which the historic inner city areas remain completely neglected. There is a clear need to understand that the concept of 'heritage' no more includes just the monuments and buildings of exceptional architectural value but heritage also defines the traditions, culture, way of life, food, dance, music and literature. Similarly, the concept of conservation includes not only protection but also revitalization, regeneration, renewal and sustainable development.

Keeping this in view, it should also be understood that one of the important elements of liveability in cities is its interactive spaces and public realm. Our shared

heritage, both tangible and intangible, can be engaged to support the realization of inclusive cultural future of the city.

The sites of Varanasi's shared heritage can be revived and maintained, if it is made to attract more locals throughout the day, especially for recreational purpose. The revamping of Durgakund could be cited as an excellent example, where the usability of the location has been increased by employing various recreation supporting elements around the *kund*, like benches, chairs, street-food vendors, small shopping centres etc. This has been done in a way that the site can cater to all segments of population. These spaces facilitate better interaction between people, leading to a newly found sense of equality that would also help them to strive towards the betterment of the area.

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Footnotes

1. As per worldometers.info, accessed on 21.7.2019. Worldometers shows estimated current numbers based on statistics and projections from organizations like the UN Population Division, WHO, FAO, IMF, and World Bank. The platform has been licensed for the UN Conference Rio+20, BBC News, and other prestigious events worldwide.
2. http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/paper2/data_files/india2/Million_Plus_UAs_Cities_2011.pdf
3. Yamuna is another holy river in the Hindu tradition. The two rivers, Ganga and Yamuna meet at a point in Sangam (located in the city of Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh) which, is considered to be a holy confluence.

Xinjiang: History, Re-Education Schools and Sinicisation – A Perspective

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Abstract

Xinjiang is located in the northwestern region of China, and geographically consists of rugged mountains and huge desert basins. Its indigenous populace of Turkic speaking Uighur Muslims are agriculturists and pastoral nomads who primarily live surrounding the oasis strung out along the foothills of mountains or roam around the arid plains searching for grasslands for their livestock. Ever since the establishment of Chinese control in 1949, efforts have been made to assimilate the regional economy into that of the country. These efforts have been accompanied by a massive rise in the Han, ethnic Chinese population in Xinjiang. Officially known as the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR), recent developments are suggestive of the fact that autonomy is a chimera in the region and applicable only for the Han population. Uighurs refer to the region as East Turkestan and their struggle to separate from mainland China has led to a secessionist movement. This movement, though sufficiently weak as compared to terrorism in Kashmir in India or in North Eastern India, has resulted in the Chinese government introducing harsh measures to control secessionist ideas. Pogrom like conditions prevail in Xinjiang as China attempts to Sinicize the region by introducing Han population, culture and system into the region and at the same time sending the Uighurs into concentration camp like “re-education centres.” This paper tries to study available literature on the subject and analyze how Xinjiang is losing its culture and identity under the Sinicisation programme being thrust on it by President Xi Jinping’s regime.

Keywords: Xinjiang, China, Sinicisation, Uighurs, surveillance program, human rights

Introduction

Xinjiang means new territory in Chinese. It is a vast region, about half the size of India and one sixth of Chinese territory. Xinjiang has historically been inhabited by Turkic and Mongol people. Its inhabitants refer to the region as Turkestan or East Turkestan. Xinjiang is the only Muslim majority region in China and has land boundaries with

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Mongolia, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. It holds substantial deposits of coal, oil and natural gas as well as Lop-Nur, China's nuclear weapon testing facility. Historically, the first Chinese incursions into Central Asia happened during the Han dynasty (206 BC- AD 220). Xinjiang's control changed hands between the Hans, Mongols and Arabs. Islam began entrenching itself in the area under the regime of Abdulkerim Satuk Bughra Khan after his conversion to Islam in AD 934 (Mishra, 2001).

Xinjiang's subjugation before China began in the middle of the 18th century after being conquered by the Qing dynasty. Qing was the name adopted by a Manchu dynasty that had itself conquered China in the 17th century. The Manchus were not Chinese and spoke a different language and had a different culture. They ruled over China with an iron hand. To humiliate their Chinese subjects, Manchu rulers made them "shave their foreheads and wear pigtales as a sign of submission. Inter-Marriage was prohibited" (Sinha, 2020). The Manchus attacked Xinjiang because the Mongols residing in Xinjiang repeatedly raided China. The Mongols had ruled over China for long and dreamt of re-conquering it. Failing to deter the Mongols from their deprivations, Emperor Qianlong sent his army to occupy the region and incorporated it into China in 1768, naming it as Xinjiang. The claim of Chinese Communist Party (CPC) over Xinjiang is thus based on the imperial conquests made by the Manchus. Ironically, the Chinese themselves regard Manchu rulers as foreign occupiers. Sun Yat-sen who led the alliance which overthrew the Qing dynasty in 1911, was contemptuous in his assessment regarding the Manchus who according to him, were "a foreign, barbarian people, who had entered China 260 years ago and have oppressed and enslaved the Chinese. It is time to liberate China from this yoke. Those who surrender, when the revolution takes place, are to be spared; those who resist are to be disposed of without scruple" (Sinha, 2020). Xinjiang was however never completely subdued by China. People of Xinjiang revolted as soon as Taiping rebellion broke out in China in the middle of the 19th century. The revolt was unsuccessful as the British assisted the Manchus in suppressing the rebellion. In 1884, Xinjiang was made a province of China.

Xinjiang was afflicted by turmoil and conflict even after the end of the Qing dynasty. In 1944, Muslims in Yining, the administrative centre of Yili district of Xinjiang, revolted. The rebels established the East Turkestan Republic (ETR) and the Yili National Army (YNA) which was supposed to be the military arm of the state. During the Sheng Shicai-Soviet cooperation during 1933-42, Xinjiang had become an exclusive sphere of Soviet influence. When Sheng shifted his allegiance to the Chinese, the Soviets started to support the Muslim rebels of Yili. Chiang Kai-shek however negotiated with the Yili rebels and a Provincial Coalition government was formed, though the Yili regime maintained its *de facto* independence till 1949 (Mishra, 2001).

China was however clear about its geostrategic intent from the inception of People's Republic of China (PRC) on 1 October 1949. Born out of a lengthy civil strife, CPC wanted buffers allowing China strategic space to maneuver. It was Mao's aim to secure the periphery of China at the earliest by liberating Xinjiang and Tibet. Soon after establishment of PRC, Radio Beijing announced that People's Liberation Army (PLA) must "liberate all Chinese territories, including Tibet, Xinjiang, Hainan and Taiwan" (DIIR,

2001). The military takeover of Xinjiang in 1949 is considered as one of the greatest military feats of modern times. The opportunity to convert lofty proclamations about liberation of Chinese territories arose when the Soviet Foreign Trade Minister in discussions with Mao Zedong said: "If the nationalities of Xinjiang were given autonomy, the soil for the independence movement would likely [disappear]. We do not stand for the movement of independence of the Xinjiang nationalities and do not have any claims on Xinjiang territory" (Arpi, 2017). Not one to miss subtle strategic signals, Mao convinced the Soviets that China wished to give Xinjiang "autonomy, in the same manner as for Inner Mongolia, which is already an autonomous region" (Arpi, 2017).

Mao used a two-pronged 'war' strategy in Xinjiang: He first ensured surrender of the nationalist forces followed by sending a large number of troops in two different directions (north and south Xinjiang). The assurance of Soviet support had made things easier for PLA. By taking over Xinjiang, China gained many advantages; Firstly, they obtained pivotal position to control western borders of the country; secondly Xinjiang was geographically crucial to facilitate trade and Commerce with Central Asia. The territory was strategically vital to block any possibility of Soviet forward movement in the region and also because it allowed China to come in contact with the Indian frontiers, particularly in the Aksai Chin area. Towards the end of September 1949, a large contingent of communist troops started moving towards Xinjiang where a 70,000-strong nationalist force was still stationed (Arpi, 2017). Following the Hexi (Gansu) Corridor, the PLA moved towards Urumqi. Urumqi was under the rule of a coalition comprising of the Nationalists of Chiang Kai-shek (KMT) and representatives of the former Second East Turkistan Republic (ETR), supported by USSR. The ETR supporters were particularly strong in the three districts in northwestern Xinjiang, where they had retained some autonomy. KMT on its part controlled most of southern Xinjiang. Once CPC received Soviet support, the next phase of capturing Xinjiang was marked by KMT Generals shifting loyalties towards PLA. On 25 September 1949, Tao Zhiyue, the KMT Commander-in-Chief of the Xinjiang garrison and Burhan Shahidi, the Political Commissar, announced formal surrender of the nationalist forces before the Chinese communists.

After the surrender of KMT Generals, the five ETR leaders travelling to negotiate with CPC died as their plane crashed over the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic. There were strong rumours to the effect that they had been assassinated. The path was now unrestricted for PLA troops. Starting from Yumen, east of Jiuquan in Gansu Province, the PLA went through some of the harshest terrain, and "they started a massive advance of forces towards Xinjiang along north and south of Tian Mountain (Arpi, 2017). With Soviet support the PLA occupied each important town and city in Xinjiang, and militarily crushed remnants of Chiang Kai-shek's forces within two months (Arpi, 2017). Mao's master-stroke can be understood in the perspective that with the annexation of Xinjiang, China was strategically on the gates of India and Tibet. The military benefits of this move would be visible by 1962 when PLA used its annexation of Xinjiang and Tibet, and a road connecting the two through Aksai Chin to lend India a crushing military defeat.

Separatism in Xinjiang and the Chinese response

Xinjiang was made an autonomous region in 1955, an autonomy which has remained symbolic. While autonomy itself is a chimera for the people of China, Xinjiang

has been worse off. From 1950s onwards, the CPC regime has encouraged settlement of Han Chinese, in order to secure, control and exploit the region, which is rich in hydrocarbons, mineral resources and virgin agricultural lands. Since 1949, the region has seen a massive inflow of Han immigrants mainly directed there by the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC). This organization had helped former soldiers demobilized after the Civil War to settle down in the region, by providing some advantages to its members. XPCC was used to pursue demographic colonization while boosting the manpower needed to provide security for the region and exploit its resources. XPCCs are heavily subsidized up to the extent of 80% by the CPC regime and control nearly one-third of the local farmed land and produce about a quarter of the provincial industrial output. As a result of this resettlement procedure, the Han population has risen from 6.7% of the region's population in 1949 to about 40% presently (Castets, 2003).

Increased economic opportunities have further facilitated Han migration into Xinjiang. Beijing has also implemented a labour exportation programme using which Uighurs are sent to work in other parts of China (Wong, 2014). This deviously manipulated programme has been consistently used to increase the Han to Uighur ratio in Xinjiang. Uighurs are the original residents of Xinjiang who are Turkic-speaking and largely Muslim by religious denomination. This rise in Han population in Xinjiang and reducing native Uighur population in the region has been the source of persistent tension in the province. Central Chinese control over Xinjiang has been effective for only 425 years over the course of two millennium (Small, 2015) which suggests that the Uighurs have always had a strong sense of separate nationalism which has acted as an impediment to China's absolute control over restiveness in the region. The first opposition group in Xinjiang against Chinese control was formed in 1967 with KGB's support and had Turkic and Marxist affiliation. This East Turkistan People's Revolutionary Party advocated an "independent, secular, and communist East Turkistan oriented towards the Soviet Union" (Starr, 2004). The group however did not last long enough once the Soviets withdrew their support. By the end of 1980s the resentment of Uighurs against the demographic change had begun to increase. China had by then also started to feel apprehensive of the ripple effect of Central Asian Republics attaining independence after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The revival of Islamic activities in these newly liberated countries and its impact on Xinjiang had begun to worry China.

Trouble erupted in 1988 in Urumqi as Uighurs protested against the publication of a book which they considered as racially insulting (Millward, 2004). Uighurs clashed with Chinese police in Baren near Kashgar in April 1990, which resulted in the loss of more than 50 Uighurs lives along with those of six policemen. Following the Baren clashes, violence erupted in Urumqi, Artush, and other cities resulting in the deaths of more than 100 people (China/Uighurs, 2020). Sporadic unrest continued in Xinjiang in the 1990s which resulted in the "Strike Hard" campaign being launched by the CPC in 1996 which specifically targeted "splittism and illegal religious activities" (Human Rights Watch, 2005). This "Strike Hard" campaign which has since been repeated under the pretext of countering criminal activities has condemned hundreds of people being shot to death, rampant use of torture to obtain forced confessions and jailing of thousands. Most importantly it started to take away the right to practice Islam in the name of

crushing ‘splittism,’ religious extremism and terrorism” (Starr, 2004). According to Human Rights Watch, the characteristics of the Strike Hard campaign in Xinjiang are similar to those practiced in China: summary trials, reducing the judicial process to a minimum with emphasis on observable punishment, and mass sentencing. In Xinjiang however, religion appears to be as much the target as crime (Human Rights Watch, 2005). As a result of the initial “Strike Hard” campaign many Uighurs escaped to neighbouring Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan. Many of them also reached Pakistan which after the retreat of the Soviet forces in disgrace from Afghanistan, was a cauldron of the idea of jihad and its practitioners; the mujahideens.

The harsh Chinese crackdown and influence of the conducive conditions in Pakistan led to formation of the East Turkistan Islamic Party (ETIP) which had a pan-Turkish ideology rooted in Islamist revival in the province. It gained prominence in April 1990 during the Baren clashes when hundreds of Uighurs had marched on to government offices in protest against the Chinese policies of forced abortion of Uighur women and exploitation of Xinjiang’s resources. When the crowd chanting jihadi slogans could not be controlled by the local authority’s PLA troops and PLAF had to be brought in to crush this revolt (Small, 2015). Uighur connection with the Afghanistan jihad soon became useful as the leaders of ETIP who had escaped from the Baren violence met up with Uighur mujahideens in Pakistan. This heady brew of jihadis led to the establishment of East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) in 1998 (Raschke and Todd, 2010). The ETIM however failed to get support from Central Asian and Islamic countries who did not want to take on the economic and military heft China carried. Pakistan on its part had turned over many ETIM separatists to China as a token of its friendship.

On 5 July 2009, Urumqi suffered from the worst communal violence witnessed in China. A protest over the killing of two Uighurs in Guandong acted as catalyst for release of pent up frustration and grievances of the Uighurs. Protests soon escalated into a bloody orgy as Uighur gangs slashed, stabbed and beat the Han Chinese in horrific riots (Macartney, 2009). Official Chinese figures put the death toll in the Urumqi riots at 197, whereas unofficial reports placed it much higher. The Han vigilante groups soon organized themselves and indulged in retaliatory attacks. With Xinjiang subsequently never completely at despite the “Strike Hard” campaigns, the scene was set for an even ruthless Chinese crackdown on Uighurs.

The Farce of “Re-Educations Schools”

In 2018, a UN Human Rights panel reported receipts of credible reports that one million Uighurs were being detained in what resembled a “massive internment camp that is shrouded in secrecy” (Stephanie, 2018). *Gary McDougall*, a member of the *UN Committee on Racial Discrimination*, cited estimates that two million Uighur Muslims were forced into “political camps for indoctrination” (Stephanie, 2018) in Xinjiang. McDougall expressed concern that behind the façade of combating religious extremism and maintaining social stability, Xinjiang had been converted into something that “resembles a massive internment camp that is shrouded in secrecy, a sort of ‘no rights zone’” (Stephanie, 2018).

This should not have come as any surprise to China watchers as signs of brutal crackdown was evident in President Xi Jinping's speech in 2017 when he ordered the security forces to erect a "Great Wall of Steel" around Xinjiang as the region remained restive (Phillips, 2017a) Chen Quanguo, Xinjiang's CPC secretary, had by then ordered Chinese troops to "bury the corpses of terrorists in the vast sea of the people's war [on terror]" (Phillips, 2017b). Chen who in his earlier charge as CPC secretary of Tibet had gained notoriety for his harsh measures is credited with implementing an even harder crackdown on Uighurs. With an ultimate eye on a politburo position Chen wants to impress Xi by not appearing soft on terror. The order to Xinjiang residents to prominently display Xi's portrait in their homes was just the beginning of the indoctrination process (Sinoinsider, 2017). The indoctrination process which is supposed to last for several months depending involves forcing the detained Uighur Muslims to renounce Islam, criticize their own Islamic beliefs and those of fellow inmates, and recite Communist Party propaganda songs for each day. Inmates are forced to consume pork and alcohol, both forbidden in Islam. Even apparently harmless manifestations of Muslim identity like growing a beard can become the reason for Uighurs being sent to an internment camp (Samuel, 2018). While the iron curtain around any information coming out of China ensures deniability to any news, satellite imagery has revealed the growth of these internment camps, both in number and size around Xinjiang (BBC, 2018). *The Wall Street Journal* (2017) has reported that these internment camps had doubled in a year.

China, has however been selling a completely different narrative about the internment camps to its own people. Frequently these camps are referred to as "vocational" or "re-education schools" for people who have "some problem with their thoughts [32]." They are also sometimes also equated to hospitals (Samuel, 2018) implicitly implying to Islam as a disease. CPC through an audio recording circulated to Uighurs on *WeChat* has been even more specific that those selected for reeducation "have been infected by an ideological illness" and with "religious extremism and violent terrorist ideology, and therefore must seek treatment from a hospital as an inpatient. The religious extremist ideology is a type of poisonous medicine, which confuses the mind of the people. If we do not eradicate religious extremism at its roots the violent terrorist incidents will grow and spread all over like an incurable malignant tumour" (Samuel, 2018).

Samuel quotes *James Milward* as saying that China sees "Religious belief as a pathology." According to *Milward* the re-education schools are "like a search and destroy medical procedure that they want to apply to the whole Uighur population, to kill the germs of extremism. But it's not just giving someone a shot- it's locking them up for months in bad conditions" (Samuel, 2018). The inmates of the "re-education schools" are however not assured of a permanent cure of their "ideological illness" through a one-time internment. The CPC *WeChat* recording further instructed them to "remain vigilant, empower themselves with the correct knowledge, strengthen their ideological studies, and actively attend various public activities to bolster their immune system" (Samuel, 2018), once they returned home. *Tahir Imin*, a US based Uighur academic feels that this re-education programme was part of Chinese attempts to eradicate Muslim ethnic minorities and forcefully assimilate them into the Han Chinese majority. "If there is any 'illness'," *Tahir* has said, "it is being Uighur" (Samuel, 2018). Turpan City, a Uighur dominated

region of Xinjiang reported in 2013 that it was undertaking “transformation through education work” (Zenz, 2018) in order to deal with “four special types of people” (Zenz, 2018) to ensure a stable society. At the focus of this transformation have been those wearing veils, young men with long beards, those wearing Kirgiz clothes and other ethnic dress which the CPC deemed to be problematic. In 2015 Xinjiang’s justice department committee secretary reported that in a typical Uighur Muslim village 70 percent of the population “change with the wider surroundings” and are “easily transformed.” The remaining 30 percent were “polluted by religious extremism” requiring “concentrated education work” (Zenz, 2018).

The “re-education schools” gained strength with the appointment of Chen as CPC secretary in August 2016. The number of internment centers have increased manifold since his taking over. In Xinjiang, Zenz has argued, Chen has resorted to even harsher measures than Tibet. Chen’s appointment, increase in the number of Uighur detainees, and massive rise in the number and size of these internment centres coincided with the Xinjiang government’s “de-extremification ordinance” in 2017 which stressed on “de-extremification” through education (Zenz, 2018). According to a paper published by Xinjiang’s Urumqi Party School, “punishment of criminal offenders and transformation through education are the key elements of de-extremification work” (Zenz, 2018). As a measure of success of the “de-extremification,” the paper has shown that 99 percent of those who underwent re-education were able to “distinguish illegal religion,” a percentage which was in stark contrast to the earlier 68 percent who were unaware of their “mistakes” (Zenz, 2018). Since 2017, internment times in the “re-education schools” have started to last for even six months to more than twelve months. Counties in Khotan Prefecture have advertised “transformation through education center” teaching positions, requiring knowledge in applied and criminal psychology, “heart health education” and Marxism (Zenz, 2018). Xinjiang’s “re-education schools” are notorious for their clandestine nature. Family members and relatives of detainees do not know where their loved ones are being detained. People are forced to install a smartphone app enabling remote communication without disclosing the location of the re-education facility. Massive budget allocation for “re-education schools” and security features in the training center related bids confirm that in reality these are well-secured internment camps. This “antidote” to “cure” any person “intoxicated” with “addictive” effect is applied to any Muslim in Xinjiang at the slightest suspicion (Zenz, 2018).

Expectedly, China has denied any allusions to the “re-education schools” being closer to modern day concentration camps with Xinjiang Governor Shohrat Zakir calling the idea “completely fabricated lies” and “extraordinarily absurd.” Zakir on the other hand calls these centres “boarding schools” with guaranteed personal freedom of “students” (Martina, 2019).

The New York Times in an expose of 400 pages of internal Chinese documents ‘The Xinjiang Papers,’ has however nailed these lies. These documents indicate how Xinjiang students returning from abroad and other parts of China are told that their missing parents are in “training schools” which they cannot leave. The students were chillingly informed that their behavior could either extend or shorten the detention of

their family members who had been detained because they had been “infected by unhealthy thoughts.” Freedom for the detained was only possible when “this ‘virus’ in their thinking is eradicated and they are in good health” (New York Times, 2019).

The documents show that this crackdown started after Xi’s visit to Xinjiang in 2014 where he issued directives for an all-out “struggle against terrorism, infiltration and separatism” using the “organs of dictatorship,” and displaying “absolutely no mercy.” Xi compared Islamic extremism to a contagious disease as “People who are captured by religious extremism — male or female, old or young — have their consciences destroyed, lose their humanity and murder without blinking an eye.” After his appointment Chen has used Xi’s speeches as groundwork for his diktat to “round up everyone who should be rounded up” (New York Times, 2019).

Surveillance as a tool of Police state

CPC has been making unbridled use of technology to keep surveillance on and detain Uighur Muslims. This use started in 2014 and has grown manifold after 2016 and Chen’s assumption of power in Xinjiang. Apart from surveillance cameras equipped with facial recognition technology, the regime also collects information such as biometric data, data usage and location to combat perceived terror threat. Human Rights Watch has used a leaked list of 2000 detainees of the Aksu prefecture in Xinjiang to report that China is using a big data program, Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP) to police and arbitrarily select Uighurs for detention. IJOP is utilized to aggregate data about people from various sensory systems, and then zeroes in on those who appear to be potentially threatening. Indicators like “general performance” combined with other sources of information, are then used to send the suspects to the “re-education schools.” IJOP’s algorithms are programmed to even use lawful behavior as having relatives and families abroad as reasons for detention. Reasons like Studying the Quran without the state’s permission or allowing one’s children to study the Quran, wearing religious clothing, such as the burqa, or having a long beard, traveling to other parts of China such as Beijing and Shanghai without notifying the local officials, can be identified through the platform and then used to detain Uighurs. Something as mundane as switching off one’s phone repeatedly can have the same consequences (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

This omnipresent surveillance has reached a state where complete personal information including biometric data of Uighurs is being stored in the database which is linked to the ID of that particular individual. Compilation of all this data allows a person to be rated as “safe”, “normal” or “unsafe.” This ranking in turn decides that whether a Uighur can indulge in such routine activities like visiting a mall or museum or be sent to “re-education schools”. Uighurs can expect visits by security agents if overseas calls are made on their numbers by family/friends residing abroad (Milward, 2018). Despite combating the “three evil forces” of “separatism, extremism and terrorism” (China Daily, 2012) since 2012, China passed its first comprehensive counter-terrorism legislation only in 2015 (Byman and Saber, 2019) showing a growing prioritization of domestic counter-terrorism efforts. Previous legal measures against terrorism had been amendments to Chinese criminal codes whereas the 2015 legislation gave CPC broad authorities. The act defines terrorism and extremism ambiguously perhaps to encompass

a broad range of actions that they apprehend would endanger domestic stability. This law *inter alia* mandates that technology companies have to assist the government in counter-terrorism measures including with decryption, and by limiting foreign access to the information and communications technology for national security reasons. The counter-terrorism law and its enforcement in association with technology companies has ensured that Xinjiang has become a police state. Xinjiang residents have to submit to facial recognition scans to enter markets, buy fuel or even use public transportation. Biometric data such as DNA, fingerprints and iris scan of Uighurs is randomly collected to maintain absolute control of the population (Byman and Saber, 2019).

Counter-terrorism activities in China involve prohibition of “enticing” a minor to participate in religious activities, individuals being fined tens of thousands of dollars for spreading news, including on social media that supposedly harm social stability. Even sharing of “extremist” thoughts is prohibited. The government has also published a list of actions that imply religious extremism, including actions such as storing large amounts of food or quitting smoking or drinking abruptly. Knives purchased by Uighurs have the purchasers identification data etched on to the blades as QR codes. Facial recognition software alerts authorities when residents who are under suspicion venture more than 300 metres from their homes, workplaces or other approved areas. In a nutshell, Xinjiang has become the most policed state in the world with police and paramilitary troops being stationed every few hundred feet (Byman and Saber, 2019).

China in reality, is leaving no stones unturned in its efforts at “Sinicisation” of Xinjiang. *The Guardian* refers to “Sinicisation” as non-Chinese societies being forced to conform to Chinese culture, particularly that of the ethnic Han majority (The Guardian, 2018). This includes dress code, religion, culture, politics and language. It quotes You Quan, the head of the “united front work department” overseeing ethnic and religious affairs as saying that “The party’s leadership over religious work must be upheld” and “Sinicisation” of Muslims in Xinjiang must go on (The Guardian, 2018). A typical “Sinicisation” programme includes “applauding” the virtues of CPC, singing songs about Xi Jinping and “say” thanks to the government. The detained people have no right to talk to each other (Stephanie, 2019). And this, as they say, is the easier part. Survivors of the “re-education centres” have described appalling, inhuman conditions in these camps with detainees not even allowed to talk to each other during their long and indefinite detention. The regimen inside the camps for the locked up people is military like with those unable to cope with the punishing schedule, both physical and ‘educational,’ disappearing without reason, never to be seen again. Surveillance is oppressive in these camps with detainees being scared to yawn for the fear of it being taken as prayer and thus being labeled an “Islamic terrorist.” Harsh interrogation without any formal charges, random acts of cruelty and executions, are par for the course for the ‘re-education schools.’ (Gulbahar and Rozenn, 2021).

The mindset behind these inhumane “re-education centres” can only be judged from the statement of Liu Xiaoming, China’s ambassador to UK, when confronted by BBC with footage of blindfolded Uighurs being led to trains departing for these camps, retorting that he “did not know” what the video was showing and when informed about its content,

dismissing it contemptuously as “sometimes you have a transfer of prisoners, in any country” (BBC, 2020a). There are multiple reports of China forcing Uighur women to be sterilized or fitted with contraceptive devices to limit the Uighur population. Such reports have compelled the outgoing US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to urge China to “immediately end these horrific practices” (BBC, 2020b).

In its desperate urge to delink the Uighurs from their cultural and civilizational identity, China is entering their private lives to such preposterous levels as banning parents from giving children certain Islamic names thus forcing movement towards “Sinicisation.” According to the Associated Press, “Muhammad,” “Azhar,” “Arafat,” and “Islam” are among the 29 Muslim names banned in Xinjiang (Shih, 2017). The CPC government has banned the veil, fasting for Ramzan, certain type of beards and even restricted pilgrimage to Mecca. Traditional houses and buildings in the old town of Kashgar have been razed to the ground and rebuilt in modern Chinese style to remove all traces of traditional Islamic architecture (Byman and Saber, 2019). The US Congressional-Executive Commission on China has called out the egregious religious and social restrictions on Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang through arbitrary arrest and a digitized surveillance system and referred to the “re-education centres” as the “largest mass incarceration of a minority population in the world today” (CECC, 2018). The “re-education centres” and the “Sinicisation” programme has only one parallel in modern history; Nazi Germany’s concentration camps. The singlemindedness of the two pogroms is chillingly similar.

Conclusion

Xinjiang is vital strategic region for China, more so after the introduction of Xi’s signature Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with six of the economic corridors passing through Xinjiang. BRI’s ‘jewel in the crown’ China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has its origin at Kashghar. CPC is uncomfortable about Xinjiang’s Muslim majority and the perceived impact of the religious instability in the region on BRI. Since the Uighurs cannot be made to simply vanish from their homes to facilitate economic prosperity and development, the idea is to use the “re-education schools” to “sinicise” them. An Uighur delinked from his religious and cultural moorings would be safe in the eyes of the CPC. Use of technology to identify Uighurs for detention in the “re-education schools” has ominous portents for freedom around the world with other authoritarian regimes learning from China. Time the world community wakes up to confront this novel and more lethal version of Fascism.

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Melodrama: The Carrier of Anti-War Sentiments in Hindi War Films

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Abstract

Hindi war films have often been criticized for not having the essence of a 'real' war film. It has also been criticized for being melodramatic. Most of the Hindi war films are largely based on various wars fought between India and Pakistan. The partition of India and subsequent formation of Pakistan has given us a treasure trove of memorabilia and, somehow, Pakistan has always managed to spark a sense of nationalism in Indian populace. A common history of our shared past and, an array of overwhelming emotions, allows melodramatic imagination in Hindi cinema. This imagination creates anti-war sentiments and puts questions on the concept of 'war'. The paper is an attempt to analyze the anti-war sentiments in Hindi war films through melodramatic imagination. In this paper, four films *Hindustan Ki Kasam* (1973), *Border* (1997), *LOC Kargil* (2003) and *Kya Dilli Kya Lahore* (2014) have been undertaken for detailed analysis.

Keywords: Hindi cinema, anti-war sentiments, melodrama, peace, India-Pakistan relations

Introduction: War Film Genre

War film is one of the film genres, associated with warfare. Usually, this genre is referred to the cinema depicting battle action (Jones, 1945). Actual combat fighting of land, air and sea against nations or humankind provide for a plot of war films (Dirks, 2010). The history of war films can be traced back to D. W. Griffith's film *The Birth of a Nation* (1910), which is based on American civil war but, the film has been criticized for being anti-African Americans and for glorifying the Ku Klux Klan¹. There are number of other films and documentaries on the American Civil War, Spanish-American War, First World War, Vietnam war and so on, but, cinema on the Second World War played an important role to enrich the war film genre in the west and Hollywood. These films are predominantly based on topics such as Adolf Hitler, nazi/nazism, Gestapo, Benito Mussolini, fascism, death camps, concentration camps, the holocaust, etc.

War films have often been criticized for being the agent of propaganda yet, these films gained high popularity and received many awards on different platforms. It is also necessary to analyze the elements and sentiments behind the war films which

sustained interest of the audience in filming the war. There is so much in our consciousness which is visual, non-verbal and has a pictorial relationship with our consciousness, what we call memory. Arthur Marwick, the Marxist military historian, outlines this relationship between war and memory- "Wars loom large in the memories of ordinary human beings; particularly this is true of those who have directly encountered the intense excitement as well as the dreadful tragedy and suffering of war..." (Marwick, 1998). We will also have to think about what enlarges the idea of war in the memory of an ordinary human being. Although war affects the consciousness of common men but, there are also other elements or authorities behind this consciousness that enriches our memories of war and romanticizes it. Authorities of nation states want to evoke nationalism and by sustaining war memories in the mind of ordinary men, they are trying to achieve their goal. Hitler sustained the memory of war to glorify the racial purity and superiority of the Germanic race. America glorified the sacrifice of soldiers during Vietnam War, during the cold war communication mediums such as newspaper, radio, television and films were used as the tool of propaganda by both powers against each other to eulogize the idea of nationalism. War films are one of the tools to nourish war memories in favour of nationalism. But this poses an important question, i.e.- is it only war which is looming large in the memory of common men? The shared emotions, traditions, language and a common past too, are difficult to vanish from our memory and are always alive in our minds. We will argue more on it under the analysis of Hindi war cinema.

Hindi War Films

In the west, second World War is a key incident to sustain war films whereas, in India, rivalry with Pakistan is the key-element or consciousness behind war films. Before further arguments, let's scrutinize some of the Hindi movies. Perhaps, Chetan Anand's *Haqeeqat* (1964) which is the first war film of Hindi cinema released after Indo-China war of 1962. It was so because up until the 1962 war, India had never experienced direct involvement in a war. This film was marked by the narrative of what India and Indian soldiers faced during the war. After this film, there has been no other war film dealing with with China issues while, India's complex relationship with China does not dissolve yet. Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) also had to face three years battle with Tamil separatist in Sri Lanka but except *Madras Café* (2013) there is no other Hindi film on the issue. This forces one to wonder why does the tension with Pakistan has always gained so much attention by Hindi filmmakers? Except war, our sentiments, emotion, anger, anxiety and the memories of our shared past establish a close relationship between India and Pakistan. These elements inspire Hindi war films to deal with the anxieties around Pakistan. It is considered that Hindi war films are more melodramatic in comparison to western war films. The relationship with Pakistan gives a scope of melodrama for Hindi war films. This melodrama leads to a war film towards anti-war sentiments.

The influence of Kabayali attack of 1949 and the war of 1965 with Pakistan can be traced in Hindi films such as *Hum Dono* (1961), *EkMusafirEk Hasina* (1962), *Shehnai* (1964), *Sangam* (1964), *Aradhana* (1969), etc. However, these films cannot be

considered as a war film. Film *Upkar* (1967) also carries the influence of the 1965 war with Pakistan but it seems more influenced by our former Prime Minister Lalbahadur Shastri's slogan "Jai Jawan Jai Kisan", rather than the war. *Hindustan Ki Kasam* (1973) is based on the 1971 war with Pakistan and after this film, we find an interval of war films. However, that was the time, when no war occurred between India and Pakistan. Apart from this, between mid-seventies to early nineties, India was facing political transition and internal structural issues such as rampant poverty, unemployment, black marketing, economic crises, sense of individualism, etc. and these themes attracted cinema as movie plots.

In 1997, overwhelming experiences of celebrating its fifty years of Indian independence brought out nationalist sentiment. These sentiments have been captured by Indian cinema in many ways such as through songs, NRI connection, remembering our freedom fighters, freedom struggle, the wound of partition, etc. Film *Border* (1997) is another way to display nationalism by remembering our martyrs. After a long interval of war films, *Border* came on the silver screen. The 1999 Kargil war gave the opportunity to war cinema and the series of war cinema such as *LOC Kargil* (2003), *Lakshya* (2004), *Deewar* (2004), *1971* (2007), etc. were released. Subsequently, a joint effort by two media houses- the Times of India group in India and the Jung group in Pakistan, took the initiative to develop peace process between India and Pakistan, by bringing out people-to-people connection. This effort is known as *Aman Ki Asha* or *AKA* (Hope for Peace), which was launched on 1st January, 2010. During these years some anti-war films also released- *War Chhod Na Yaar* (2013) and *Kya Dilli Kya Lahore* (2014). After 2014 India's relation with Pakistan turned a bit bitter and in 2019, film *Uri: The Surgical Strike* released on the silver screen.

Melodrama

Melodrama is the combination of drama and melos (music) and thus translates to- 'drama with music'. Under the umbrella of drama films, melodrama is a sub-genre that is characterized by the plot which leads to high emotions amongst the audience (Dirks, 2010). Peter Brooks identifies that the purpose of melodramatic imagination is to highlight emotional excess, improbable plotting, reliance on exaggerated gestures and over determination of bodily signs in a film (Brooks, 1976; Sameer, 2019). Linda Williams argues that melodrama gives us the opportunity, to be sympathetic for the virtue of a tormented victim and its primary concern is to retrieve innocence and to stage it (Williams, 1998). On the basis of these arguments by Brooks and Williams, we can find some characteristics of melodrama to be-

- Emotional excess with the help of bodily signs and exaggerated gesture
- Improbable plotting
- Sympathetic for the virtue of beset victim
- To retrieve innocence.

The Analysis of Hindi War Films (Indo-Pak Wars)

Hindi war films will be analyzed with the help of the characteristics of melodrama as underlined by Brooks and Williams, under the segments of family, romance,

religion, dialogue and songs. For this analysis, four Hindi war films based on different wars with Pakistan, will be undertaken. These films are- *Hindustan Ki Kasam* (1973) by Chetan Anand, *Border* (1997) and *LOC Kargil* (2003) directed by J. P. Dutta and *Kya Dilli Kya Lahore* (2014) by Vijay Raaz. *Hindustan Ki Kasam* and *Border* have the plot of 1971 war with Pakistan; *LOC Kargil* is based on Kargil war of 1999 and the film *Kya Dilli Kya Lahore* carries the plot of border tension during 1948.

a. Family-

The narrative of the family is epicenter of Hindi war films. Family can be the space for improbable plotting and emotional excess. Filmmakers find family as a space to drive different aspects of characters except being a warrior. The family also gives the background of characters where they got their upbringing. The opening scene of the film *Hindustan Ki Kasam* (1973) shows a family where two brothers Ranveer (Vijay Anand) and Rajesh (Priyanshu Sahani) are the officers of Indian Air Force, their father was a martyr of 1965 war with Pakistan. Ranveer's wife has passed away; he is the father of a little boy. They live happily with their mother, sister Mohini (Priya Rajvansh) and Ranveer's little son. Ranveer gets injured by a Pakistani officer Usman (Bharat Kapoor) and dies while Usman is caught by the Indian air force. After Ranveer's death, the story discloses that during partition Ranveer's maternal aunt (his mother's sister) was left behind in Lahore and Usman is her son. Through this melodrama of family relationship, the filmmaker wants to demonstrate how people of both countries are connected and belong to the same bloodline. Both Ranveer and Usman are victims of the situation.

Film *Border* starts with the family of Major Kuldeep Singh Chandpuri (Sunny Deol) then film goes to the family of Bhairon Singh (Sunil Shetty) and gives the audience a hint of their familial background. Even in the film *LOC Kargil* audiences are introduced to the families of soldiers. These glimpses of families portray the anxiety of parting during a war. The scene of DharamvirBhan (Akshaya Khanna) and Manoj Pandey (Ajay Devgan) respectively in the film *Border* and *LOC Kargil* with their mothers give the space to the improbable plot for emotional excess and shows familial virtues of love, emotion, wariness, respect, sentiments, etc. of a soldier.

Unlike *Border* and *LOC Kargil*, Film *Kya Dilli Kya Lahore* engages the audience with the family of two soldiers through their memory. This film evokes the memories of partition and what people left behind during partition. Two soldiers of India and Pakistan in a tensed situation argued that how they had to leave their home, family and friends after partition. Pakistani soldier Rehmat Ali (Vijay Raaz) migrated from Delhi and settled in Lahore while Indian soldier Samarth Pratap Singh (Manu Rishi) came from Lahore and joined the Indian army. Unlike other war films when Rehmat tells to Sampath about his family, Sampath says "go to your family as they need you more than the border". When Sampath is on the point of Rehmat's gun, Barfi Singh (Raj Zutshi) is reading his letter, Sampath's father writes him to come back to home as war is not his cup of tea, if one day Afzal (Sampath's childhood friend in Lahore) will come in front of him he won't be able to shoot him. Sampath's wife also writes that their son's birthday is about to come and asks to bring something for him when he will be back home. This letter, suddenly, pulls the audience out of the glamour of war.

b. Love and Romance-

Love is a very delicate emotion of human being. It is love and romance which can retrieve emotion and innocence even from a toughest person. Cinema shows that warriors do not only have the bravery of battle but, they also have delicate emotions of love and romance. There is no Hindi war film which does not have emotions of love and romance of a soldier for his wife, beloved or fiancé. Even Rehmat's attachment with his wife's silver chain, in the film *Kya Dilli Kya Lahore*, shows his love for her wife. Hindi war films secure the space to set the plot for romantic scene(s) and/or song(s). These romantic sequences have nothing to do with war but, filmmakers add it in a war film to make a soldier complete by emotion and responsibility. The portrayal of an emotional outburst by the parting of two lovers during the war is a trend of Hindi war films. In the film *Border*, when DharmveerBhan is shown to be leaving his village for his duty on war front, he tells his fiancé Kamala (Pooja Bhatt) if he dies then she should marry another man to which she refuses by saying that she is his shadow and they will never apart. Unlike film *Border*, in the film *Hindustan Ki Kasam* Rajesh's beloved rejects him because of him being an air force officer and the given uncertainty of his life. These two films commendably showcase two victims of different emotions during a war.

c. Religion-

The projection of religion is another tool of melodrama in Hindi war films. It gives the glimpse of India's traditional notion about world, humanity and mankind. The film *Hindustan Ki Kasam* starts with the narration of Bhagavat Gita², "Or phir Krishna ne Arjun se kaha na koi bhai, nabhatija, na beta, na guru, ek hi shaklubhartihai har aine men, atmamartinahi jism badalletihai, dhadkan is seenekijachuptihai us seene men, jism letehainjanm, jism fanahotehain or jo ekrozfanahoga wo paidahoga, ek kadi toottatihaidoosari ban jatihai, khatm ye sislila-e-zindagiphirkyahoga" (then Krishna said to Arjuna there is no brother, nephew, son or teacher, there is only one face in each mirror, sole is never die just change its body, the hart of one body starts to beat in another body, only body takes birth and dies and one who die he will take another birth, as a broken chain can create another chain, then how this cycle of life could end). This piece of Gita doesn't glorify the war but shows war as a duty, the duty which doesn't have any dilemma of life and death. This dilemma less duty is the virtue of a true soldier.

In a scene of this film, an Indian soldier asks a Pakistani Muslim girl to tie a Rakhi on his wrist so that the girl could believe that he will save her life. In another sequence from the film *Border*, Bhairon Singh saves the holy Quran of a local villager. Both scenes are part of melodramatic imagination which brings out this idea that religious haters do not exist behind any war; it is a duty for the soldier to serve his motherland. Even in the film *LOC Kargil*, after the routine worship in an Indian army camp soldiers are chanting a religious slogan, "Dharma ki Jai ho, Adharma ka Nash ho, Praniyon men sadbhavna ho, Vishva ka Kalyan ho" (Hail Dharma, destroy iniquity, may there be goodwill among human beings and may there be welfare of the world). This chanting shows the Indian philosophy of 'Jai Jagat' (Hail the world). This chanting demonstrates the contrast between the idea of war and peace, those soldiers who are ready to go on war front

praying for harmony amongst human being and for peace and welfare for the world. This melodramatic plotting gives another virtue of soldier that is inherent in them through traditions and culture.

d. Dialogue-

Film *Hindustan Ki Kasam* starts with the narration of these lines, “Ladai me kabkisiki jeet hui sab ki har hotihai, jab bhai, bhai se ladtahaidil me dardjyada or gussakamhotahai...” (Who wins the battle and when? Battle has been always lost by everyone, when one brother fights to another then there is deep pain, not anger...). Then the scene opens in a meeting where an air force officer briefing to his subordinate officers about war “Aapjantehain jo farzhumenapasandthanibhana pad rahahai” (As you all know, the duty, which we didn’t like, we have to do now). These dialogues show that the war is not the voluntary situation for soldiers but, they go through it to serve their country. In this film, the narration of *Bhagavat Gita* is in the Urdu language which is the national language of Pakistan but, has its origin in India, to highlight how two countries are interconnected. The interconnection between both countries has also been shown when Rajesh’s mother says to Usman and Rajesh that the land of both countries is same and this land wants water, not blood.

Ranveer Bhan also asks Bairon Singh in the film *Border* that why will he have to shoot a soldier who is also a mother’s son just like him- an argument that puts question on the bloodshed of war. Similarly, *Kya Dilli Kya Lahore* portrays numbers of melodramatic scenes through Rahmat and Sampath’s arguments. Both Rahmat and Sampath are recalling their past. Rahmat memorizing his Delhi days before partition how he lived in Chandni Chowk, played with kite, and is reminiscent of how he used address Pandit Nehru as ‘Chacha’³ much like any other child of the country. He recalls the incidence when Pandit Nehru visited his school and everyone offered him a rose but, he loved him so much that he gave him two roses. Sampath is also recalling his days in Lahore that how he played with Afzal, fell in love with Lajwanti in Lahore, and enjoyed his childhood days.

e. Songs-

Albeit these films have some songs dedicated to brave soldiers and nationhood and successfully ignite nationalism but, there is no song which would eulogize war. Besides this, the romantic songs in these films are the tool to create melodrama. Song such as “Har taraf bas yahiafsanehai hum teriaankonkediwanehai” (I am crazy for your eyes and these tales are floating all around) of the film *Hindustan Ki Kasam* gushes the memory of a beloved. Film *Border*’s song “Hume jab se mohabbat ho gai hai, ye duniyakhubsoorat ho gai hai” (Now that I’ve fallen in love, this world seems even beautiful) gives opportunity to escape in the land of love and romance from the harsh reality of war. The song of *Border* and *LOC Kargil* respectively “Aeejate hue lamhon, zarathaharo, zarathaharo” (Ooh, passing time, please wait for a while) and “Ooh Jane wale lautkeana, koi rah dekhebhulnajana” (As you are leaving, please do come back, do not forget that someone is waiting for you) portray the pain of parting. The famous song of the film *Border*, “SandeshenAatenhai, humentadpatenhai” (letters from our dear ones, makes us feel restless) is an immensely emotional song which shows that when soldiers on war

fronts get letters or messages from their friends and relatives, they feel such a nostalgia that lets them take an emotional escape from the war front and, they are immersed in the memories of their family, friends, streets, fields, aura of their village and home town.

The last song of film *Border*, “mere dushman mere bhai mere husaye...” (Ooh, my enemy, my brother, my neighbor ...) somewhere shows the hollowness of war. This song is set in war zone and a officer of winning country is seeing the dead bodies of the soldiers of enemy country and is trying to establish a relation with the dead soldiers, the opening lines of this song makes the audience realize that the war of few days gives us the crying of years or maybe even lifetime. This song ends by putting this question (to Pakistan) how long we will have to face disturbance on our borders and urges for efforts towards peace.

J P Dutta’s *LOC Kargil* also ends with a similar kind of song “EkSathi or bhitha...” (You had another friend too...). This song is dedicated to martyrs who sacrificed their life during war. “...Jab amankibasuriginjegaganke tale, jab dosti ka diya in sarhadon me jale, jab bhoolkedushmani lag jaye koi gale, jab sareinsanon ka ho ek hi kaphila, bas itna yad rah eek sathi or bhitha...” (When the flute of peace will play, when there will be light of friendship on these borders, when one would embrace other forgetting enmity, when all human being will share the same caravan, remember, you had another friend too...). It was not only a song but wish for a future between two countries. Poet and lyricist Gulzar also wishes the same in the opening lines of the film *Kya DilliKya Lahore*, with his poetic narration, “Lakirenghain to rahne do kisi ne roothkargusse me shayadkheen ch di thi, inhi ko ab banaopala or aao kabaddi kheltenghain...” (if there is a line let it be, may be someone drew it in anger, let’s play Kabaddi⁴ and make rim with this line...) This melodrama of songs has the emotional concern with the victims of war as well as a hope for future of two countries and a hope for peace.

Conclusion

By the analysis of family, romance, religion, dialogues and songs of Hindi war films, it can find that the melodrama of these films rejects the warfare. The encounters of these above segments demonstrate melodramatic elements as emotional excess by bodily signs and exaggerated gesture under improbable plotting. We all have a strong notion that our soldiers are always brave and tough but the elements of melodrama through familial, emotional and cultural spaces retrieve their innocence in war films. This innocence shows different shades of their virtues as a normal human being and highlights how not only soldiers but their relatives and friends too are the victims of warfare. By these melodramatic imaginations, almost each Hindi war film creates anti-war sentiments. The melodrama of the war films is the carrier of anti-war sentiments. It also shows that even between the noises of the war there are also love, sentiments, and emotions. War films showcased the horror of war (Dirks, 2010).

Once, in an interview with Amitabh Mohan, Prof Priyanka Upadhyaya said “no one can understand the importance of ‘peace’ better than a soldier” (Upadhyaya, 2020). Perhaps soldiers indeed are the first victims of war. This statement also recalls the dialogue of the film *1971*(2007), based on the war of 1971 with Pakistan which portrays

the struggle of Indian prisoners of war (POWs) in Pakistan. Some POWs are trying to escape from Pakistan's prison, and lose their fellow soldiers, in the process of making the efforts to escape. Then a soldier asks another if Panjabi, Sindhi, Muslims all live in both Pakistan and India, then why we create Pakistan in the first place? To which, the other soldier replies, that it was a blunder, we won't repeat it, and both start crying. This miserable episode shows soldiers losing their friends in war and, are POW on a territory which was once a part of their homeland. This episode also gives message not to repeat the blunder of the past. We need peace and harmony. It seems Hindi war films are pretty close to what United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has acknowledged as one of its basic principles. The Constitution of UNESCO states that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed" (UNESCO, 1945).

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Endnotes

1. Ku Klux Klan is an American white supremacist group and feels all non-white Americans such as African Americans, Jews, Immigrants, Leftists, Homosexuals and Catholics are inferior.
2. Bhagavat Gita is the part of great Indian epic Mahabharata; it presents the Indian idea about life, death, dharma (duty), theism (bhakti), yog and moksha.
3. India's First Prime Minister Pt Jawaharlal Nehru
4. Kabaddi is a sport of Indian subcontinent origin which is played between two teams. Here a comparison has been made between the countries' borders and the baulk line in the sports of Kabaddi. And the lyricist conveys that instead of war, these borders could also forge healthy relationship between two countries.

Peace Building and Conflict Management : Role of Information and Communication Technology

Pavitra Bhardwaj

Abstract

Peace, stability and human rights are precursors for all developmental goals and activities. A lot has been said about the economic leverages offered by the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) but still a lot needs to be explored about the multidimensional role which this and other related emerging technologies can play towards transformation of conflict situations. This paper explores the efficacy of ICT as a means for conflict management and peace building processes. The underlying idea behind the study is to investigate how technology has and can be in future, appropriated to address the structural underpinnings of modern-day conflicts. The concepts of cyber peace and cyber security have been viewed in the light of contemporary digital world.

Keyword: ICT, peace-building, conflict management, cyber security, internet and social media

Introduction

The end of cold war induced a structural shift in concerns of the state and nature of conflicts from inter-state to intra-state. The international organisations also witnessed greater significance with enhanced involvement in peace settlements. It is well known that wars leave behind vast socio-economic repercussions depriving populations of education, livelihood and even vital healthcare. Intra-state wars lead to deeper and grave consequences such as socio-cultural disintegration of countries and societies (Stewart, 2001), loss of political stability, communities turning against each other owing to loss of trust and erosion of respect for the rule of law. Such weak social infrastructure makes the task of reconstructing the economy and initiating developmental programmes tougher for the state forces. It is at this juncture, as stated by, former United Nations (UN) UnderSecretaryGeneral Margaret Anstee at an international colloquium on post-conflict reconstruction strategies in June 1995, *“once peace has been restored to a war-torn society...the overriding goal of the international community should be to assist in national efforts to ensure that conflict and chaos will not recur. This goal must be met over and above needs for relief, rehabilitation and resumption of development”* (Haughton, 1998).

The world is aiming at eradication of poverty, acceleration of structural transformations by addressing inequalities and exclusion, as well as building resilience to crisis and shocks through responsive governance. However, this seems to be a distant goal without assuring peace, security and human rights to individuals on the periphery. The UN targets to end all forms of oppression, violence and injustice and, to team up with communities and governments to seek a peaceful resolution of conflicts. New ways are being explored to enhance partnerships, foster creativity and promote collaboration to bring people closer to each other with the intent of finding amicable solution to conflicts arising out of paucity of mutual trust and confidence. Technology, particularly Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been demonstrating great potential to enhance dialogue and meaningful engagement for conflict resolution as well as ensuring peace and stability.

Advances in information technologies and its innovative applications have proved to have a deep influence on the human society at various levels. ICT has dramatically changed the way people communicate, live, do business, gain knowledge and also promote peace (Fare, 2011). The pivotal role played by this technology can be highlighted by the fact that new terms such as digital revolution, Information Society (Castells, 2002) or Knowledge Society (Bindé and Mastuura, 2005) have been coined to emphasize the central role played by ICT. It needs to be appreciated that though, ICT has transformed the socio-economic lives of the citizens by providing solutions for myriad complex problems of the contemporary world. Its applications in the process of peace building are challenged by number of diverse factors.

This paper is an attempt to analyse the efficacy of ICT as a means for conflict management and peace building processes. The underlying idea behind the study is to investigate how technology has and can be, in future, appropriated to address the structural underpinnings of modern-day conflicts at various levels like organisational, national and international. First part of the paper discusses the economic contributions of the ICT industry, specifically in the context of economic opportunities it has offered India, in the past few decades. The second part deliberates upon the role of ICT as a disseminator of peace and harmony. Its role in strategizing security measures, building communication pathways to transmit security plans and managing conflicts at all levels of the society and polity. The subsequent sections elucidate the concepts of cyber peace, misuse of ICT in making most horrid threats to the peace and stability of businesses and states, and how ICT can be harnessed as a powerful means of conflict resolution. The paper also discusses the changing role of ICT in two contexts, i.e., as a tool to spread peace, harmony, stability and security and role of social media in conflict and, secondly as a mechanism, which helps in conflict transformation and resolution at various levels within organizations, states and at the inter-state level.

ICT: Leverage to Growth

Information Technology deals with the “use of computers and computer software to convert, store, protect, process, transmit, and securely retrieve information”. Thus, the combination of telecommunication and computer science for the capture, storage and

transmission of information is coined as IT (information technology). ICT includes “hardware, software, networks, and media collection, storage, processing, transmission, and presentation of information (voice, data, text, images)” (World Bank, 2002). ICT infrastructure may include, “digital telephone network, mobile phones, Internet capability, Internet servers and fixed broadband, and other technologies” (Pradhan et. al., 2018).

In last more than two decades; IT industry, which is a major contributor to the services sector, has become one of the most significant growth catalysts for the world economy. ICT has established itself as leverage for growing economies and emerging businesses. ICT is known to contribute significantly to knowledge sharing, quality assurance and improving a firm’s performance (Luo et. al, 2016). This is the reason that businesses and economies worldwide are considering ICT as an important strategic business investment. According to consultancy firm Gartner (2018), global IT spending will grow by 3.2% in 2019.

In addition to stimulating the economy, this sector has also affected the socio-cultural lives of people, both directly and indirectly. The advent of internet and thereafter advances in mobile computing, cloud computing and Artificial Intelligence (AI) have built new relationships between society, technology, government policy and businesses. In emerging economies like India, ICT has been termed as an ‘*engine of growth*’ (Joshi, 2009). In fact, it has played very constructive role in employability, diversification and enhancing the overall standard of living of people. As per UNDP reports, ICT has been an enabler of input for enhancing human productivity, easy access to information has empowered the citizens and resulted in greater human development through knowledge sharing and enhancing the choices.

In 21st century, ICT has been both a cause as well as an effect of the rapid economic growth and development. The relationship between ICT and economic growth has been well discussed by various scholars. There are two aspects about how ICT has fast-tracked enhancement of efficiency and business productivity. The first effect is by the growth of ICT, which has provided direct increase in production of IT goods, employment in the sector. The other is due to *ICT Diffusion* (MAP_IT,2005) which refers to IT-induced development through enhanced productivity, competitiveness, growth and human welfare resulting from the use of this technology by different sectors of the economy and society. It is the penetration of ICT goods and services in other areas of institutional and business establishments for value creation and value addition. ICT provides for enhanced revenues by lowering the operational costs, gaining access to new markets, the unique business models like *offshoring and outsourcing* (Jonathan, 2017) allows to find inexpensive skilled human capital to work for the organisations at different geographical locations or outside the parent organisation respectively. The advent of internet has further revolutionised the economic scenarios by creating a sustainable niche for medium and small entrepreneurs working on low capital-intensive business ideas.

IT has been established as an engine of growth for the economy. It has dramatically influenced the way businesses are being managed. A report of the World Economic Forum (World Economic Forum, 2013) states that an increase in the digitization of a country by 10% would lead to a 0.75% increase in GDP per capita, and a 1.02% drop

in the unemployment rate. Thus, ICT is proving to be a significant means for poverty reduction by creating a wave of jobs and sources of income and also making basic amenities like education and healthcare more affordable, accessible and equitable (OECD, 2010). ICT, similar to all other technologies of the contemporary world has its potencies and confines when it comes to being effective for the welfare of mankind or being abused to give detrimental outcomes to human civilization.

ICT and Peace building

ICT like all other technologies has been commonly discussed in the social discourse as being an accelerator to processes that may have desirable or undesirable outcomes. The *dual-use dilemmas* are quite significant in case of IT, where there is a high risk of it being misused as a weapon or part of a weapon, which could prove to affect a significant number of people (Ruhmann and Bernhardt, 2019). It is the application of knowledge to create products and services that may bring larger good to the humankind, but the 20th century showcased a contrasting view of the application of science and technology for unwarranted causes and effects to the ecology and civilization. Technology can be harnessed for building peace as well as creating fatal arms for warfare. ICT is a ubiquitous technology, which forms the backbone of all other technological inventions and implementations. The role of ICT can be looked at as a disseminator for ideas of peace, harmony and strategizing security measures, building communication pathways to transmit security plans and managing conflicts at all levels of the society and polity. On the flip side, information technology can be abused and manipulated in ways that impend peace, stability and security. There have been innumerable instances where computers have been used both as an agent and as a victim of deadly cyber attacks on government agencies, defense and high tech companies, or economic crimes with losses of more than a million dollars (Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2021).

It is imperative to understand that peace and stability is the pre requisite to socio-economic development and prosperity of any country. It is evident from a couple of instances from the countries mitigating a conflict situation that development has been severely hampered, throwing all economic activities out of gear for years. The world has also witnessed how decades of developmental work has been brought to level zero by days or weeks of war and conflict like in Sri Lanka and East European countries. ICT tools have also been used for long for creating sabotage, espionage, hate propaganda, intelligence systems, cyber warfare etc. The idea of using ICT for building and keeping peace, management of crisis situations within and among states and resolution of conflicts requires a more thoughtful and holistic application of ICT tools.

Re-visiting Peace in the Information Age

Our society has been rightly coined as the *information society* and the present time as the *information age* (Mason, 1986). Information has become a vital element for life today. The *intellectual capital*, which is generated by the exchange of ideas between minds, transforms the way in which people solve their problems and achieve their goals. The conventional idea of violence portrays the use of missiles, bombs and the latest weapons of mass destruction (Javier, 2006) etc., however, the idea of violence in the

present age resonates the *structural violence* (Galtung, 1969, pp.167-191), defined as “a form of violence wherein some social structure or social institution may harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs and deploying their full potentialities”. Going by this definition, not allowing a girl child her right to education or impairing a person’s freedom of speech and expression are actions as violent as shedding a bomb. Thus, now a days, peace activists and researchers are not just looking out for ways for minimising military violence but, are also facing new challenges of how to develop ways and means (by using the latest technological development) for eliminating structural violence , i.e. for the satisfaction of basic human rights and provide an environment of fair and sustainable development (Javier, 2006).

This era of information overload and social networking comes with its unique challenges, especially when privacy and authenticity of the information may affect not just an individual’s well-being and dignity but that of countries and governments. The understanding of the terms peace and violence have to be re-visited under the changed scenario where people are spending more time on the ‘screens’ than being engaged in inter-personal communications. Also, anything shown on the ‘screen’ is assumed to be the truth and it is the only way the masses seek for verification and validation of any information that they receive. The advent of the global news networks has transformed the way information about violence and conflict is transmitted. While the news industry is held by numerous internal biases and external constraints, such as governmental control, surveillance, business policy and decision making etc. it has evidently been a major cause of bringing attention to crisis situations in any part of the world. NGOs commonly use “*forgotten emergencies*” (Abby, 2006) when referring to crisis situations that have lost their significance, and to generate response once they are out of focus of the news channels.

The internet has evolved as a powerful tool to disseminate information, it is because the internet is free of the financial and commercial constraints faced by the conventional news channels. Also, it has a much broader reach through the widespread use of smart phones and other portable devices. The Internet in itself is neutral and has no way to validate whether the information being circulated over it is legitimate and genuine, or whether the person using it has right intent. The idea of peace, in this age should encapsulate a society where free flow of ideas and sharing of knowledge are the basic virtues. A peace initiative today must aim at building an accessible and equitable knowledge base, which is easily apportioned through the use of modern-day technology. A change of thoughts is required to ensure that effectiveness and efficiency can be created not by incentivising the efforts of a few and fragmenting the society into smaller fractions. Finnish President MartiiAhtisaari said at a conference, “We can no longer afford to be at the mercy of personal chemistry and *ad hoc* arrangements.” (CMI, 2004).

It is significant to formulate the goals of peace and security ahead of deterrence of direct military or physical forms of violence to incorporate social actors while formulating policies and programs for peace building. Countries should now shift the idea of peace from mere reduction in the defence expenditures to actually harnessing science and technology to provide information and data security, combatting the fears

of terrorism, food as well as health security and environmental awareness. It has now become increasingly important to involve citizens in the process of decision making, to reorient the discourse on peace building and conflict management. Developing a transparent and trusting system of information and resource sharing which ensures meeting the basic human needs and ensuring delivery of rights to the last person in the queue. V Cerf, who is considered as the 'Father of the Internet' has argued "technology itself is not a right, but a means through which rights can be exercised." (Land, 2011) The Internet Rights & Principles Dynamic Coalition is an international network of individuals and organizations working to uphold human rights in the online environment and across the spectrum of Internet policy-making domains. It is based at the UN Internet Governance Forum, an open "multistakeholder" forum for government, business, and civil society groups to come together to discuss mutual points of concern that fall under the rubric of internet governance (Internet Rights and Principles Coalition, 2011). The flagship document, The Charter of Human Rights and Principles for the Internet which aims to raise awareness about protection of human rights online as well as offline. Its main aim is to provide a structural framework for upholding individual rights in the online environment. Such documents provide a breakthrough tool for policy making for internet governance.

Many countries of the world have recognized the vitality of information access as a basic right. Spain, France, Finland, Costa Rica, Estonia and Greece have codified the right to internet through varied mechanisms like laws, judicial rulings and even constitutions (Shackelford, 2017). At the same time efforts are also being made by international organisations and national governments to ensure cyber peace by incorporating a broader framework for *cyber security* as a part of the national security policies and organizational best practices.

ICT: Source of Abuse

In a time when information is the real power (Reinikka and Svensson, 2004) needed for the survival and success of any organisation, it is all the more necessary to identify the vulnerabilities being faced by individuals, organisations and states. The possibilities of fatal information attack crippling the national security framework are no more remote. This makes understanding "Cyber Attack" a pre requisite to discussing its role as a threat to peace and security. U.S. National Academy of Sciences, defines Cyber attacks as "deliberate actions to alter, disrupt, deceive, degrade, or destroy computer systems or networks or the information and/or programs resident in or transiting these systems or networks." (Owens, Dam and Lin, 2013). Keeping the diverse actors and technologies in the cyber space is not easy to classify cyber attacks into isolated and mutually exclusive classes. Cyber war and terrorism is a persistent threat to international peace and stability, crime and espionage are all forms of various attacks that are deployed using inter allied tools and motivations. Cyber attacks are better understood by some more specific cases with attribute such as the magnitude of loss they incur in financial terms, the frequency and the nature of the attack, the type of firm in which the attack took place, the vulnerabilities of the system etc., for example, about 43% to 90% of private-sector firms have annually reported detecting attacks in the mid 2000s (Shackelford, 2014).

Cyber security should be viewed as a critical value creating activity, it should also be a part of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and the best practices to be followed by all leading business houses with a bottom up approach. However, it has also been observed that a number of companies are diffident in disclosing any incidence of a cyber attack mainly for two reasons, first being the lack of confidence in the law enforcement agencies and second due to the liability concerns hovering them. Thus, a reasonably accurate estimation of threats looming the world due to cyber attacks is difficult, for want of more reliable data on the organisational and financial losses accrued owing to these attacks.

More specific threats that are lurking at the modern information systems are those, which will target the intellectual property and business secrets, this has become a serious challenge for both national as well as economic security for countries. Since employees are the most important vulnerability of organisations, specially crafted social engineering attacks have also surfaced as a major challenge for the industrial enterprises. It is beyond doubt that the private sector can play a very important role in creating more secure and peaceful cyberspace and ensuring the implementation of voluntary standards being formulated by agencies like National Institute for Standard and Technologies.

Defining Cyber Peace

The idea of 'cyber peace' (Shackelford & et. al., 2014) was first proposed by the World Federation of Scientists in 2008. Cyber peace means "not the absence of conflict but creation of a network of multilevel regimes working together to promote global cyber security by clarifying norms for companies and countries alike to reduce the risk of conflict, crime, and espionage in cyberspace to levels comparable to other business and national security risks" (Shackelford, 2012). Cyber peace encompasses using the cyber space for building a robust network for building international dialogue and understanding along with renouncing cyber war (Westby, 2011). The Erice Declaration on Cyber Stability and Cyber Peace called for greater cooperation and stability in the cyberspace through six principles (ITU Report), summarised as:

- the governments must ensure Cyber space permits free flow of ideas and information to all individuals
- a common code of cyber conduct must be adopted globally through a legal framework;
- respect for individual privacy and human rights is imperative to maintaining cyber peace;
- it must also be ensured that the young and vulnerable are not exploited on the cyber space through violence in any form;
- each government and private sector organisation must harness cyber security technologies to adopt international best practices and standards;
- private organisations should work towards developing innovative solutions, which foster resilience and reduce vulnerability to any form of cyber war or violence.

Role of Businesses in Promoting Cyber Peace

The businesses today have emerged as not just working for revenue generation and shareholder-oriented approaches but are consciously adopting best practices keeping in view the impact of their actions on the larger good of the community. David Fabbro (1978), in his studies found that there are a few attributes in common which exist in all peaceful societies of the world, these are open communications, freedom of speech, respecting the values and ideas of all members of the group and inculcation of non violent values among the citizens. An absence of these ethics may lead to a violent and oppressive culture in the organisation or state. The same applies to businesses also, which are actually units that will add upto developing a strong public discourse on human rights, legitimacy and public argument. Businesses can have multi-faceted role in ensuring cyber peace (Evers, 2010), although it is accepted that economics does not drive the decisions in the war zone, but it is suggested by the World Bank and the United Nations that there is a very strong correlation between poverty and violence (Brian, 2004), thus if people have good jobs which can suffice for their basic needs there are least chances of any violent outbursts from them. Thus, we say that economic development will foster cyber peace. Another argument also attributes *globalisation* as an important factor for maintaining peaceful relations among trading countries. Gartzke after a statistical analysis states that “free trade is more powerful in creating peace than democracy” (Gartzke, 2007).

Another important aspect of maintaining peace is through the rule of law or democracy. Amartya Sen (1999) has strongly advocated the significance of democratic forms of government in which the poorest of the poor has the voice to be transcended to those with power. Ensuring this will lay a strong foundation for a peaceful society at large. Thus, businesses which work on the principles of lawfulness and democracy will engage all employees in a dialogue and take all decisions after due consultation from all stake holders providing each person an opportunity to voice their concerns and respecting the rights. Large multinational business houses are also mediating institutions between the countries to which they belong and to those where they operate. The companies respect the social and cultural practices, traditions and religious beliefs of all individuals. They also show concern about the environmental issues. Thus, these businesses show responsiveness, harmony and consideration towards people from all walks of life thereby building a stable community, which is a part of the larger world order. Businesses have also been known to undertake a different mission of *track two diplomacy* which leads to building unofficial relations with another country that allow for easy exchange on official channels and spaces.

The companies making weapons, in this case “cyber weapons” can ensure that the people do not use these even though they have the technical know how to do so. The role of individual contributions and efforts can never be fully appreciated when an abstract idea of peace is being talked about. A classic example is as given by Thomas Friedman (2002), about the India-Pakistan nuclear standoff, when executives from General Electric, an American multinational company which operates through the aviation, healthcare, power, renewable energy, digital industry, additive manufacturing and venture

capital and finance sectors, met with the highest leaders of both countries to advocate restraint. The role of technological firms in establishing and maintaining peaceful relations among the countries is very significant and has been evident in numerous incidents in the recent past.

ICT and Conflict Management

Since the advent of human civilizations, conflicts, aggression, wars and violence have seemed to co-exist. On the brighter side, though, one also witnesses equally potential mechanisms to mitigate these conflicts and evolve amicable solutions which are acceptable to the aggrieving parties. Conflict management concerns itself with the design of appropriate institutions and channels which serve to defray inherent tensions in societies and prevent them from erupting into violence, and also by trying to cajole powerful actors and stakeholders, having the necessary power and resources, to bring pressure on conflicting parties to resolve their differences and settle disputes constructively (Hattotuwa, 2004). Most, if not all conflicts can be resolved by intervention of an unbiased third-party player who understands the structure and relationships between the conflicting parties and can catalyse the situation and persuade the conflicting parties to reframe their interests and goals to reach at a constructive resolution of the impending problems (Miall, 2004).

The discourse of conflict management essentially coincides with two other closely related approaches of conflict resolution and conflict transformation. ICT can link the three main processes of conflict resolution, conflict management and conflict transformation and the actors involved to strategize mechanisms for each of these processes. The actors involved include political and military leaders, academics, international and local NGOs, grassroots organisations to international human resource organisations. These actors may adopt official and coercive measures (sanctions, arbitration), non-coercive measures (facilitation, mediation etc.) or even structure oriented mechanisms like training and capacity building to address the conflict issues (Reimann, 2004).

ICT can play a very constructive role in all the three phases of conflict redressal by not just providing an impeccable means of information exchange and seamless communications but also by empowering organisations, groups and individuals to synergise transparency, accountability and cohesion for radical flow of ideas and knowledge and be a catalyst in inclusive development. It provides a secure virtual space for meeting and discussion in situations of violent conflicts where physical proximity between the stakeholders is not feasible. According to Kraybill (2001), "Conflict transformation is a holistic process encompassing mapping of macro, meso and micro level map of the peace building process is laid down and continuously updated as the process advances." A comprehensive account of geographical, social and interpersonal dynamics of the stakeholders of the peace process also needs to be maintained. It is also suggested that ICT interventions are found to be even more impactful after a ceasefire agreement has been enforced and there if fertile ground and the right perspective among the conflicting parties for meaningful engagement through collaboration, appropriating

technology and developing virtual as well as physical mechanisms for communities to perceive the conflict more constructively.

Social Media in Conflicts

The web 2.0 has provided a unique platform in the form of social media like Facebook, Twitter, You Tube etc., which not just allows users to participate but also to create their own content called User Generated Content (UGC) (Thurman, 2008) through an array of functions like blogs, posts, live streams etc. A new wave of “*citizen journalism*” is being witnessed, where citizens are playing a very active role in creating, reporting and analysing news and information. It provides democratic and open procedure of public consultation and feedback on the issues of public commons. There are various international case studies where one can see how Internet in general and social media in particular has played a crucial role in conflict situation. There are a number of political leaders who have mastered the art of using the social media platforms to broaden their support base among the followers. This populist approach has changed guards in number of countries including India, USA, Russia. This has been attributed to the power asymmetries and a shift is seen in favour of the actors who own or control the information infrastructure and larger financial resources.

It is evident that social media can potentially influence participatory processes; it provides a platform for activists and organisations to put up protests and garner support for their cause. For instance, in Syrian uprisings, Facebook is believed to have played a critical role in mobilising the urban citizens. Activists used Facebook to plan attacks and demonstrations and thereafter gave a direct on-site coverage through the same, which was much faster than the conventional news media. However, the credibility and correctness of information on such platforms needs to be ascertained by the user. People often get swayed away and create public unrest through fake news or by antagonistic and aggressive posts against the governments and its representatives. It is imperative to understand that the line between online activism and hate content is quite thin and an understanding of the socio-cultural milieu of the state in question remains a pre-condition for effective use of social media for peacebuilding processes.

Conclusion: Future of ICT in Peace-building

It is well taken that the role of ICT in the process of conflict management and peace building between communities through meaningful dialogue and voicing the concerns of the hitherto unheard is unquestionable. Nevertheless, there are a number of impediments that organisations and communities must overcome to ensure optimisation of the resources and capabilities.

- ❖ One major challenge is the *digital divide*, which surrounds problems of infrastructure, poor regulatory frameworks and needs of security and confidentiality. The issues like compatibility and interoperability of diverse communication systems, policy frameworks and impartiality are also pervasive.
- ❖ Keeping the scale of data being generated and harnessed by the big data systems, *security and data privacy* is a crucial concern. It takes a great deal of ground work to

build a trust relationship among the stake-holders that the data that an individual shares with an organisation will not be shared or leaked with any third party either by mistake or intent. A single element of misinformation or act of mistrust can prove fatal in an already conflict driven circumstance. The quality of information being disseminated will build or kill confidence of the aggrieved parties on the credibility of the actors.

- ❖ In this age of rapid technological obsolescence, **sustainability** could be a serious challenge for ICT interventions. Long-term interventions will only succeed through home grown technological models to best meet the localised needs. Many conflict transformation interventions require an independent funding source regardless of overall progress of the peace process.

To sum up, ICT interventions in the peace process is still to reach its full potential, it is to be kept in mind that access to technology is not a one stop solution for management of conflicts but it can be utilised to complement the process of internalisation and appropriation of technology to catalyse the peace process. A multi stakeholder mechanism for collective dialogue can go a long way in carrying forward the mandate of ICT for peace.

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Role of NGOs against women violence: Examples from Varanasi

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Abstract

Women in India are subject to all forms of violence. Female infanticide is quite common in Haryana and Punjab because there is a preference for sons as, male child carries on the family lineage. The education of male child is also considered much more important. In these two states, the sex ratio is lower than the national average within the household and there exists gender discrimination which, determines intra-household distribution of food. It is because women and girls are given less food than men and boys, malnutrition among adolescent girls and women is quite prevalent in India. Due to lower educational levels, a woman has a much lower capacity to earn. Varanasi is also not an exceptional case and all types of violence against women, especially domestic violence. Some NGOs in Varanasi are actively working towards safeguarding the rights of women and combating domestic violence. This paper is an attempt to understand how well these NGOs are involved in the process of tackling women violence and what are the benefits gained by these NGOs to the society, especially to women for their dignity, upliftment and empowerment in this city. Both primary and secondary data has been used for analysing the situation. This paper aims to give a base to scholars and public officials for further study of women violence in Varanasi and contribute towards its eradication.

Keywords: Women, violence, gender inequality, NGOs, empowerment

Introduction

Violence against women has been clearly defined as a form of discrimination in numerous documents. The World Human Rights Conference in Vienna, first recognized gender- based violence as a human rights violation in 1993. In the same year, United Nations declaration, 1993, defined violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to a woman, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.” This definition added ‘violence perpetrated or condoned by the State’, to the definition by United Nations. Violence against women is partly a result of male dominated approach in our society that assumes men to be superior to

women. Given the subordinate status of women, much of gender violence is considered normal and enjoys social sanction. Manifestations of direct violence include physical aggression, such as blows of varying intensity, burns, attempted hanging, sexual abuse and rape, psychological violence include insults, humiliation, coercion, blackmail, economic or emotional threats, and control over speech and actions. In extreme conditions, it also leads to death. These expressions of violence take place in a man-woman relationship within the family, society, state and nation. Usually, domestic violence towards women and girls, due to various reasons remain hidden and unidentified (Sharavanan, 2000). In India, the problem of violence against women is a result of a long-standing power imbalance between men and women. Men have control over access to property and resources. There is also a sexual division of labour in India that results in female exploitation—physically, mentally, and commercially. All of this results in women being subject to all forms of violence, in India. Female infanticide is quite common in Haryana and Punjab because there is a preference for sons as male children carry on the family lineage. The education of male child is also considered much more important. In these two states, the sex ratio is lower than the national average.

Types of women violence in India

Rape is a common crime against women all over the world. The high-risk categories are young girls (including minor girls) in squatter settlements. Another major category is that of low caste and tribal women who are molested when their community launches a struggle for its rights. Rape is used in these cases as a form of retaliation and backlash against the community in question. Women belonging to religious and other minority communities also become victims during communal riots. The army and various paramilitary forces have been offenders in politically sensitive areas. The victimization of women during riots is common. In rare but much publicized cases, middle class women have been victimized for political vendetta.

Widow immolation (sati), that was legally abolished by the British Government, was an ancient practice in specific caste communities in some parts of India, where the widow was burned alive by throwing her on the funeral pyre of her dead husband. Even after Indian Independence in 1947, several cases of Sati practice were discovered in the State of Rajasthan. The most traumatic and widely publicized case was the immolation of a young widow, Roop Kanwar, in Rajasthan in 1989. It was made into a spectacular ceremony by her in-laws and the local priests, and watched by thousands of people, while the police and the Government did not even attempt to intervene. Its defence as a part of the Rajput religious tradition shows the intensification of ideology and its vocal and sustained articulation to perpetuate a custom of extreme violence to women.

Child marriage has been the Hindu practice for centuries, and the lower age limit at marriage, set at 18 years by the Child Marriage Restraint Act, is often flouted. The physical injury to girls due to early consummation of marriage and early pregnancies can be fatal, while the emotional strain of domestic responsibilities at an immature age compounds the problem.

Female infanticide and female foeticide are common phenomena in societies which places a high premium on male children. Both are done clandestinely and are

rarely brought to light, except in small pockets where the scale of female infanticide is discovered to be high. The use or misuse of amniocentesis to detect the sex of the foetus, and to abort if it's a female, is a relatively new but rapidly spreading phenomenon. Due to pressure from voluntary groups in Bombay, the Maharashtra Regulation of Prenatal Diagnostic Technique Act was passed in 1988, but its implementation has been indifferent and no convictions are made.

Prostitution has registered an alarming increase. It is a highly organized crime which takes place despite the Prevention of Immoral Traffic in Women Act. According to the provisions of the Act, the woman who solicits is liable to prosecution, but the abettors of brothels — the pimps, male customers, corrupt policemen — are able to escape. Poverty in rural areas makes women and girls easy victims of the prostitution racket, and their condition is pitiable.

Eve-teasing is sexual harassment of women in crowded public places, common in large cities as well as in villages. It is a minor offence, usually punishable by a small fine and one day's imprisonment.

Review of literature

The term non-governmental organization (NGO) eludes precise definition and classification. The most common way of defining these organizations is by the type of activities they are involved in (Moghadam 1997). These include advocating for human rights and women's rights, sponsoring and conducting research, delivering goods and services, and providing infrastructure, to name a few. However, these categories are not rigid or mutually exclusive. For instance, a women's rights organization may be closely tied to a research institute, or an advocacy NGO may also be involved in service delivery. In fact, NGOs often use service delivery as a way to establish themselves in communities. Thus, it is often difficult to classify an NGO in a single category.

NGOs have proliferated globally over the last several decades. Increased privatization, the expansion of free market ideology, globalization, and the rise of fundamentalist movements (which often seek to curtail the rights of women and other minorities) have all contributed to their growth (Jafar, 2005; Moghadam 1997; Mumtaz & Shaheed 1987; Weiss 1993). Presently, NGOs around the world are involved in a range of activities from delivering basic goods and services such as health care and clean water, to fighting for human rights and women's rights. Yet, we know little about the external pressures that NGOs face and the contexts they operate within. Although there has been some research on NGOs from an organizational point of view (Hilhorst, 2003; Ndegwa, 1996), and there have been discussions of the relationship between NGOs and the state (Baiocchi, 2002; Kamat, 2002), the cultural and social environments that NGOs work within are largely unexplored.

This article focuses on women's NGOs in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh; that is, NGOs that self-identify as working specifically for the betterment of women in a particular region. These NGOs are involved in various activities ranging from campaigning for women's rights and providing vocational training, to running health care facilities and

providing shelter for victims of violence and abuse. These groups face certain challenges that are unique to them because they are seen as “women’s NGOs.” Thus, one can consider them and their challenges and strategies as part of a group, even though there are differences within the category of women’s NGOs.

Though the proceeding discussion focuses on the relationship between NGOs and the state, the themes presented are also relevant to NGOs’ relationship with religious fundamentalists. After all, just as the state, religion can too be a site of both oppression as well as liberation. It is thus critical to study its impact on organizations that are struggling on behalf of women. Some scholars view NGOs as a “bulwark against the state amassing unbridled power” (Weiss, 1999). They believe in NGOs’ democratizing potential and view them as playing an essential part in moving away from authoritative forms of government. Some researchers also see them as an important component of women’s movements worldwide. Civil society organizations such as NGOs have often proven to be the most powerful—if not the only— voice against authoritarianism, religious fundamentalism, repression, and injustice. Others do not see the rise of NGOs in such a positive light. They view it as a result of nations embracing neoliberal and market-oriented ideologies that have enabled the state to shrink its responsibilities in the areas of health care, education, welfare, and other public services. As a result, according to these scholars, civil society organizations, and specifically NGOs, have become overburdened with providing public services, and their transformative potential has been minimized. In fact, some scholars argue that the “NGOization” of the women’s movement has proven to be detrimental to its cause (Bari & Khattak, 2001; Kamat, 2002), and that NGOs have become merely tools for reproducing hegemonic structures of power. Sangeeta Kamat (2002) comes to this conclusion after offering an in-depth case study of a grassroots organization in Western India. Kamat (2002) does not see NGOs as ultimately offering an alternative paradigm for development, or as being representative of devolution of power from the state to the public”. Instead, she argues that particular grassroot organizations may, in fact, reproduce and reinforce the hegemony of the state. Gianpaolo Baiocchi (2002) is one of the few researchers who take into account the context within which NGOs operate. He argues for a “relational” framework in analyzing state-civil society relations. According to his model, three factors influence the state-civil society relation-ship(s): (1) degree of state openness (authoritarian versus democratic, etc.); (2) types of constraints on civil society (placed by the state, such as censorship, lack of freedom of the press); and (3) types of interactions between citizens and agents of the state (such as office of a legislator, town hall meeting). Thus, the nature of the relationship between the state and civil society can vary at different times and in different countries depending on these three factors. In a similar vein, Veronica Schild (1998) argues that NGOs often act as “neo” or “para” instead of “non” governmental organizations. She reveals the interconnectedness of the state and civil society in Chile by pointing to the continuous “migration” of feminist scholars and activists—sociologists, economists, social workers, and educators—between various government and nongovernment organizations. This migration of feminists into state agencies has raised interesting and thorny questions for feminists worldwide. The dilemma lies in the dual nature of the state, as Carol Miller and Shahra Razavi (1998) point out: “State institutions and legal systems in both the North and the South have upheld women’s structurally

unequal position in the family by sanctioning gender-differentiated practices in political and economic participation, and inheritance rights, and by tacitly condoning domestic and sexual violence against women." On the other hand, feminist practice in many countries have demonstrated achievements from working through state institutions. Because of this contradictory role of the state, feminists have been divided in their strategies. Some feminists believe in following an "engagement" strategy (Miller and Razavi, 1998), where they seek out government jobs with the goal of eventually transforming the existing bureaucratic structures and policies, and bringing them into congruence with feminist goals and visions. Bishwapriya Sanyal (1997) argues for a similar approach on the part of NGOs, and believes that they need to be actively engaged with the state in order to be effective, NGOs must abandon their autonomy fetish and begin to work closely with dominant institutions, political parties, and so on. To say it another way, just as development does not trickle down from the top, pushed by the state alone, it cannot effervesce from the bottom, initiated by NGOs alone. Other feminists believe in following a "disengagement" strategy. According to this approach, bureaucracies are inherently non-feminist, and when feminists join them, their voices are generally suppressed or their agendas are watered down (Ferguson, 1984; Miller and Razavi, 1998). This is precisely the reason why, according to these scholars, NGOs should maintain their autonomy from the state and other bureaucracies.

NGOs against women violence in India

One of the earliest mentions of the acronym "NGO" was in 1945, when the United Nations (UN) was created. The UN, which is an inter-governmental organization, made it possible for certain approved specialized international non-state agencies - or NGOs - to be awarded Observer Status at its assemblies and some of its meetings. Later, the term came to be used more widely. Today, according to the UN, any kind of private organization that is independent from government control can be termed an "NGO", provided it is not-profit, non-criminal and not simply an opposition political party. An NGO's orientation refers to the type of activities it takes on. These activities might include human rights, environmental, or development work. An NGO's level of operation indicates the scale at which an organization works, such as local, international or national. NGOs were intended to fill a gap in government services, but in countries like India, NGOs are gaining a powerful stronghold in decision making. In the interest of sustainability, most donors require that NGOs demonstrate a relationship with governments. State Governments themselves are vulnerable because they lack strategic planning and vision. They are therefore sometimes tightly bound by a nexus of NGOs, political bodies, commercial organizations and major donors/funders, making decisions that have short term outputs but no long term affect. NGOs in India are under regulated, political, and recipients of large government and international donor funds. NGOs often take up responsibilities outside their skill ambit. Governments have no access to the number of projects or amount of funding received by these NGOs. There is a pressing need to regulate this group while not curtailing their unique role as a supplement to government services. NGO in India perform a variety of activities that would benefit the public. However, very few of us know what exactly happens. Many of us do not even know that there are different types of NGOs in India. The main aim of NGOs in India is to serve the people who

are suffering out of poverty or some natural calamity. They identify the problems in the society and try to sort the problem with the resources they have. For this to happen, rather than attending the victims as individuals, they form a group and register themselves as an India NGO and before serving the people. However, they would have to comply with all rules and regulations that are framed by the government and only the group that is eligible would be certified by the government as an 'NGO'. This would not only make them eligible for availing various preferences that the government of India announces but would also help them in building confidence among people. If they were not certified, people would obviously doubt them and panic when some group from nowhere is all of a sudden attending to their problems. Other than that, NGOs in India do not make any profit. In fact, they would have to take care of all their expenses and manage to raise enough funds for their projects using their own influence. Some of the Indian NGO offer free education to the poor children and other children who are not able to afford the school fees. Some of them have a proper setup for conducting classes whereas some other smaller groups of NGO visit various places and conduct classes there. Some of the NGO in India also provide medical facilities to the rural people and few others work towards to welfare of the women. There are even some NGO in India that offers job opportunities to the lower class of people in order to increase their income thereby improving their lifestyles. These NGO in India that offer variety of services to the poor face some minor problems in meeting the government requirements, getting permissions for their programs and in executing them. However, the major problem that they face is in fund generation. They try all possible ways and apply different strategies to generate as much funds as possible. The main reason for all these efforts taken would be to serve the poor and to execute the programs that they have developed for the welfare of the poor people. As NGO in India run mainly with the support of the funds that are raised, they plan everything carefully so that each program that they execute is executed in a very cost effective way.

Objectives

1. To find out the mission of NGOs working against women violence in Varanasi city.
2. To find out the causes which adversely affect the mission of NGOs.

Research Methodology

Both primary and secondary data has been collected from various sources, wherein primary data mainly includes the interview of...? and secondary data has been collected from various books, journals and websites. The research is mainly descriptive and qualitative in nature.

Non-government organization working against women violence in Banaras city

Varanasi also known as Banaras is a city on the banks of the Ganges in Uttar Pradesh, **and** is a historical city in northern India. The city is sacred to Hindus and also one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. In many ways Varanasi epitomizes the very best and worst aspects of India, and it can be a little overwhelming.

Despite being a holy city and a culturally rich place, number of domestic violence cases have surfaced in Varanasi over the years. It is believed that many of these cases of violence are dowry-related. In the game of figures, the police registers of Varanasi zone depicted a drop in the number of rape cases last year, but interestingly, also indicated that crimes against women have risen alarmingly. The rise in graph of violence against women in Varanasi's shows that there is a great need of revising the laws on women violence by the government authorities as their work seems to be ineffective to control the violence against women. Thus, lots of NGOs are coming forward to take the responsibility of needy, helpless, homeless and oppressed women and are empowering the lives of oppressed women. The list consists of some of the important NGOs in this city with their missions:

National Women Organization

It was established in 1982, and aims to contribute towards the empowerment of disadvantaged women and children to enable them to gain control over their own, their families' and their communities' health. Survey revealed that it is facing many problems due to lack of proper infrastructure, lack of coordination among workers and poor planning process.

Lok Chetana Samity

It is situated in Chiraigaun, Varanasi. It provides housing for working women as well as emergency shelter for women in need. It also provides business services to economically and socially disadvantaged women and helps them to initiate and effectively manage their own microenterprises and grassroots associations. Further, it delivers education for poor and physically handicap women and widows of soldiers and helping them to earn their livelihood. Survey of this NGO shows that work done by this organization in Varanasi is quite satisfactory. It is empowering the lives of women and children and is making them economically and physically independent. Women of different age groups are getting benefit and different awareness programme are organized from time to time. The main problem is that people are not aware of these facilities so they never come to them on their own for any help.

Pad Dalit MahilaPunarotthan Samiti

The NGO is run by Durgavati Seth. It works for women of every class and religion in whole Uttar Pradesh. Its aim is to give education to oppressed women of all age groups. It mainly protests against dowry and other social evils. It also encourages marriage without dowry. It gives sewing and weaving training to both educated and uneducated women. It also gives shelter to helpless women and children. Survey of these organization showed that the work done for women empowerment is quite satisfactory but due to lack of funds and manpower the proper implementation of its objective is getting difficult day by day.

GuriaSwyamSeviSansthan

Started by Ajeet Singh in 1993-94, its objective is to help prostitutes and their children by making them aware of their human and civil rights and offering them the

choice of an alternate lifestyle. Towards this end, Ajeet has established a school for the children of prostitutes of the Shivadaspur colony in Varanasi. Guria (or Gudiya) approached ASHA for funds to build a school in the colony. The school educates children, builds up their confidence so they may enroll in the local public schools, and gives tuition or supplementary schooling to those who already attend public schools. Thus, the school attempts to minimize and negate the sense of ostracism the children suffer while attempting to join the public schools and even after they do so. The survey showed that though it has a very organized working structure, it is still struggling with the manpower problems and are in need of more manpower for their extensive programs.

MahilaSamakhya (Education for Women's Equality) Programme

It is under the supervision of Saroj Sambhal, at present this programme is running in 192 villages of three development blocks of Varanasi i.e. Chakiya, Niyamatabad and Sevapuri. It provides women and adolescent girls, the necessary support structure and an informal learning environment to create opportunities for education. It also creates an environment where women can seek knowledge and information and thereby, empower them to play a positive role in their own development and development of society. It enables Mahila Sangh so as to actively assist and monitor educational activities in the villages - including primary schools, various education centers and facilities for continuing education. It has established a decentralized and participative mode of management, with the decision-making powers developed to the district level. The main issue with it is that it is struggling with fund problem. It needs more sorcerers for running its various programme.

Chetana Mahila Samity

It helps the society by the formation of self-help group, child labour eradication, awareness among with drug abusers and child labour. However, it is facing many problems due to lack of proper infrastructure, lack of coordination among workers and poor planning process.

Upvha

Upvha serves the community by running community health programme, especially for women. It also provides health training to community women and educates women by providing skill training etc. The main issues is the infrastructure development and proper training facility of their workers.

Social Action and Research Center

Its main aim is to work for removing women harassment and child abuses from the society. It also organizes programmes for family counselling and legal awareness for women. Lack of awareness and funding problems are its major issues.

Findings

NGOs for women in Varanasi are providing the following benefits to the needy women:

- i. Housing for working women as well as emergency shelter for women.
- ii. Business services to economically and socially disadvantaged women and helps them to initiate and effectively manage their own microenterprises and grassroots associations.
- iii. Education for poor and physically handicap women and widows of solders and helps them to earn their livelihood.
- iv. Economic and cultural development of women so that they can get proper respect in the society.
- v. protest against dowry and other social evils and do campaigning against,they also encourages marriage without dowry and run many awareness programe.

Thus, the NGOs help towards enhancing the self-image and self-confidence of women and thereby enabling them to recognize their contribution to the economy as producers and workers, reinforcing their need for participating in educational programmes. Also, they are empowering the lives of women and children and are making them economically and physically independent but in doing so they face the problems of funds and manpower which is affecting the proper implementation of their objective. Many issues are also associated with these NGOs regarding its working. The major problem were the lack of fund and infrastructure and funds followed by lack of awareness in the society for these NGOs. Some of the NGOs complained of having less manpower and coordination among workers.

Conclusion

Violence against women requires a multi-pronged effort. It requires raising awareness of women regarding their rights, but more importantly, providing a strong support system for women in distress. NGO is one of the alternatives available among various development organizations and one of the inputs among technical, financial and other resources. Still the primary role of NGO is at the local level as it mobilizes people and their resources for an indigenous self-sustainable development, and at this level it can be a pioneer, mediator power broker, catalyst and has many other roles. At present, there are several non-government women's organizations in Varanasi city, which provide temporary shelter, moral support, legal aid, assistance in getting jobs, etc. Thus, they are not only delivering directly some benefits to people, but also motivate people, mobilize resources, initiate leadership, and participate in development programmes for self-reliance. There are also the organizations which provide rescue homes for women, but which usually do not emphasize economic self-reliance for women. A trend has, however, started for running training programmes, legal literacy classes, etc. Such support centers are too few to handle the large number of victimized women. Education through the mass media, schools, and informal groups must emphasize the rights of women, and simultaneously reorient boys and men to their responsibilities and their obligation to treat women as equals. These will not change society overnight. Providing independent means of livelihood for women, playing down the notion of marriage as the only destiny for women, and equalizing power relations in the hierarchical family structure have to accompany other efforts. Sensitization of the police, government officials and the judiciary will need to be done for complete empowerment of women in our society.

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Visual Stories on Social Media: Promoter of Inter-Religious Peace Building

Dr. Gaurav Shah

Abstract

Pervasiveness of social media across the globe has suddenly made it a media platform to be taken as a serious channel of communication. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and You Tube has become easily accessible for everyone through their smart mobile phones, computer and other gadgets. But social media now a days is known more for hate speeches and fake news. Inter-religious differences are made to escalate on social media through abusive languages and trolling. Fake videos filled with venomous and hateful content gets easily 'viral'. This creative medium has become more of a means for venting grudges and vendetta. Amongst this cacophony of multitude voices, the paper tries to find out the stories on social media, particularly on You Tube that act as conflict reconciler rather than conflict escalator.

Key Words: Social Media, Hindus, Muslims, Inter-Religious peace

Introduction

For most of the 20th century, social scientists thought that religion would have no role to play in modern society and denied the possibility of conflicts due to religion. Processes like urbanization, economic development, modern social institutions, growing rates of literacy and education, pluralism and advancements in science and technology would lead to a decline of religion in politics (Fox, 2004; Healy, 2005). But in 21st century, the 9/11 terror attack; 26/11 terror attack at Mumbai; the Iranian revolution; the worldwide rise of religious fundamentalism; and ethno-religious conflicts like those in Chechnya, East Timor, Tibet, Sudan, and Sri Lanka ruled out the demise of religion and ascertain that still, religion is an essential element of modern and social phenomena (Fox, 2004). The inter-religious conflict has been escalating across the globe in form of many kinds of violence with terrorism being the crudest among them (Friedman, 2016). India has experienced several communal clashes in form of riots since independence (Rajeshwari, 2004). In the new millennium, post-2002 Godhra riots, two riots namely Assam riots and Muzaffarnagar riots in 2012 and 2013 respectively were mainly in news for a common reason. In these riots, fake videos, MMS, emails etc. were used to spread communal hatred on social media (Shah, 2016; Ahuja, 2013).

In August 2012, India experienced one of the largest urban flash migrations. On August 15 and 16, nearly thirty thousand people constituting fifteen percent of the two hundred thousand north-east community living in Bengaluru fled towards Assam. From Pune itself, more than half the city's twenty thousand strong north-easterners left for their homes (Unnithan & Kiran, 2012). The reason for the exodus was the rumor of revenge attacks by angry Muslims that disseminated across social media platforms. Threats were issued to people of north-east (living in Bengaluru and other parts of India) through SMS, MMS on mobile phones and social media (Mondal, 2012) that after Eid on August 20, non-Muslims from north-east region will be attacked and would be targeted by "Muslims" in revenge for Bodo militants' attacks on Muslims in Assam (Unnithan & Kiran, 2012; A New Protocol, 2012). This panic, fed by doctored images, some of them extremely gruesome, had been circulating on the internet and various social media sites like Facebook and Twitter for some days (ibid). The images were designed to look like Muslims being indiscriminately killed in Myanmar and Assam (Purie, 2012). Similarly, in UP's Muzaffarnagar, video clip allegedly showing a Muslim mob lynching two boys was used to stir unease and hatred between Muslims and Hindus (Haq, 2013). Later this video was found to be shot in a tribal area of Pakistan, two years before the Muzaffarnagar incident (Ahuja, 2013).

Research Question

Both these incidents show the misuse of social media. It is inquisitive that if through doctored videos and emails, communal hatred could be spread, then there ought to be some medium that could counter these viral videos and emails on social media. What could be the tool that can help in alleviating inter-religious conflicts and disseminating the message of peace and harmony between hostile religious communities? And also, possible utility of that particular tool?

Overall Argument

In his paper 'Religion and Conflict', Reychler (1997) believes religious organizations to be the crusader of peace building between hostile religious communities. According to Reychler (1997), "Religious organizations are a rich source of peace services. They can function as a powerful warrant for social tolerance, for democratic pluralism, and for constructive conflict-management. They are peace-builders and peace-makers". Religions contribute to peace-building by "empowering the weak, by influencing the moral-political climate and by developing cooperation and providing humanitarian aid" (ibid.). But the paper views that religious organizations restrict themselves to their religious principles and conform to the opinions, feelings and ideas of adversary only to the extent the adversary endorses their principles and ethos. As soon as the hostile religious group or community leaves the periphery of ideas of religious organizations the peace building process gets derailed.

Further to answer the research questions, Mohammed Abu-Nimer's¹, model of Religiocentric to Religiorelative, a model for religious transformation and inter-religious peace building, was studied. The model, in short, is a method of inter-faith/inter-religious dialogue that creates an atmosphere so that "the believer does not pass a negative

judgment on the other religious beliefs or practices, but observes (or recognizes) the different religious and spiritual values, norms, rituals, and behaviors; understands their meaning; and accepts them as they are in their religious and cultural context” (Abu-Nimer, 2001). His idea of organizing training workshops (ibid.) to process his theory into practice also seems very relevant and useful, nonetheless, has its own set of limitations.

Costly workshops, non-availability of conflict managers, lack of favorable atmosphere to bring aggrieved religious groups on one table and limited reach of such workshops especially in hugely populated country like India limits the scope of such workshops. This further strengthens the research inquiry by interrogating the kind of interactive platform or tool that could help in building inter-religious peace and trust between Hindus, who constitute the largest religious majority of India (Population by religious community, 2011) and Muslims, who constitute the largest religious minority in India (ibid.; Zakaria, 1988). The first platform could perhaps be mass media as; it holds the power to cater to a large audience. Schramm (1954) believed that the technologies powering the mass media provided instant communication with a large and largely anonymous audience (Chaffee and Metzger, 2001). Mass media especially Radio and Television have created a kind of ‘techno-religious spaces’ (Kong, 2001). However, the traditional mass communication experience is a one-way, top-down, sender-driven, time-specific activity; news seekers are mere consumers who receive only the information provided by news organizations, have little choice over content, and for the most part consume content at a time that is predetermined (Weeks & Lance, 2013). Whether it’s print media or electronic media, there is no mechanism for immediate response or feedback, which nullifies the whole purpose of interactivity despite wide reach of mainstream media (Shah, 2016).

India is world’s second largest user of internet and has second highest yearly growth in usage of the same (*Internet users by the country*, 2016). Also, with more than 143 million users (*Social media users in India to reach 143 million in April: IAMA*, 2015), social media has become not only a source of fast communication but, a platform of giving voice to voiceless, thus making individuals, groups, communities and societies, at large, empowered. Social media has the power to let a small incidence get attention of millions of people worldwide. Therefore, the focus of this study is inclined towards social media which facilitates one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one, many-to-many forms of communication (Castells, 2007). Castells defines social media to be the reflection of the rise of a new form of socialized communication: mass self-communication that is self-generated in content, self-directed in emission, and self-selected in reception by many that communicate with many (ibid.). But, the problem is limited or no access of certain sections of people to new technology and even if the access exists, most of the people do not have the know-how of the processes involved. Even those who can use their mobile phones and computers, find it difficult to express themselves in their native language on Twitter and Facebook. Lack of literacy and reach of content in native languages is a big hurdle. As goes the famous adage by Arthur Brisbane “Use a Picture. It’s worth a thousand Words”, moving images or videos can be the tool to make social media a voice that everyone can understand and relate to. A video in native language can be understood by everyone and could be uploaded easily without getting involved in intricacies of typing. The video can be uploaded on WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. Therefore,

to find out the usefulness of online videos in mitigating inter-religious conflicts and building inter-religious peace, some case studies were selected.

Methods

Statistics show that more than 84 percent of internet users in India watch online video content (*Percentage on internet users who watch online video content on any device, by Country*, 2014). Hence only those case studies that have an online video, have been undertaken to conceptualize the research work. The case studies were taken as per convenience. Videos that talk about either Hindus or Muslims or both or connote Muslims, Hindus or both, have been preferred and videos containing hate speeches were not taken for the study.

Case Study 1: Kashmiri Muslims in Bandipore Celebrate Shivratri, want Pandits to return.

An ancient Shiv temple in Bandipore's Sumbal town in Kashmir on the banks of Jhelum hasn't had devotees on Shivratri for years. Not after Kashmiri Pandits fled the town twenty-five kilometres from Srinagar, during the peak of the militancy in the early nineties. But, 24th February 2017, Friday morning was different. Kashmiri Muslims living in the town turned up at the temple to celebrate Shivratri, the biggest festival on the calendar of Kashmiri Pandits. A local contractor, Imtiaz Ahmad led the prayers after dozens of young men scrubbed the temple floor clean; pouring water on the Shivling, the representation of the Hindu deity Shiva. He also offered fruits and sweets. This video (NDTV, 2017) received 4312 views, 329 likes and 69 dislikes. This video surely propagates message of inter-religious peace in times of turbulent Kashmir.

Case Study 2: Muzaffarnagar short film/Hindu-Muslim unity

A fictional video inspired by 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots was published on 13th September, 2016. A girl from the Hindu Jat community has been shown to be allegedly harassed in an eve teasing incident by one Muslim youth in Kawal village of Muzaffarnagar. In retaliation, Hindu relatives of the girl killed the Muslim youth. Then, two brothers of the girl were lynched by a Muslim mob when they tried to escape. This fictional videoshows that a Muslim youth instigate his community to kill a youth from the Jat Hindu community because the Jat youth was trying to molest a Muslim girl. The Muslim community gets infuriated and kidnaps the Jat youth and decides to kill him. In retaliation, the Hindu Jat community also kidnaps a member of Muslim community and both the communities decide to kill the wrongdoers before the hostile communities. A teacher from the village intervenes and asks both the communities to first find out the real fact and don't pay heed to false rumors. (Bhatt, 2013). In 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots, almost 60 people died ("Govt releases data of riot victims identifying religion", 2014). The video (BFF Films, 2016) was watched 224,650 times and received 23000 likes and 6400 dislikes. Certainly, such kind of videos even after being fictional helps in curbing the rumors spread on social media and disseminates the message of peace and harmony between hostile religious communities.

Case Study 3: Communal Harmony- Hindu & Muslim running a medical store together

The city of Sherkot in Bijnor district is known for its rich culture and profound heritage, which is a result of its great history. An example of this can be seen among the

owners of 'Ram- Rahim Medical Store' who present a picture of communal harmony in the city. The two friends opened their medical store based on relationship of trust. They hope to inspire others by setting an example of their friendship. Both respect each other's religious rituals and share a unique understanding. And they celebrate all festivals together. Good relations between them with Hindu and Muslim religious background, has played an important role in the growth of their business. They attribute the success of their business to the amicable relations between them. They have been running the medical store successfully, since 1997. The video (ANI News, 2015) received 9598 views and 530 likes, 8 dislikes. The video is a living testimony of inter-religious peace and harmony. It gives the message that Hindus and Muslims despite their differences can live together and work together.

Case Study 4: Surprising reactions of Indians when they meet a Pakistani

This four minute and 34 seconds video is a social experiment done by Dhaval, a member of Ride for Peace from Mumbai who presented himself as a Pakistani Muslim to cover the response of the local crowd. The video was shot at Connaught Place in New Delhi. In the video, Dhval is shown with a placard stating "I am from Pakistan but I love India as much as you do. Can I get free hugs?" Initially, the commuters read the placard and walked away. But, after some time it is seen that many boys, girls, women, men, children come and give hug to Dhaval. Many take selfies with Dhaval. The video (Ride for Peace, 2017) received more than 2.5 million views and 33000 likes whereas 2300 dislikes. The video connotes that despite the protagonist of the video being a Muslim and an outsider, he receives the warmth and affection from members of varied class, race, religion, nationalities and region.

Case Study 5: Brooke Bond Red Label - swadapnepanka, shree Ganesh apnepanka

This two minute and nineteen second video is basically an ad video by Brook Bond Red Label which is famous for its tea brand (Castting, 2018). The video is based on social harmony. In the video a customer enters a shop of Hindu idols and images. The shopkeeper explains the customer about the various interpretations of postures of Ganesha idols. The customer agrees to buy one of them but as soon as he comes to know about the religion of the shopkeeper, he shows his reluctance to buy the idol. The customer asks shopkeeper that despite being a Muslim why does he sell Hindu idols. Shopkeeper replies that it is also a kind of worship for him and God is one. Impressed by the shopkeeper's views, customer finally buys the idol. The video received 29,622 views and 654 likes whereas 345 dislikes.

Case Study 6: Tanishqekatvam

The one minute twenty seven second video launched by Tanishq famous for its jewellery brand created lot of controversy. The motive of the video was to promote its brand through the message of religious harmony. The ad is about a pregnant Hindu woman escorted by her Muslim mother-in-law to her baby shower ceremony (Bordoloi, 2020). The woman is surprised because this ceremony is not held in Muslim community. Her mother-in-law assuages her by saying that to keep her daughters happy any such tradition can be organized anywhere. This ad received more one million views and

26000 likes whereas 28000 dislikes. This ad was criticized by one quarter of the society calling it an issue of promotion of Love Jihad (Mirror Online, 2020). The ruckus compelled Tanishq to take down the advertisement from social media handles including Youtube channel. The particular video is a deleted video from Youtube.

Findings & Conclusion

Case studies 2 and 4 are social experiments done and shown on social media to counter the malicious and hateful religious content uploaded on various social networking sites. The kind of response case study 4 receives (2.5 million views) is a surprise element. The main character of video presents himself as a Muslim from Pakistan. These days India is having acrimonious relations with Pakistan and then too many people came forward to hug the person, truly shows that peace is an intrinsic element of Indian society. The kind of response these videos got through the number of views show that social media can also be used for peaceful purposes. Case studies 1 and 3 are glaring examples of peace and harmony between members of two major religious communities of the country.

Case studies 1 to 4 received much more likes than dislikes but case study 5 received substantial dislikes while case study 6 received more dislikes than likes. Interestingly this video of Tanishq is launched again with the message that it is the video which “the haters don’t want you to see”. Then also it was disliked more than was liked. The dislikes also show that the many users don’t like Muslims to be the main protagonist in the video to promote inter-religious harmony or peace instead it should be vice-versa, that is Hindu family should have been shown performing a ritual of a Muslim family in their home to please the Muslim woman (Mirror Online, 2020). Had the ad been shown with Hindu being the main protagonist, perhaps the ad won’t have faced that much blowback. For example the Surf excel ad that was viral some years ago (Ghosh, 2020). This kind of perception shift in social media users shows that times are changing. And now, more concepts like these are accepted only if they endorse the ideology of the current dispensation. The deletion of the video also shows that how vulnerable business enterprises become when they have to face anger and dissent of public. Again this kind of public resentment is seen in case study 5 where again the users don’t endorse Muslim as the chief protagonist. It can be inferred through the high number of dislikes for video of case study 5.

Founding Father of “Peace Studies”, Johan Galtung sees peace as a dynamic process. According to him “Peace is what we have when creative conflict transformation takes place non-violently”. Hereby peace is seen as a system characteristic, a context within which certain things can happen in a particular way. The proof of the pudding is in eating; the test of a marriage is when the going gets rough; the test of peace is in the ability to handle conflict” (Galtung, 1996). We see that social media is an interactive and dynamic platform because of the facility of posting/uploading images and videos on it. To counter the hate campaigns on social media, videos as mentioned above make a counter that induces *creative conflict transformation* to ensure building of peace between religious communities. However, social media comes with some limitations.

- Usage of social media is growing exponentially (14 percent in 2014) but still the amount of penetration, that is, percentage of population of India that uses internet is just 19 percent of the total population which is a really small number, considering the huge and diverse population of the country.
- Social media is still an urban phenomenon and requires skills. Rural or less educated people find it difficult to use internet, in contrast to television or radio which doesn't require any special skill, and moreover the use of television or radio is very handy compared to laptops or mobile applications.
- Internet connectivity and speed is also an issue. In remote villages and towns, the speed which could facilitate smooth running of internet is missing.

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The Significance of Nonviolent Communication as a 21st Century Literacy Skill: An Exploration

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Abstract

Breakdown in relationships, highly individualistic and materialistic culture, and inherent lack of social cohesion – all reflect the tensions of the modern society. In order to negotiate these complexities and contribute towards a harmonious coexistence, young people, in fact all citizens need to acquire different sets of 21st century skills. As communication is an integral part of all our relationships and social interactions, developing our communicative abilities is critical. It is in this regard; it is significant that individuals develop a healthy communication ecosystem. For evolution of a healthy communication ecosystem, the aim should be to practice nonviolent communication as part of our daily habits. This paper while delving on the importance of nonviolent communication as a 21st century skill will aim to look at perspectives of citizens around the world on how they can use nonviolent communication as part of daily habits. The perspectives will be captured from the reflection of participants doing an online course on nonviolent communication being offered by Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, New Delhi, India.

Keywords: Non-violent communication, inter-personal relationships, peace building processes, dialogue, coexistence

Introduction

At a time when the world is facing the rising challenges of hate speech, stereotyping and intolerance, a global effort is needed to counter these and initiate innovative plans to promote healthy communication amongst the citizenry. Speaking at the launch of the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres (2019) said, “Hate speech is in itself an attack on tolerance, inclusion, diversity and the very essence of our human rights norms and principles. More broadly, it undermines social cohesion, erodes shared values, and can lay the foundation for violence, setting back the cause of peace, stability, sustainable development and the fulfillment of human rights for all.”

The dimension of hatred or intolerance in our communication is not limited to just groups and communities trying to promote ill-will in the society, its ill-effects can be

observed even in relationships within families, friends, institutions and workplaces. Pressures of modern day society are a fertile ground for unhealthy communication and contribute to breakdown in relationships. The need for positive and healthy communication is the underlining thrust areas in the numerous workshops that the author has been conducting on nonviolent communication. The concern on how unhealthy communication impacts not only the relationships but even the health of individuals is reiterated by numerous participants in these workshops.

For instance, the following is the reflection of a trainee in a workshop on nonviolent communication that the author conducted: "I had a tip-off with my friend. I thought I was right and stuck to my stand; in fact, I got aggressive. He did the same. The inflexibility in our respective stand triggered further conflict. It destroyed our relationship. It is now close to two years that we haven't spoken to each other. But on introspection, I don't think the issue was big enough to lead to the end of a congenial relationship of over five years. I think I was too selfish and never tried to see his position." Such reflections are common in contemporary society where relationships become sour on trivial issues. In the backdrop of increasing individualized society where individuals try to outwit the other to race ahead, the principles of tolerance, understanding, ingenuity in handling differences and spirit of mutual co-existence seems to be declining.

In this context, Jardim and Da Silva (2018) talks on the concern of individualism in modern societies, "Young people live in an individualised society which has erected the individual as the focus of all investments, which has led to the weakening of the social ties and commitments between an "I" and another "We". It is a society marked by an individualistic culture that calls individuals to be autonomous, encouraging people to maximize their personal benefits.... the considerations of the common good are less relevant and the mandatory exhortations to live for each other or to devote to an end more than themselves no longer have social resonance." Jardim and Da Silva (2018) underline an extremely important issue of the 21st century which is the decline in the age old principles of living together and for each other. Individuals are more adept in looking for every opportunity to maximize their personal benefits. This is leading to breakdown in social ties in many parts of the world and encouraging a sense of disconnection even in families and between friends. In many instances, it leads to a culture of narcissism. It has also led to feelings that sustaining one's self-ego has to be primary objective. In short there seems to be a deficit of compassion, empathy, mutual respect and expressions of gratitude. One of the major effects of these deficits is the evolution of unhealthy communication and prevalence of negative energies not only amongst individuals but in the society at large.

Further, Robert Putnam in his book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000) talks about how modern society has suffered from a collapse of community. Putnam presents evidence that increasingly we are connecting with each other less meaningfully more than ever before. In such a scenario, one of the important ways in which people can get over with this problem of the collapse of the community according to Putnam is 'by coming together in unity for the good of our communities- we can generate trust, reciprocity, information flows and quality social cooperation'. Also

experiences suggest that on many occasions' psychological insecurity and dysfunctional relationships propels the desire to race towards materialism. In all probability, an individual who rush towards the acquisition of materialistic goods will further find themselves in the whirlpool of insecurities that could lead to its further aggravation.

An individual's insecurities, the race towards materialistic lifestyle and the climate of narcissism – all determines our social connections and interactions. Our communication ecosystem- whether our intrapersonal communication or our communication with others are all constructed by these factors of insecurities and narcissism. These determine the language and expressions we use- both verbal and nonverbal, our actions and thoughts. More often in such a scenario, individuals find their communication ecosystem to be unhealthy- they lack coherence, clarity and flexibility in their communicative acts. Their communication ecosystem remains cluttered and this affects their relationships with their social connections. In fact, for many establishing healthy communication is a forgotten art. It is in this context, that developing skills and capabilities to construct a healthy communication ecosystem has become a necessity in every society across the world. Such an ecosystem would comprise the tenets of both individual and society's well-being; it would help in strengthening relationships and contribute towards social cohesion. Such a communication ecosystem would aid in contributing to expansion of social capital and prosocial behaviour in the society. Hence for the construction of a healthy communication ecosystem it would be pertinent to encourage the practice of nonviolent communication right from a young age.

A discursive analysis of responses of participants from different countries on the reflection exercises in the online orientation course on nonviolent communication being offered by Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti will form the basis of the arguments on why nonviolent communication is an important life skill that needs to be practiced in daily lives. About 8000 participants have already done this free online course available in the Gandhi Smriti website. (<https://www.gandhismriti.gov.in/announcement/orientation-course-nonviolent-communication-0>) It is also available through the MyGov platform. (<https://www.mygov.in/task/orientation-course-nonviolent-communication/>)

An Insight into 21stCentury Skills

Wagner (2008) underlined seven survival skills for students to be prepared for 21st century life, work and citizenship. These included:

- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Collaboration and leadership
- Agility and adaptability
- Initiative and entrepreneurialism
- Effective oral and written communication
- Accessing and analysing information
- Curiosity and imagination

Meanwhile Delors Report of 1996 produced by the International Commission on Education for 21st Century (UNESCO, 1996) formulated four principles identified as the four pillars of education viz. Learning to Know; Learning to Do; Learning to Be and; Learning to Live Together. Similarly, the World Health Organization has articulated the following life skills needed for the 21st Century:

- Decision-making and problem-solving;
- Creative thinking and critical thinking;
- Communication and interpersonal skills;
- Self-awareness and empathy
- Coping with emotions and coping with stress.

In short, encapsulating the different skills enumerated by different commissions and institutions, it can be said that 21st century skills include learning skills, literacy skills and life skills. All the three skills together are essential for the holistic empowerment of young people and these give them the wherewithal to negotiate the complexities of different issues and concerns related to their daily lives. All of them are intertwined and aids in the process of growth and development of young people. For instance, young people need to develop their life skills like capacities to negotiate, make decisions, think critically, and nurture deep intrapersonal and interpersonal communication in order to handle the challenges of contemporary society. Further they need to develop their social skills in order to engage with others. Besides, enhancement of emotional skills is needed to express their feelings and emotions. Here it is important to note that all the 21st Century skills can be imbibed by individuals by being keen observer, develop in-depth understanding of different issues and phenomenon, commitment to practice the skills and experiencing change. In short, they are in the realm of experiential learning.

Significance of Nonviolent Communication as a 21st Century Skill

Just as the wave cannot exist for itself but must always participate in the swell of the ocean, so we can never experience our lives by ourselves but must always share the experiencing of life that takes place all around us. The ethics of reverence for life requires that all of us somehow and in something shall act as men towards other men. – Albert Schweitzer

Communication is considered as the fulcrum of an individual's social skill. Without adequate communicative capabilities it would be difficult for individuals to maintain and strengthen social ties. It is the key in all the three 21st Century Skills discussed- learning, life and literacy skills. The core point that comes up here is what should be the nature of communication skills that individuals should develop which leads to holistic empowerment of the individual and helps her/him to contribute to social cohesion and harmonious coexistence. The ill-effects of unhealthy communication ecosystem in the backdrop of contemporary materialistic and individualistic society have already been discussed above. Hence, in the pursuit of evolving a healthy communication ecosystem, the essence of practicing nonviolent communication comes to the fore.

Here it would be apt to understand the expansive explanation of nonviolent communication provided by senior Gandhian, Natwar Thakkar (Kundu, 2018):

“To me nonviolent communication literacy would mean how our communication efforts should be nonviolent; how our ability and capacity to communicate not only with ourselves but with our family and society be nonviolent in all aspects and overall how the entire process of communication whether between individuals, groups, communities and the world at large should be nonviolent in nature. This would entail deep understanding of the art and science of nonviolence and its centrality in all our daily actions. It’s not just verbal and nonverbal communication, nonviolent communication literacy would also include whether our thoughts and ideas are nonviolent or not. This would also mean how we can rid of our preconceived notions of individuals or groups with whom we want to communicate and stop evaluating them to suit our own ideas. More than often we are attuned to think in terms of moralistic judgments which may be our own constructions. By developing deep understanding of the art and science of nonviolence and integrating it in our communication practices we could get over with biased and moralistic judgments; this in turn could contribute to emotional bridge building.

Also, in order to establish on why nonviolent communication should be a 21st century skill, it would be pertinent to point out its different elements. These include (Kundu, 2020& 2020):

- Nonviolent Communication means complete lack of violence in the way we communicate with others.
- We should learn to communicate with ourselves and self-introspect.
- Use of appropriate and positive language
- Avoiding stereotypes in our communication efforts
- Avoid moralistic judgements
- Avoid evaluative language
- Role of mutual respect in communication
- The Power of Empathy
- Strong belief in the power of compassion
- Connecting with needs of others
- Importance of flexibility in our communication
- Practicing active listening skills
- Expressing gratitude

Here it would be pertinent to understand how people around the world try to link nonviolent communication to the acquisition of life skills. As this paper uses the perspectives of participants in the online course on nonviolent communication offered

by Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, New Delhi, it would apt to capture some of these perspectives. It may be noted that the course highlights the Gandhian approach to nonviolent communication and uses the explanation offered by Thakkar (Kundu, 2018) in the reading material. As many as 8000 responses were received and all these responses were looked for the purpose of issuing certificates for the completion of the course. About 3000 participants were cleared to be given the certificates.

ZawadiNdasima, Uganda: I have realized as I did the course that nonviolent communication has to be part of my daily routine. It has to be practiced and is practical. Using this will help me in my life and community.

Augustine Behemuka, Kenya: I have picked two practices that I hope can help me to incorporate the elements of nonviolent communication into my daily habits. I now introspect through daily reflection on my habits in the evening before retiring to bed. This will help me identify common patterns in my behavior; especially regarding the way I respond or react to tense situations during the course of the day. In my own life experience, this has been helpful in developing a sense of awareness to the reactions – verbal and non-verbal - made by the people I engage with. I may know if my message has been received positively or otherwise. Two, continue to practice active listening during my conversations with all people that I interact with at work, home and even public space.

Ishani Ghosh, India: This course helped me broadened my vision and taught me a lot of new things about this noble method of communication, which I now hope to make an integral part of my daily practice. It helped me grasp the importance of words and communication. It is really surprising to know how language can help to establish a bridge of connection between individuals, and yet also destroy such a bridge, if not used carefully. I learnt to avoid the use of evaluative language and moralistic judgments. I now understand the importance of spending time speaking to our inner selves, to find creative solutions of our feelings and needs, and also to connect better with others around us.

ToksonbaevaKanimetAbdisalamovna, Kyrgyzstan: Exposure to the use of nonviolent communication helps us handle issues that may arise and also contributes to the strengthening of relationships.

Girish Karadali, India: Nonviolent communication means communication with politeness, respectful and without hurting others sentiments. In recent times, I get aggressive many times and talk in foul language out of frustration. But now realize that I can handle it if I listen what is coming from other person and how I can make him / her understand in nonviolent way.

Babli Kumari, India: As a student of nonviolent communication, I can discern between real expression of emotions and statements which are in fact description of what we are thinking not what we are feeling. Our selection of words and the way we communicate decides whether we are able to make / retain / resist our connections and togetherness in the society. Practicing nonviolent communication will help me to make

best version of myself in the society, it will help to build bridges with others for the healthy and peaceful environment.

Padma Prasad, India: If we practice nonviolent communication, we will be able to encourage mutual respect and it will contribute towards our overall well-being.

Sohini Jana, India: I intend to make non-violent communication as a part of my daily habits by consciously engaging with the following steps:

- Becoming mindful of judgemental thoughts and responses when listening to someone
- Avoiding evaluative statements
- Focusing more on prioritizing the relationship rather than deciding to prove whether or not someone is right or wrong
- Empathizing with the other's emotions by accepting that they have a different story than ours
- Expressing gratitude and daily maintaining a gratitude journal
- Listening to learn
- Respecting the speaker by attentive body language as well as active learning
- Practicing appreciative enquiry in order to create a safe space for communication and helping the other person feel heard
- Focusing more on connecting with the other person while appreciating differences and disagreements
- Engaging in introspection to keep note of my own prejudices and avoid reactions based on stereotyping
- Becoming mindful of the language which I am using while communicating

An analysis of the reflection exercises reveals the perspectives of the participants on the communication ecosystem that needs to be nurtured. More than 80 per cent of the participants felt that nonviolent communication contributes to their well-being, is an essential life-skill that contributes towards harmonious coexistence, encourages mutual respect, understanding and greater acceptance of each other's position. The analysis also reveals how use of nonviolent communication contributes to the plugging of deficit in compassion, empathy, gratitude and respect. It also points on the significance of constructive intrapersonal communication, self-awareness and how we introspect.

In the backdrop of the explanation of Thakkar (Kundu, 2018), the basic elements of nonviolent communication and the analysis of the responses to the reflection exercises received by Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, it would be pertinent to delve on its centrality as a 21st century skill:

- An important aspect of nonviolent communication is the understanding of human interdependence. Nonviolent communication is a holistic communication approach involving human beings, nature and all other living beings. It underlines the importance of cosmocentric approach to human nature. In this context, nonviolent

communication helps in guiding individuals to harmonious communication with not just other human beings, but also with nature and other living beings. In the context of the present concerns of climate change and environmental degradation, it is essentially that human beings learn the *'art and science of communication harmoniously with nature and other living beings'*.

- The Buddha had eloquently said, "Words have both the power to destroy and heal. When words are both true and kind, they can change our world." The words that we use determine our social interactions; if it is not apt or violent it can destroy relationships. It is the foundation of the process of social cohesion. Hence, it is important to delve deeply on the type of words that are we are using in our daily; it is an important skill to be learnt. Similarly, our nonverbal communication is extremely important as aggressive posturing turns-off people with whom we are communicating. Similarly, in the contemporary societies, it is important to control our mind and thoughts. Negative thoughts lead to negative emotions. Our thoughts help us to shape our communication with the outer world.
- Constructive intrapersonal communication- both our self-talk and inner dialogues is an important skill to learnt. This leads us to the essence of understanding the self and increasing self-awareness. When we start communicating with ourselves, we will develop patience and before arguing with others, we will start reflecting. We can practice nonviolent communication by observing our inner self and deeply listening to our self-talk. This will help us to look for creative solutions of our feelings and needs and also on how we connect with others. Also it is important to practice self-empathy and self-compassion to expand the scope of one's self-awareness.
- The five pillars of Gandhian nonviolence are respect, understanding, acceptance, appreciation and compassion. These pillars form the foundational architecture of nonviolent communication. Learning to respect each other, learning to understanding other's point of view, developing the attitude and patience to accept different views and ideas and learning to imbibe positive appreciation are all essential life skill education that are critical in the 21st century.
- Nonviolent communication helps us to develop pluralism in our process of communication. On many occasions we get entrapped in different stereotypes that hinders in the process of mutual respect and openness. We tend to get entangled in cobwebs of different labels, identities and narratives. All these leads to problems that many of our societies are facing- hate speech, intolerance and xenophobia. Practicing nonviolent communication brings plurality in our thinking and communication and helps get over with the stereotypes.
- In the backdrop of the complexities created due to the materialistic and individualistic society, it is generally pointed out that there is empathy deficit in our contemporary societies. This had also been underlined by the former President of USA, Barack Obama who had said in 2008, "I think we should talk more about our empathy deficit, our ability to put ourselves in someone else's shoes , to see the world through those who are different from us- the child who's hungry, the laid-off

steelworker, the immigrant cleaning our dorm room..We live in a culture that discourages empathy, a culture that too often tells us that our principal goal in life is to be rich, thin, young, famous, safe and entertained.” Cultivating skills to be empathetic hence is a critical skill to nurture and is part of the overall process of nonviolent communication.

- Similarly, the ability to act compassionately is another important skill that needs to be developed as it helps to recognize our shared humanity. It helps individuals to elevate themselves to a higher plane and can actually help in reducing our own sufferings. Martin Luther King eloquently explains the true meaning and value of compassion and nonviolence which he says is realized when individuals are able to see the ‘enemy’s’ point of view and are able to assess their own weaknesses from these views. He feels if individuals are mature they will be able to learn and grow from the wisdom of those who hold opposing views.
- Expression of gratitude is another important element of nonviolent communication. The more individuals’ express gratitude the wider their perspectives will become. When we learn the habit of expressing gratitude we will be able to exercise more positive emotions. Several studies point out on how by deliberately practicing gratitude we can overcome the negative effects of materialism.
- Here it needs to be noted that practicing altruistic tendencies like empathy, compassion, kindness and gratitude helps individuals reduce their stress, strengthen their relationships and encourage prosocial behaviour. Promoting prosocial behaviour is an extremely component of contributing towards social cohesion.
- Another important element of nonviolent communication is active and deep listening skills. Listening skills is an important attribute of human growth both at the individual level and the societal level. The more we develop our listening skills the more we will be enhancing our engagement with others and social connections.
- Connecting with needs of one self and others is another important life skill that individuals should try to develop. Much of the conflicts that surfaces dissolve easily when we learn the art of connecting to the genuine needs of others.

Conclusion

From the discussions above especially capturing the views of the participants of the course on nonviolent communication, it is adequately established that acquiring skills in nonviolent communication is important for all to be able to handle the complexities of contemporary societies. It needs to be termed as an essential 21st century skill and hence needs to be introduced right from school level. It is an important attribute for contributing towards individual self-awareness, social cohesion and overall towards a harmonious coexistence.

In fact, keeping its importance in mind, the Central Board of Secondary Education in India has joined hands with the Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, New Delhi to offer its free online course on nonviolent communication for students, principals, teachers and parents. (<http://cbseacademic.nic.in/NonViolence.html>). About 72000 participants have registered for the course through this platform.

Finally, the essence of nonviolent communication is intertwined in the human ability to forgive and the spirit of reconciliation. In a world when we are not willing to forgive others even for the slightest mistake, it had been profoundly expressed by Nelson Mandela as he was leaving prison after being there for 27 years. *“As I stand before the door of my freedom, I realize that if I do not leave my pain, anger, and bitterness behind me, I will still be in prison. Holding grudges does not make you strong. It makes you bitter. Forgiveness does not make you weak, it sets you free. Don’t imprison yourself forever.”*

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