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Lokaratna is the e-journal of Folklore Foundation, Bhubaneswar. It is a peer-reviewed International online open access journal with ISSN: 2347-6427. The purpose of the journal is to explore the rich cultural traditions of India for a wider readership. Any scholar across the globe interested to contribute to any aspect of folklore is welcome. This volume contains articles on culture, folklore, literature, and language pedagogy.

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4. References should be on a separate page. Use References not Works Cited or Bibliography
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From the Desk of the Chief Editor

In recent years, humanity has been increasingly confronted with conflict, war, intolerance, and relentless competition for territories and power. These are not just headlines in our daily news cycle; they are pressing questions about the kind of world we aspire to inhabit. War has become the agenda of many nations—where the powerful threaten the powerless, and the powerless, too, dream of confronting the powerful by achieving atomic power. Human life has no meaning before the atomic power.

This is not merely a struggle between states or statesmen. This is a challenge to the democracy and power by another group of people seeking power dismantling state authority through either by gun power, or by religious fanaticism. Ordinary citizens—children, women, elders, and working men—have become victims of devastation, trapped in a tragic “no man’s land.” Families have been wiped out; children turned orphans; women widowed; men bereft of their loved ones. The destruction we witness today goes far beyond the imagination of Homer’s *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, or Vyasa’s *Mahabharata*. In those epics, wars were largely confined to soldiers and rulers, leaving ordinary subjects relatively untouched. Today’s wars, however, make no such distinction: citizen or soldier, young or old, rich or poor, male or female—none are spared. The atomic bomb does not discriminate between friend and foe. Human history has never before seen such indiscriminate devastation.

In this perilous age, each individual is made aware—sooner or later—that we are all sitting upon a ticking arsenal. To remain unconscious of this reality may feel like innocence, but to be conscious of it is to carry the grave responsibility of global citizenship. Modern multimedia

has already reached the remotest corners—from Siberia to the southern hemisphere, from the forests of Africa to the tribal villages of central India—making war and its consequences visible everywhere.

At such a juncture, scholars and writers have a profound role to play. They can resist injustice and war with the strength of thought, and discover sources of peace, coexistence, and love within literature, folklore, and cultural traditions. Indian literature—oral and written—has long upheld truth, nonviolence, reverence for nature, and the spirit of peaceful coexistence. The land of Buddha and Gandhi stands as a testament to these values. Despite despair, the people of this country have always sought to live with dignity and resilience, refusing to surrender to fate.

It is, therefore, the responsibility of writers, scholars, scientists, linguists, and artists to search for pathways to peace, tolerance, and harmony, and to share them with the world. They must draw upon India's rich cultural and literary heritage, which has consistently offered a philosophy of truth, nonviolence, and human solidarity.

We call upon writers and thinkers at this moment to explore, articulate, and propagate the timeless wisdom of Indian culture—so that its message of peace and coexistence continues to guide the world, regardless of how modernity interprets or misunderstands it.

Mahendra Kumar Mishra

Editorial



Life Paths: Folk Culture as Functional Artefacts

Folk culture is a vital repository of a community's identity, encompassing its art, craft, music, dance, festivals, and rituals. These elements serve far more than entertainment function; they are deeply embedded with social, ritualistic, and economic purposes that sustain the community's structure and values. For instance, rituals are integral to social and religious life, often addressing core human concerns. The Karma festival of Western Odisha is a prime example. It is observed not for mere celebration but to appease Goddess *Karamsani*, seeking her protection from diseases that threaten people, crops, and livestock during the vulnerable rainy season. By performing rituals to ward off misfortune and ensure a good harvest, the community reinforces collective responsibility and fosters unity and cooperation among villagers. Similarly, practices like the jhoti (ritual art) drawn during the *Bhai Jiuntia* ritual transcend decoration. This art is a sacred invocation, a visual prayer to deities for the longevity and well-being of younger brothers, illustrating how aesthetic expression is inseparable from spiritual petition. The objects of folk culture are fundamentally functional. A visit to a tribal museum reveals this intrinsic practicality. Items like fishing nets, bows, and arrows were not created as artifacts but as essential tools for survival. Each object served a direct economic and occupational function, forming the basis of livelihood and representing a practical wisdom

passed down through generations. Thus, folk culture is a holistic system where belief, art, and utility are closely integrated, preserving the community's way of life.

Many articles in this issue of *Lokaratna* focus on the art, craft, festivals, and music of folk communities. They examine festivals, songs, musical traditions, and other cultural practices in contemporary contexts. For instance, in the article “*Fusion of Tradition and Innovation in the Artistic Expressions of Durga Puja*,” Ushasi Bhattacharya and Sujay Kumar Mandal analyze the innovations that have emerged in the rituals, decorations, and processes of Durga Puja celebrations. Dr Atrayee Kashyap in “*Socio-Cultural Significance of Folk Musical Tradition: Weaving the Tapestry of Identity of the Deori Community of Assam*” explores the socio-cultural significance of the folk musical traditions of the Deori community in Assam. Moulima Chatterjee, in her article “*When Oceans Tune Human Being: A Musical Case Study on Some Famous Bengali Folk Songs*,” studies folk songs known as *bhattiyali* (ebb songs) and highlights their musical dimensions. In “*Mankirdias: A Study on the Silent Erosion of the Socio-Cultural Heritage of Ethno-Nomadic Tribe*,” Dr. Bijayalaxmi Dash foregrounds the socio-cultural life of the Mankirdia tribe of Odisha and demonstrates how their traditional ways of life have been altered in the wake of modern social change.

The *Literature* section contains three articles, each engaging with cultural dimensions within literary and cultural studies. Dr. Pradip Kumar Panda’s article, “*Myths, Tradition and a Pilgrimage towards Liberation in Raja Rao’s The Serpent and the Rope & Kanthapura*,” foregrounds the interrelation of myth, tradition, and the quest for spiritual liberation as explored in Raja Rao’s renowned novels *The Serpent and the Rope* and *Kanthapura*. The article “*Illusion or Devotion? Transcendental Love and the Subaltern Woman in Hindi Cinema Posters*” by Pallawi Narayan and Dr Mahesh Kumar Mishra examines the representation of transcendental love and the subaltern woman in Hindi cinema posters. The third article in this

section, “*Rivers in Odia Literature*” by Dr Swapna Rani Singh, investigates cultural perceptions and literary representations of rivers in Odia literature.

The *Language Pedagogy* section comprises five articles that address issues related to language education in India’s multilingual and multicultural contexts. Professor Revathi Srinivas’ article “Cohesive Devices in Undergraduate Argumentative Writing: A Comparative Analysis of Topic-Induced Variation” looks at argumentative essays written by undergraduate students in Telangana and assesses grammatical cohesive devices used by them. On the basis of this analysis, the article argues for the need of an instruction in “reference management, conjunction diversification, and task-scaffolding writing curricula through genre specific cohesive strategy training.” Swagatika Panigrahi and Dr. Debasish Mohapatra’s article, “*Effective Communication in English: A Key to Academic and Professional Success in Paramedical Sciences,*” investigates the role of English proficiency in enhancing the academic writing of learners. In “*Investigating the Impact of Interactive Decisions on Student Participation and Learning,*” Professor Padmini Shankar and Niranjana Kumar explore how interactive decision-making influences student participation and learning outcomes. Dr Mahananda Pathak and Sai Sri Nandan’ Dosapati’s article “Cultivating Agreeableness: An Analysis of Socio-Emotional Elements in Andhra Pradesh’s 10th Grade English Language Textbooks” deals with the socio-emotional elements in 10th grade English language textbooks. Dr Pratima Sahu’s article, “Technological Solutions for Multilingual Education in India: Opportunities and Obstacles,” examines the ways in which technological innovations can both facilitate and challenge the implementation of multilingual education. In the Book Review section, Shradhanjali Mahapatra reviews the volume *The Unreachable World of Gopinath Mohanty*, edited by Anand Mahanand and Pramod K. Das.

In bringing out this issue of *Lokaratna*, we have received the support of many individuals. We extend our sincere thanks to the contributors for their articles and to the

editorial team for their careful review. We are pleased to welcome our new editorial team member, Dr Snigdha Subhrasmita, and express our gratitude for her meticulous editing and dedicated work. We remain especially grateful to Mark Turin for his generosity in consistently uploading the issues. Although this issue was delayed due to the time required for receiving articles, we are delighted to now present it to our readers, with the hope that it will be received with appreciation.

Anand Mahanand

Executive Editor

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FOLKLORE

Fusion of Tradition and Innovation in the Artistic Expressions of Durga Puja

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University of Kalyani, West Bengal

Abstract

Durga Puja is an annual festival celebrated with pomp and grandeur in India, especially in Bengal. It holds a special place in the cultural landscape and modern trends of Bengal, forming a vibrant tapestry of history, art, community bonding, and socio-economic significance that enjoys global recognition. Its elaborate rituals, artistic creations, and spirit of communal harmony make it a compelling subject for in-depth study and documentation. This paper explores the relevance of the festival by examining the harmony between tradition and modern adaptation, including eco-friendly practices, thematic concerns, and technological integration such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Networking Technology, and Virtual Reality (VR) in today's cultural diversity. It first studies technological innovations in the construction and decoration of pandals, idol-making craftsmanship, and the performance of artistic festivals through music, dance, and drama. The cultural significance of recent eco-friendly practices, technological integration, and thematic design in modern Durga Puja are also examined. The research investigates how Durga Puja reflects cultural changes from traditional to modern perspectives through innovative approaches. It analyses the impact of eco-friendly practices on environmental sustainability and eco-consciousness. The blending of tradition and innovation is further explored in terms of generating revenue, creating employment opportunities, and fostering business growth. Finally, this paper highlights the cultural impact of Durga Puja as a bridge between tradition and modernity, showing how the festival preserves its core values while embracing change.

Keywords: durga puja, tradition, innovation, cultural significance, eco-friendly practices

1. Introduction

Durga Puja, a significant festival in India, is rich in artistic elements. Some key artistic elements associated with Durga Puja are pandal decoration, idol-making, idol decoration, lighting, floral decoration, painting, performing arts, etc. All these are associated with the rich cultural heritage of Bengal. They promote artistic expression and captivate global spectators.

Durga Puja has been recognized as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (ICHH) by UNESCO in 2021 by embodying tradition, spirituality, and artistic expression. It is the 1st Asian festival to receive this prestigious recognition. Apart from this glory, this festival brings international tourists to Bengal to witness the grandeur of the Durga Puja. Every year, the visual spectacles captivate many tourists from diverse backgrounds. This cultural carnival includes music, culinary, craft, and performing arts. The traditional, mythological, and spiritual aspects of Durga Puja co-exist with contemporary Durga pujas.

In the contemporary theme-based pujas, there is a recent trend of technological integration with the traditional practices of idol-making and pandal construction. This research article explores how Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Virtual Reality (VR) are integrated into traditional idol-making, pandal decoration, and performing rituals associated with Durga Puja. By examining the role of AI and VR in facilitating the development of eco-friendly Durga idols and pandals, this paper seeks to explore the potentiality of these technologies in maintaining environmental sustainability and preserving cultural heritage.

This research also discusses the application of AI technology for analysing past trends and current preferences for pandal decoration, eco-friendly material selection, generating unique designs, crowd management, preventing unexpected breakdowns, and so on. It also explores the application of VR simulation for visualization, virtual tours, and so on. This research aims

to explore a comprehensive understanding of blending of modern technological integration with traditional practices of Durga Puja.

This paper explores how blending ancient traditions and modern adaptations contributes to the festival's cultural relevance. In this paper, we explore how the celebration of Durga Puja reflects not only religious fervour but also environmental concern, social values, beliefs, cultural integration and economic aspects. By examining the influence of tourism and the local economy, this paper highlights the significance of Durga Puja in contemporary society. In short, this paper explores how tradition, cultural heritage, and modernity are woven together in the artistic expression of Durga Puja.

Finally, this research sheds light on the cultural significance of the artistic expressions of Durga Puja where ancient tradition mingles with modern adaptations. The artists are the unsung heroes who bring life into this festival of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Through their artistry artists transmit the traditions to new generations. Their innovation and creativity attract visitors from far and wide. As we celebrate the grandeur of Durga Puja, the role of artists is recognized and their impact on different aspects of society. This research contributes to understanding the coexistence of tradition and modernity through the artistic expressions of Durga Puja. It embraces modern adaptations as well as preserves the rich culture of Bengal.

2. Literature Review

The history of the iconography of the Durga idol has been changed since the 5th century CE. Since the Gupta Period onwards, there have been so many changes in the forms of Durga idols. In the first phase, the form of the Durga idol was like the ten-armed deity slaying Mahishasura in the form of a buffalo. This type of idol is found in the temples built in the

Chalukya Dynasty. Then, in the second phase, we see the transformation of Mahishasura into having a human body with a buffalo head. These idols are found in the temples built in *Chalukya* and *Rashtrakuta* Dynasties. Then, in the third phase, we see human Mahishasura popularly in Odisha temples. In the fourth phase, an eight-armed Durga slaying Mahishasura emerged from a lifeless buffalo. This evidence is found in the temples of the *Chalukya* and *Hoysala* Dynasties. In the last form, ten-armed Durga slaying Mahishasura emerged from a dead buffalo in the centre, and her children surrounded her. This form evolved in Bengal during the 15th – 16th century. This history of modern Durga worship in Bengal and its socio-cultural influence is discussed by Majumder (2021).

The last form of the Durga idol has been transformed over the centuries through cultural influences, particularly during the colonial period and under zamindari patronage. Das and Basak (2021) and Das (2021) have discussed the shifts in traditional idol-making practices in Kumartuli. Historical records indicate that the kings of Krishnanagar recruited six artisans from present-day Bangladesh to craft idols for their familial worship. Following this royal initiative, the artisan community began settling in Krishnanagar under the royal family's patronage. Later, the zamindars of Shobhabazar supported certain artists in establishing an artist colony in Calcutta. From this period onward, local zamindars and wealthy merchants began celebrating Durga Puja to gain favor with British officials. Das and Basak (2021) and Sinha et al. (2023) have traced this transition from Bangladesh to Krishnanagar and ultimately to Kumartuli.

The innovation in the creation of idols started to grow over time. Generally, three types of Durga Puja are celebrated in Bengal: familial Durga puja, community-based Durga Puja, and Sponsored Durga Puja. In familial Durga Puja, a particular style is followed, such as drawing the eyes, making a face, idol decoration and ornamentation, temple decoration, and arranging

the deity with the other gods, goddesses, and Mahishasura. Rituals are given priority, and they are piously maintained. With the advent of community-based Durga Puja, rituals become flexible as these are arranged collectively by several families in the same. Innovation in idol-making and pandal decoration started at this time. The grandeur of the Durga Puja celebration reaches maturity with the commercialization of Durga Puja sponsored by some influenced person. This commercialization generates a competitive market regarding the creation and innovation related to Durga Puja. These are discussed by Ghosh (2012).

A religious festival has been transformed into a public art and enterprise through the evolution of Durga Puja from the elite family to the '*Sarbojanin Durgotsab*' (belonging to all). There is an entire shift from traditional worship to contemporary theme-based culture. This shift is associated with pandal structure, idol making, the outer environment, decoration, colour, lighting, music, and cultural performance. This shift has been discussed by Ray (2017) and Guha-Thakurta (2015). This event captivates global tourists irrespective of religion, class, and creed. In this cultural carnival, Kolkata is turned into a public art exhibition where people are connected with art and culture. This is also discussed by Sinha (2023).

Research has been conducted regarding the present socio-economic scenario of the potters of Bengal. The role of urbanization, labour migration, women empowerment in idol-making, environmental issues, public policies, and their implications on Durga Puja have been researched by Sinha (2023). Durga Puja has immense sociological significance beyond the barrier of religion. It is a powerful expression of creativity, innovation and a unique blend of modernity and spirituality as we experience in urban space. This sociological significance has been discussed by Rai (2022).

Research has been conducted regarding the traditional technology used by the idol makers and its modification. Modifying traditional technology helps increase production due to the

advancement of modernization and globalization. This technological integration has been explored by Paul, Das, and Mandal (2018). ICT is important in creating, forming, and maintaining a Diaspora identity among the Kolkata intellectuals. Modern technologies help the Durga Puja ritual to become a major icon for Diaspora unity and identity among the Kolkata intellectuals. This is discussed by Andersson (2007).

Proper organization of Durga Puja may result in the economic growth of India as well as the benefit of the people. Durga Puja is the best time to promote the culture and tradition of Bengal worldwide. Linking this festival with various centrally sponsored schemes may benefit the Indian economy, especially tourism. Further, it may be beneficial for the common people. Pant (2019) discusses how proper organization of Durga Puja may result in the economic growth of India as well as the benefit of the people by using correct policy making.

Lack of education and awareness, poor infrastructure, lack of accessibility to market, financial constraints and lack of technological knowledge are the major challenges encountered by the local artisans of Raghurajpur Heritage Village of Odisha. Role of middleman and issues of copyright are also found as major obstacles on the way. Due to some political and administrative reasons, the village is still in an under-developed state despite national recognition as a heritage village. These challenges are discussed by Bal (2023). The author has suggested effective steps particularly from the state Government in association with the central Government to act upon it towards promotion of the local tourism and local economy.

Durga Puja is the celebration of Bengali tradition and culture. West Bengal has its own variations of performing some customs. It is visible that each ritualistic performance reflects the Binary category or Gender role of patriarchal society. Further, there is the cultural assimilation of the ritual of *Kumari puja* in North India and in South India performed on the 9th day of Navaratri and Bengal's *Kumari puja* on the 3rd day (*Mahastami*) of Durga Puja.

Significance of some special rituals such as *Dhunuchi Naach*, *Arati*, *Kolabou* or *Navapatrika*, *Kumari puja*, and *Dashami Bhog* are explored by Saha (2021).

Durga Puja has a close relationship with agriculture and ecological sustainability. Various rituals of Durga Puja are connected to agriculture, fertility, prosperity, protection of crops and sustenance of livelihood. The timing of Durga Puja is related to the interval of agricultural cycles. The coming and going of goddess Durga is also related to agriculture. The use of agricultural bi-products in idol-making and decorations provides environmental sustainability. These are explored by Bhattacharya and Mandal (2024).

3. Research Gap and Objectives

By reviewing these previous works, we have identified some areas where new perspectives can be explored. These are as followed:

- (i) Cultural and social impact of Durga Puja through innovations.
- (ii) Blending of tradition and innovation in the artistic expressions of Durga Puja focusing on pandals, idols and celebrations.
- (iii) Technological integration in eco-friendly and sustainable Durga Puja.
- (iv) Economic influence of Durga Puja in tourism, revenue generation and employment opportunities.

The objectives of this study are listed below.

1. Examine how Durga Puja reflects cultural and social changes from traditional to modern perspective through innovations.
2. Explore the innovations in the traditional concepts of Durga Puja, focusing on pandals, idol-making, and folk celebration.
3. Investigate inherent traditional values on the contemporary eco-friendly practices, technological integration, and thematic design for the above tasks.

4. Observe revenue generation and employment opportunities by blending tradition and innovation in Durga Puja.

4. Amalgamation of Tradition and Innovation in the Artistic Expressions of Durga Puja

There are a lot of artistic expressions of Durga Puja. Here, we focus on three: pandal, idol, and festival. These three elements are the traditional elements. They are part of every Durga puja from ancient times. However, the flavour of these three elements has changed over time. In this section, we will discuss the innovative ideas used in recent times to present these three elements.

4.1 Innovative and Artistic Elements Involved in the Durga Puja Pandals

The pandal setup of Durga Puja must have an artistic involvement to captivate the attention of the spectators. The architectural designs of the pandals range from traditional to contemporary innovative themes. Often, well-known historical, popular, and heritage architectures are temporarily created by skilled craftsmen, attracting numerous spectators.

Skilled artisans create pandals modelling temporary but panoramic sculptures present worldwide using diverse materials such as bamboo, soil, hay, clay, jute, paper, cloth, glass, wood, metal etc. They express mythological stories, religious motifs, folk tales, historical incidents, cultural changes, environmental awareness, social issues, and eco-consciousness. Vibrant colours, embellishments, and floral decoration also add visual appeal, enhancing the festive atmosphere. Various designs of pandals are shown in Figure 1 as traditional pandal (a), theme based pandal such as promoting agriculture (b), promoting sports (c), and promoting cottage industry (d)



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

Figure 1(a) shows a traditional pandal, decorated with mythological embodiments. Figure 1(b) shows a traditionally structured pandal modelled on a granary. This pandal is decorated with the things associated with agriculture. Figure 1(c) is a theme based pandal. It shows the importance of physical sports and condemns video games. This pandal is decorated with various sports accessories. Figure 1(d) promotes cottage industry and folk craft. The pandal is decorated with various folk crafts and products of cottage industry.

Traditionally framed pandals are decorated with modern innovations. Similarly modern innovative pandals are decorated with folk-arts and products of cottage industry. Pandals modelled on famous temples are internally decorated with modern technology. Example: a pandal is decorated with earthen lamps. But small LED and water lamps are used instead of fire in the earthen lamp. Again, innovative pandals are decorated with agricultural products,

cottage industry products, etc. Lighting plays a chief role in enhancing the aesthetic elements of pandal decoration. Both traditional earthen lamps and modern LEDs create a magical atmosphere that influences the visual impact of the pandal (Figure 2).



Fig 2: Sustainable lighting in the Durga puja pandal

Recently, creative artists who have adapted to modern software are using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to generate unique designs for Durga puja pandals {Figure 3 (a)}. With the help of AI, puja organizers analyse past trends and current preferences for pandal decoration. AI systems also control traffic flow, manage crowds during the festival, and ensure a smooth and safe celebration. Sometimes, we hear about the closing of famous pandals due to overcrowding and malfunctioning of various installations. The use of AI to prevent unexpected breakdowns and proper maintenance is increasing yearly. These AI operated technologies are reaching visitors through mobile apps.

Virtual Reality (VR) is also applied to set up high-budget Durga Puja pandals. VR also provides virtual tours for people who cannot visit the pandals physically {Figure 3 (b)}. It has helped people to participate in the traditional rituals associated with Durga Puja remotely.



(a)

(b)

Figure 3 (a) shows a Durga puja pandal designed by AI before the actual construction. Figure 3 (b) shows a visitor watching virtual Durga puja through Metaverse.

In the familial Durga Pujas, the extended family members distant from their roots participate in the puja rituals and feel the essence from anywhere in the world through AI, VR, WWW, and many other advanced technologies. By integrating such advanced technologies into the setup of the Durga Puja celebration, Puja organizers offer more accessibility to the visitors. Thus, this modern technology integration helps us preserve tradition and make it reachable to remote people, new generations, physically challenged people, lazy people, etc.

These artistic expressions of craftsmanship, creativity, fusion of tradition and innovation make Durga Puja pandals not merely religious spaces but also captivate and engage participants from diverse groups.

4.2. Innovations in the Material, Colour and Design of Idol and its Decoration

Art of idol-making materials includes clay, paper, shola, cloth, wood, bamboo, colours, etc. Clay is a primary and traditional material for creating the idols of Durga {Figure 4 (a)}. Symbolically, the clay stands for Mother Earth by emphasizing the eco-friendly aspect of the festival. Nowadays, artists are shifting from synthetic materials to eco-friendly materials in idol

making and its decoration. This shift aims to reduce environmental impact and maintain artistic quality by enhancing their aesthetic appeal. Various vegetables, crop grains, jute sticks, cane sticks, coconut shells, rice powder, natural dyes from various flowers and leaves, floral colours, and paints are innovatively used in pandal and idol decoration {Figure 4 (b)}. These natural materials contribute to Durga Puja for eco-friendly and sustainable practice. This shift aims to reduce environmental impact and maintain artistic quality by enhancing their aesthetic appeal.

The use of diverse materials, vibrant colours, and decorations appeals to visual aspects and reflects the festival's religious, cultural, historical, social and artistic essence. These artistic elements preserve the tradition as well as promote innovation and eco-consciousness. In this way the artistic expressions of Durga Puja act as a bridge between traditional materials blended with modern innovative ideas.

Nowadays, AI and VR are used in high-budget pujas with a focus on eco-friendly practices by promoting sustainable decoration, and decreasing waste. AI helps artists to design idols and decorations with maximum structural integrity while using minimum material usage for high-budget puja {Figure 4 (d)}. AI analyses the impact of various idol-making materials on the environment and suggests eco-friendly materials. Additionally, AI suggests the scope for recycling from previous years and the reuse of those materials for current and upcoming years by reducing the need for new resources {Figure 4 (c)}. Besides, lights, sounds, and temperatures are adjusted through AI-operated devices according to the environmental conditions.



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

Figure 4 (a) is a traditional Durga idol in *daker saj*. Figure 4 (b) is a theme-based Durga idol with eco-friendly materials like plants, vegetables, floral petals, floral dyes, earthen pots etc. Figure 4 (c) is a theme-based Durga idol made from recycled materials of plastic and metals. Figure 4 (d) is the image of an AI generated Durga idol in outer space before the actual construction.

Using VR simulation, artists visualize designs before construction and change accordingly. VR shows the characteristics of the eco-friendly materials used for idol-making and pandal framing. It previews the final construction. Artists visualize the reusing of recycled materials through VR simulation.

4.3 Innovative Folk Celebrations during Durga Puja Festival

Music, dance, and other performing arts are integral to celebrating Durga Puja, which engages participants. In familial Durga Puja, the devotees sing bhajans devotional hymns to express reverence and seek blessings from the goddess. These devotional melodies evoke a spiritual atmosphere, fostering a sense of devotion among the worshipers. *Sarbojanin* Puja organizers arrange various musical concerts. Renowned artists are invited; amateur artists also perform. All these add cultural richness and aesthetic depth to the celebration.

Traditional songs and dances are performed with innovative twists during Durga Puja to create a festive spirit. Traditional compositions are blended with folk music or contemporary rhythms, adding dynamism to the performances. Performers use vibrant costumes and thematic choreography that create a unique fusion of traditional art forms and innovative and festive energy. These performances depict various mythological stories as well as various contemporary social issues. These performances entertain the people through their traditional forms and create awareness among them through their innovative ideas.



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

Fig 5: Folk performance (a) Musical performance (b) Dhunuchi nach (c) Tribal dance and (d) Puppet show in Durga Puja

Besides music and dance, various recitations, dramas, skits, street plays, and puppet shows are performed during this festival in both familial and *Sarbojanin* Durga Puja. These public performances not only entertain the visitors. They also enrich our cultural heritage. These performances promote a sense of unity and artistic pleasure. These performances also restore some lost culture which were prevalent in the previous era.

In performing music, dance, drama, and other performing arts, AI and VR are widely used to enhance creativity, accessibility, and engagement. AI analyses traditional music related to Durga Puja, like *bhajans* (praising songs), *agamoni* songs (welcoming Goddess Durga as a married daughter to her father's home through songs), *bhakti geeti* (devotional hymns) to generate new compositions blended with modern musical instruments, folk music, tribal dance and so on. AI helps content writers generate scripts based on contemporary issues using mythological characters. VR simulations create virtual platforms for rehearsals, virtual performances, stage designing, etc.

4.4 Reflection of Social Issues through the Artistic Expressions of Durga Puja

Artistic expressions of Durga Puja mirror various cultural and social beliefs, values, and societal changes. Through AI and VR, contemporary social issues like gender equality, women empowerment, child labour, etc. are presented as themes of Durga Puja to spread awareness among the spectators. By using AI and VR, global issues like environmental conservation, climate change, misuse of water, forbidding plastic, reuse and recycling of bio-products, nature trails, etc. are also addressed. They also create an ambiance of geographical diversities like themes such as Iceland, the Forest of Amazon, Egypt, mountain ranges etc. Durga Pandals with

the reflections of social issues is presented in Figure 6 with the theme of Home Confinement during lockdown (a), and with the theme of Stop Child Labour (b).



(a)



(b)

Figure 6 (a) mirrors the life of home confinement during the covid year. The pandal is decorated with the images of TVs, computers, laptops, books, magazines etc. which played an important part in human life during the lockdown. Figure 6 (b) reflects the social disease - child labour. It shows how childhood is squeezed under this social disease. Here, a child prays for liberty to the goddess Durga. It gives a message to society to stop child labour.

Integrating modern technology with Durga Puja mirrors the cultural shift from tradition to modernity. It symbolizes societal acceptance of modernity and advancement. All these elements create a dynamic fusion of traditional and cultural heritage with contemporary artistic innovation.

4.5 Innovation in Traditional Durga Puja Impacts Tourism and Economy

Durga Puja plays a pivotal role in the tourism and economic growth of West Bengal. Durga Puja, a major cultural festival of heritage of West Bengal, attracts tourists from different parts of India and throughout the world. Both traditional heritage and contemporary diverse themes, attractive decorations, artistic elements, and innovative creativity exhibit the rich cultural heritage of Bengal. This yearly exhibition attracts tourists to explore the artistry, craftsmanship, tradition, and historical narratives related to the festival. Social media plays a pivotal role in

exhibiting these globally. Tourism during Durga Puja impacts the local economy by spending on accommodation, food, transportation, shopping, etc. Thus, tourism during Durga Puja creates a positive economic influence. During the festival of Durga Puja AI and VR are used for offering virtual tours of pandals by allowing global people to experience the cultural richness of Bengal.



(a)



(b)



(c)

Fig. 7: *Puja parikrama* (a) Banner (b) *parikrama* by double decker bus (c) *parikrama* enjoyed by foreign visitors during Durga puja

Not only tourism, Durga Puja contributes to local business as well. Local business people, including artisans, decorators, flower vendors, fruit vendors, caterers, fast food stall owners, restaurant owners, and garment merchants, all experience increased demand for their products and services. This economic demand is found in areas of highly celebrated Durga Pujas. AI

and VR are utilized to create virtual marketplaces to enhance E-commerce and virtual and online shopping.



Fig 8: Shops benefitted from Puja (a) flower shop (b) fast food stall

This festival also provides temporary employment opportunities for a wide range of individuals. Employment opportunities arise through the demand for AI developers, VR content creators, event management professionals etc. This contributes to the local economy. Business people advertise their products during this time. AI and VR-operated advertisements attract more people. They also financially support this festival and promote their products and services. This nurtures a symbiotic relationship between business and culture. In short, the aesthetics of Durga Puja stimulate economic growth in the regions where this festival is celebrated.

5. Conclusion

Integrating Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality into various aspects of Durga Puja represents a dynamic fusion of tradition and innovation. From the material selection to the creation of eco-friendly idols and pandals, from the enhancement of performing arts to spreading awareness among the spectators regarding contemporary social issues, from enhancing tourism, business, and economy to create job opportunities, AI and VR play a pivotal role embracing cultural changes as well as preserving cultural heritage. They help to transcend geographical boundaries and transmit the rich culture of Bengal to the diaspora.

Our study shows that the adaptations of eco-friendly practices, technological integrations, and contemporary issues reflect the festival's adaptability to changing themes while preserving its cultural essence. Durga Puja has economic influences by generating revenue, creating employment opportunities, fostering business, and attracting tourists through the visual spectacle of pandals and cultural performance. Our study shows that the technological integration in Durga Puja is economically more beneficial. We also observe the folk events attract more audiences when they are integrated with modern adaptation. We wish to collect the quantity of technological elements in Durga Puja and analyse them. We also will find out the qualitative improvements in the traditional events and Durga Puja elements while using innovation in them.

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Socio-Cultural Significance of Folk Musical Tradition: Weaving the Tapestry of Identity of the Deori Community of Assam

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Abstract

The phrase "Weaving the Tapestry of Identity" beautifully captures how cultural, social, and other factors intertwine to shape who we are. Identity is not static—it evolves through interactions, traditions, and shared histories, much like the intricate threads of a tapestry. Socio-cultural refers to the combination of social and cultural factors that influence human behavior, traditions, and interactions. It encompasses aspects like customs, beliefs, values, and societal norms that shape communities and individuals. For example, socio-cultural influences can be seen in language development, artistic expressions, and social structures, where traditions evolve through historical and cultural exchanges. This research paper focuses on the usage patterns and significance of the folk musical tradition of the Deori Community of Assam, North-East India. It also examines the changing aspects and developments that have taken place to understand the present status of the musical tradition in the contemporary Deori society. It also delves into the search whether a tradition like the Guru-Sishya Parampara (teacher-pupil tradition) exists or not under the realm of folk musical tradition of the Deoris.

Keywords: tradition, folk music, culture, identity, deoris

Introduction

Just like a tapestry is made up of different threads, identity is formed through history, traditions, beliefs, culture, experiences, and interactions. The first function of music, especially of folk music, is to produce a feeling of security for the listener by voicing the particular quality of a land and the life of its people- (Lomax, 1960, p. 25). Folk musical traditions play a crucial role in shaping cultural identity and fostering social cohesion. They serve as a living archive of history, emotions, and communal experiences, passed down through generations. Folk music preserves cultural heritage and strengthens community bonds, reflecting diverse influences and historical narratives. Folk music worldwide acts as a medium for storytelling, expressing collective struggles, celebrations, and spiritual beliefs. Research about music has generated diverse beliefs, views and theories that explore its nature and meaning. A recurring theme on this topic is the view that the particular cultural context that surrounds a distinct music practice influences the music produced within those cultural boundaries (Herndon & McLeod, 1982; Lomax, 1976; Merriam, 1964; Nettle, 1992). Research says that music learning and teaching, music practices, and passing on the lineages are influenced by socio-cultural characteristics (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013; Hargreaves, Marshall, & North, 2003; Ho, 2014). Back in 1980, Harris viewed culture as “learned and shared behaviour”, something in which feelings are expressed through many facets including “language, art and religion (Harris, 1980, p. 19.) In 2008 however, Baldwin, Faulkner, Hecht and Lindsley revealed that such definitions illustrate western societies misunderstand the concept and rather culture is an “empty vessel” waiting for people to fill it with meaning” (Baldwin, Faulkner, Hecht and Lindsley, 2008, p.4). Regardless, it is evident that culture impacts on the ways in which music is learnt, taught and performed. Indeed, Radocy and Boyle (Radocy & Boyle, 1979) stated that “culture clearly affects musical behaviour (and that) music may influence the culture (in which it is produced)” (Radocy & Boyle 1979:27). Others reflected on how society impacts on music traditions

(Kelly, 2016 & Small, 1996). Kelly's (2016) work, for example, explored how music teachers in schools can understand better how music teachers in schools can understand better how music is inherent in society and in turn that many aspects of society impact on student's lives. He believed that schools should consider how to appropriately teach students cultural knowledge and expectations by inviting the whole community's involvement, this will thus allow the entire community to function more effectively (Kelly, 2016). The society in which we live thus has a great importance when we consider how to teach music. In unpacking this notion further, research in the field of ethnomusicology provides detailed analyses that explore the interaction and unique relationship that exists between music, culture and society, Alan P, Merriam's work, *The Anthropology of Music* (Merriam, 1964) has been particularly influential in this area and is still considered a reliable source amongst students and academics (Campbell, 2016; Elliot & Silverman, 1995; Feld, 2013; Stone, 2016; Swanwick, 2001). Merriam believed that "concepts and behaviours must be learned, for culture as a whole is learned behaviour, and each culture shapes the learning process to accord with its own ideals and values" (Merriam, 1964, p. 145). Merriam (1964) explored the process of enculturation further and explained that learning is a lifelong process where culture persists.

It is through education, enculturation, cultural learning, that cultural gains its stability and its perpetuated, but it is through the same process of cultural learning that change takes place and culture derives its dynamic quality. What is true for culture as a whole is also true for music; the learning process in music is at the core of our understanding of the sounds men produce (Merriam, 1964, p. 163).

Nettl (1975) agreed that "through an enculturation process, each social order develops its institutions and artifacts for perpetuation of itself, and music's existence is one of the few things common to all cultures, highlighting how music, as a common element to all cultures, can

be the point of contact in determining cultural and social foundations of any given society (Nettle, 1975, p. 71). Expanding this further, strong support existed in early ethnomusicological literature for the idea that music can tell us many things about a particular culture through its instruments, instrument makers, and its performance structures that encompass the interaction between performers, audience and/or composers (Lomax, 1976; Merriam, 1964; Spearritt, 1980). Lomax's (1976) work is still significant in this area, as it explored the specific way that culture was reflected in music practice and it highlighted a correlation between social structure and song structure. Lomax (1976) believed that a culture's song performance style "has a special cultural and social role to play among human communication systems (Lomax, 1976, p. 12). Even earlier, Lomax (1968) had written that "a culture's favoured song style reflects and reinforces the kind of behaviour essential to its main subsistence efforts and to its central and controlling social institutions" (Lomax, 1968, p. 133). Views such as those expressed by Feld (1984), Lomax (1976) and Merriam (1964) highlighted the impact that culture can have on music and in some cases music on cultural expression with each author concluding that music is, in fact, culture and cannot be separated from life experience. In a similar vein, Dewey (1958) also noted that "for while art is produced and is enjoyed by individuals, those individuals are what they are in the content of their experience because of the cultures in which they participate" (Dewey, 1958, p. 326). Such work asks how the concepts of *music as culture* and *music are culture* are reflected upon, and taught about, in contemporary learning environments. For many people music is their culture and a direct expression of who they are. Taking a different view, Blacking (1973) argued that music can be a "product of the behaviour of human groups, whether formal or informal: it is humanly organized sound" (Blacking, 1973, p.10). Black's use of the phrase 'humanly organized sound' denotes a sense of music beyond an unintentional or random sound event but as a process that is purposefully engaged in by the

members of a particular society albeit in ways which align with dominant or accepted socio-cultural norms. Walker (1990) held a similar position by stating:

The place of music in the belief systems of all cultures suggests that music itself must be, to some degree, systematically organized. What is inherent in both these views is that music is as much organized by its presence in a context as it is influential on that context and this dynamic interaction is best understood as a whole system (Walker, 1990, p. 195).

Harwood's (1976) earlier work also explored this notion by suggesting "that music functions symbolically in several ways". These include the expectations of the performers and audience, the standards of judgment proper to the culture, the context proper to a particular performance, and the listener's way of perceiving the world in general (Harwood, 1976, p. 529). Accepting these, it is important to recognize the cultural influence and unique interplay between the many roles evident in the music-making and learning process. Merriam (1964) supported this view, stating that "music is a product of man and has structure, but its structure cannot have an existence of its own divorced from the behaviour which produces it". He believed that to conceive music as an organized sound, the behaviours involved in its production and the meaning underlying these behaviours must be understood (Merriam, 1964, p. 7). Crucial to understanding the notion of 'organized' sound is that several elements of music can be treated or used in certain 'organized' ways (Blacking, 1973). This idea embraces the view that music comprises various elements such as pitch, rhythm, harmony, melody. And form (Turek, 1996). Anderson and Lawrence (1991) and George (1897) presented these elements as common to all music cultures. Others perceived the common elemental approach to understanding music useful to a point, but it fails to capture the less tangible socio-cultural meanings assigned to the processes of making music (Ishimatsu, 2014; Leong, 2016; Pratt, Henson, & Cargill, 1998; Small, 1998; Smith, 1998). There is also some evidence to suggest that an elemental approach may have a detrimental effect on student outcomes. Walker (2001)

posited that “just concentrating on the musical elements and performance techniques alone without developing an understanding of what the music is about leaves audiences feel bored and alienated” (Walker, 2001, p. 16). It is important to emphasize that some cultures view music as a distinct phenomenon integrated with other experiences in cultural life. Oku (1994) explained that “we tend to understand unknown music by means of the concepts of our familiar music” (Oku, 1994, p. 120). Stock noted that (1994):

we cannot necessarily apply our own, familiar, definitions of music to foreign musical sounds, and that basic, fundamental principles which we take for granted in our own music may not be reflected in other kinds of music (Stock, 1994, p. 8).

Some authors (Walker, 1990; Shepard & Wicke, 1997) argued that sound and the nature of its organization through the use of elements by people are important considerations in reaching an understanding of music but these are not the only aspects that need attention. Nattiez (1990) further stated that “music is whatever people choose to recognize as such, noise is whatever is recognized as disturbing, unpleasant or both” (Nattiez, 1990, p. 47). This infers that people’s experience of the sound organization in a particular context affects how they perceive music. Several authors offer extended commentary on the importance of meaning in music particularly noting the relationship between music and culture (Inskip, McFarlane & Rafferty, 2008; Meyer, 1961; Small, 1996; Whitman, 2005). An integral part of the music making process according to Blacking (1973) and Small (1998) are the non-music elements that “contribute to the nature of the event that is musical performance” (Small, 1998, p. 9). These elements are also noted to contribute to people understanding of each other’s music across cultural contexts (Ravignani, Delgado & Kirby, 2016).

Blacking (1973) believed that “all processes relevant to an explanation of musical sound” are to be explored or a “context-sensitive analysis of the music in culture” (Blacking,

1973, p. 17) must occur if the true meaning is to be gained. This includes understanding the purposes of non-music elements such as spiritual significance that includes such aspects of loyalty or economic import, social purpose or even biological structures (Blacking, 1973). Bennett Reimer (1989) argued that music is more than just the experience of making and can be defined by its aesthetic contribution to the Arts. Langer's as he viewed music as a primary mode of communication where music acts as a discourse between actors within the musical experience: a symbolic exchange between audience and performer. In comparison, Suzuki (1982) saw music like language operating on a different level through symbolic processes using different units of exchange and this work has advanced even further under Almen (2017) and Rampton (2014). In Swanwick's (1999) work he asserted that the musical work provides an essential basis for deriving symbolic meaning. Further to this, Campbell (1996) believed that it may not be possible or even desirable to "transcend" (Swanwick, 1999) the cultural and social origins of a particular music.

McAllester (1996) noted that "it is better to teach anything about other cultures 'music' than nothing at all" (McAllester, 1996, p. 66). Miller (1996) took a different stance and believed that there are cases where some music cannot be taught because of the value and meaning that it holds. He posited that one must experience the holistic picture in order to truly understand this worth. Behaviours associated with music making cannot be isolated from the social and cultural context in which such behaviours take place because it is within this space that music has a purpose and is assigned meaning (Walker, 2001). Small (1998) and Elliot and Silverman (1995) concurred that music's meaning is located in the process of music making. David Elliot and Marissa Silverman (1995) in their prominent text, *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education*, explained further that "before there were musical compositions there was music making in the sense of singing and playing remembered renditions and improvisations; that many cultures still view music as something people do" (Elliot & Silverman, 1995, p. 49).

For Elliot (1994) “music making is essentially matter of knowing how to construct musical sound patterns in relation to the traditions and standards of particular musical practices. Music-making is essentially a matter of procedural knowledge, or non-verbal knowing-in-action” (Elliot, 1994, p. 9). Music as phenomena would not be possible without acknowledging the ways in which both the cultural context and society impact on music practices. Music traditions have been noted to be dynamic, not static and as such, can shift and change over time; and this has increased substantially due to global movements of people but also due to the incredible access to others’ music cultures in an online environment. To deeply explore the notion of how culture and society are reflected in music one needs to understand the meanings associated with it.

Deori Community of Assam: The North Eastern region of India indeed presents a glorious example of diversity which is followed by myriads of distinct aboriginal tribal communities inhabiting the region. The Deoris amongst them are no exception to this rule. The Indian Constitution has regarded the Deoris as a Scheduled Tribe of Assam. The present inhabitations of the Deoris are spread in Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Majuli Districts of Assam. Other than the state of Assam, the Deori villages are also found in Lohit and Tirap Districts of Arunachal Pradesh. As per semantics the word *Deori* means the offsprings of God and Goddess, *deu* means great, wise; and *o* and *ri* denotes male and female respectively. Deoris, like to proudly introduce themselves as *jimo-chan-ya* amongst themselves (Deori, 2002). The etymological meaning of the Deori word *jimochanya* is- *jimo* means the sperm, semen or virile, *chan* means sun and *ya* means moon. The *jimo* is born from the sweet union of *chan* and *ya*, i.e., *purush* and *prakriti* (Shiva- Parvati). The Deoris were the levite or priestly class and functioned as the priests of the Chutiyas of Assam, who established their kingdom at Sadiya. According to W. B. Brown- “It has been observed that the original seat of the Deoris was in the region beyond Sadiya.; and some of them still occasionally visit Sadiya for religious

purposes”. It is also significant to note that the Ahom kingdom, dispersed all the Chutiyas to the different parts of Ahom kingdom as a state policy, but the Deoris were allowed to stay in their habitat (Sadiya) and continue their worship in the shrines there. This clearly indicates that the Ahom rulers did not equate the Deoris with the Chutiyas (Deori, 2002). There are four broad divisions amongst the Deoris. These divisions are- a) Dibangiya, b) Tengapaniya, c) Borgonya, d) Patorgonyas. The division is termed as *gayan* or *khel* by the Deoris. Each of the division is said to be originated from a particular river’s or place’s name the people who resided near the Dibang river named themselves as dibangiya, the people who resided near the Tengapaani river named themselves as tengapaniya, the people who resided near Bornodi river named themselves as borgonya, and patorgonya group is not found in the present time. The Patorgonya group is not traceable at present and it is presumed that the members of this group might have been amalgamated with the other existing groups of the Deoris or with the other communities (Deori, 2002).

Socio-Cultural Significance of Folk Musical Tradition:

1. **Preserving Cultural Identity** – Folk music reflects the traditions, beliefs, and experiences of a community, reinforcing a sense of belonging.
2. **Oral History & Storytelling** – Many folk songs narrate historical events, myths, and everyday life, acting as a bridge between past and present.
3. **Social Cohesion** – Music brings people together during festivals, rituals, and communal gatherings, strengthening bonds within a society.
4. **Expression of Resistance & Resilience** – Folk music has often been a medium for expressing struggles, resistance, and hope during challenging times.
5. **Influence on Modern Music** – Folk traditions inspire contemporary music, blending old melodies with new styles to keep cultural heritage alive.

Tradition is always in a state of flux: Guru- shishya parampara is a sacred teacher-student relationship which fosters the preservation of musical knowledge (Overmeyer, 1990, p. 75). There are three intertwined features of the guru-shishya parampara: periods of close contact between teacher and student (Time), mutual devotion (love), and the enforcement of discipline (discipline) leading to self-discipline, dynamic concepts of time, love and discipline and instill attitudes about music-and about life (Overmeyer, 1990, p. 75).

1. **Time:** to learn traditional music one requires time from the elderly people or with a teacher. As an oral tradition, transmission relies not on books but on guru's individual guidance. Perceptions of the ideal amount of time the shishya and guru should commit to each other tends to shift according to the time practically available. Although the guru-shishya relationship evidently can be nurtured in a close classroom environment, it has no large institutional replacement. The ancient tradition provides for what modern relationship counselors call "quality time"- a necessity for developing bonds of mutual devotion (Overmeyer, 1990, p. 76-77).
2. **Love:** to best communicate musical thought, the guru and the disciple must love one another. Since only the shishya can perpetuate the guru's heritage, such love and trust becomes a crucial requirement. The guru who loves the disciple will have the impetus to teach with dedication and to freely impart knowledge. In turn, the disciple is to respect the master as a representation of the divine. Savitri Devidas agreed with this analysis, stressing that the self must be completely surrendered to the guru: the disciple feels reverence, adoration for the guru, and with "vinya"-humility-absorbs all the guru offers. Even to the professional, the guru can remain a constant source of guidance (Overmeyer, 1990, p. 79). Further

description of the ideal love relationship is complicated by the diverse types of people who take part in the tradition. A common metaphor for the guru-shishya parampara that always comes up in conversation was the concept of the father-child relationship (Overmeyer, 1990, p. 79). A good child gives the father complete respect and always tries to abide by his rules. The method of demonstrating devotion becomes a prime concern of the disciple. This devotion is expressed in rituals with the relationship in progress; many services are done for the guru out of respect, in order to acquire rare knowledge and to win his praise; however when the heart of a guru must be won in order to be accepted as the shishya, one must express one's devotion to the guru's music (Overmeyer, 1990, p. 81). Money here is only to be given as a ritual offering, if at all needed. Otherwise the relationship may seem tainted, mutual devotion may seem suspected. Thus, the guru-shishya parampara can respond with understanding and sensitivity even to changing conceptions of how love is best expressed within its tradition (Overmeyer, 1990, p. 85).

3. **Discipline:** the guru does not simply lavish valuable time and affection on the disciple; his or her role is to maintain discipline. Draconian styles of teaching are often detailed in stories about the guru-shishya parampara, implying that physical and mental torture is the flip side of success (Overmeyer, 1990, p. 85). Many renowned musicians, living and dead had proudly acquired their art from more than one guru. Like a string of lovers, each guru could receive undivided attention while the shishya was with him. The guru-shishya parampara will maintain its relevance and vitality only if it remains sympathetic to the values of the changing needs of the individuals who want to learn (Overmeyer, 1990, p. 86).

Time, love and discipline form the basics of the guru-shishya parampara. The ways and means of achieving these elements are not the same between two generations, or between two people. But does the relationship resemble a tangle of multiple arms without a central deity-a unifying theme-to attach them to? Traditions support social structures. Not all great musicians will teach their music to a disciple, but, being part of the performance tradition, they are atleast in a position to pass on beauty to an audience. And if someone is touched, that person, given the freedom to do so, may seek its source. The rest flows from there (Overmeyer, 1990, p. 87). The pressures on the guru-shishya parampara to transform its nature are mounting. Nonetheless, conservatives fearing “degeneration” must concede that this tradition will endure as the ideal method of instruction only as long as it can accommodate the changing needs of its participants. The relationship yet lives, and that it does so may be related directly to the fact that this ancient human bond possesses dynamism and flexibility, like the music tradition it remains (Overmeyer, 1990, p. 79). In the Deori society the urge to learn to play the folk musical instruments or to learn the lineage of dancing patterns too includes the factors of time, love and discipline but the Guru-Shishya parampara is not found in the Deori society, the folk though devotes time for folk musical tradition and out of love and compassion with discipline they learn but they do not follow the rigid rules of Guru shishya parampara. If an elderly master of folk music imparts the knowledge to a new learner then the new learner offers a *tamul panⁱ* or *esunga sujeⁱⁱ* to the master he or she can join the learning sessions free of cost or sometimes by pay a little amount as the name of offering. But the performers of dance; a boy or girl learns the rhythm of dancing the patterns of beats on their own naturally by watching their folks performing but sometimes to make it more polish they go through some learning classes.

Culture is one of the most important categories which determine the life of any nation. It acts as the means of a man's experience accumulation, storage and transmission from previous generations to the next ones. As a certain sign system, culture involves the mastery of it and this requires a constant intellectual process, coupled with an intense emotional experience. This process is ensured by socio-cultural activities, creating the conditions to familiarize people with culture through the creation and dissemination of cultural values. Folklore is an important part of culture and the study of folk art is an important means of pedagogical influence on a younger generation. The activity of folk music ensembles that preserve the cultural traditions of their people through the revival and the reproduction of folk art, forms, contributes to the process of ethnic-cultural education realization among children and youth (Kelley, 2016, p. 60). The importance of folklore in the process of ethnic cultural education is explained by several reasons. Firstly, it serves as a form of people knowledge and values transmission to future generations. Secondly, an ethnic language preserved as an important factor of a national identity determination due to folklore. Thirdly, it has a powerful ethnic influence based in the category of folk art (Kelley, 2016, p. 61).

The art of each ethnic group has specific features, bears the imprint of a national identity, and reflects the distinctive features of a national culture. The problem of people cultural and historical heritage preservation includes the monuments of folklore and provokes the socio-cultural aspects of communities. The fact that folklore- a living and evolving one and in some cases a disappearing and assimilated one under the influence of external factors is the phenomena which needs a careful attitude more than ever. The precious treasure of folk wisdom and a count of centuries-old traditions contained in it forms the foundation of a nation's culture possessing a powerful pedagogical potential. Folklore groups, remodeling, reproducing and translating folk art in various forms of social and cultural activity, provide security, education and upbringing mission (Kelley, 2016, p. 65). One major form of socio-cultural

activity is the organization of folk art festivals. The main aim of such activities were maintenance and the development of ethnic culture, the facilitation and identification of folk song original performers, the creation of favorable conditions for the groups who want to master the art of folk singing, to the development and the disclosure of traditional folklore repertoire wealth. The need for such activities is explained by ensemble leaders on the basis of the fact that the spiritual and moral components incorporated in the folk art of the past are of value to any person of any age. The singing of folk songs, the reconstruction of family rituals by folklore ensembles (patriot, wedding, funeral ceremonies, etc.) not only acquaint the younger generation with the historically established traditions and customs of their ethnic group and their way of life- this is a store house of folk wisdom, knowledge and ideas about family relations, many of which have not lost their relevance to this day (Kelley, 2016, p. 64-65).

Different causes are found in the history of human migration. Historically Deori language was the medium of interaction among the four clans of Deoris in the past. Presently the Borgoyan and the Tengaponiya groups are not using their traditional dialects since they are assimilated to Assamese culture. The Dibongiyas on the other hand are trying to retain their traditional culture. Even among the present three clans of Deoris, Assamese become the main language of communication. It is established that only one language (either Deori or Assamese) is used even in Deori dominated areas. In the periphery of the villages both Assamese and Deori languages are spoken among the Deori people (Deori, 2013, p. 77-79). The occupational patterns that dominate the villages are mainly agriculture activities. The first group of settlers came there in search of cultivable land and cultivating since then generation after generation. The traditional Deori livelihood system is gradually replaced by diversified activities in the villages and in urban areas. Traditionally Deori social system is very conservative. They had very little interactions with other ethnic groups before independence. In that period Deori

culture was centered on *Thaanghar*ⁱⁱⁱ, a traditional worshipping house which did not allow them to interact with other communities. Therefore they had very little knowledge about other societies. Due to the spread of education to the remote villages and assimilation with other ethnic groups, the Deori culture gradually started losing its rigidity. Their interaction with other ethnic groups increased because of livelihood change and social relations.

The cultural differences are being reduced everyday due to the day to day close interactions with other communities living very close to each other since there are no contiguous households of the same communities in the urban areas. Thus they started to learn to live together in great harmony and cohesive manner (Deori, 2013, p. 92-93). Inter community marriages in a traditional Deori society is never permitted in the past. In the old days they did not even allow other communities to enter their houses. This traditional culture of taboo system has lost its importance due to cultural assimilation and frequent interactions with other communities. Today the villages are experiencing many inter community marriages which was not even thought of in the olden days. Traditionally Deoris are the worshippers of *Kundimama*^{iv}, *Pisha Dema*^v and *Pisachi Dema*^{vi}. A trend of adopting non-traditional religion among the highly educated Deori people is noticed especially in the urban areas this religious transformation is no doubt a result of acculturation with other communities of the greater Assamese society and also other respective societies of new environment. Influence of Sri Sankardeva's view among different communities of Assam is very positive. On the other hand many conscious Deori people seek religious reforms in traditional Deori religion owing to its expensive and irrelevant rituals (Deori, 2013, p. 96). Significant changes have taken place in dress habits of Deoris from traditional to modern and rural and urban areas experience different magnitude of change.

Bisu-puja is one of the important socio-religious festivals of Deoris. The bisu-puja is generally performed in their shrines located in every Deori villages as advised by '*Deudhai*^{vii}'.

It is a general tradition that a bisu must start on Wednesday. Also if in a particular month of the year the first Wednesday happens to be *Samkranti or amabaishya*^{viii} then the bisu-puja must be deferred to the next Wednesday. But at this instant of performing ‘*Bisu Husori*’^{ix} in time-honoured way is lessening amongst the youths and in the villages as well (Deori, 2013, p. 98). The conservative Deori culture did not allow close interactions with other ethnic groups in the earlier days. Now this strictness is gradually smoothing of interacting with other communities, although the degree of interaction in Deori villages are still quite low than that of the town areas. Another transformation is found in adopting views of non-Deori religion. The excessive costs in the rituals and prevailing superstitions in the religious practices of traditional religion diverted the educated new generation Deoris to follow non-traditional religions within the sphere of Hinduism. Now, Deori culture means a little amount of work culture- in the form of tradition only. So it is established that Deori culture is changed significantly and all those ‘forbidden’ works in the past now become suitable works for Deoris. As a result of the rapid change within a short period, *Deughar*^x, the educational center of Deori culture, and the priests both have lost the previous characteristics which were to be found in the earlier days. the thaans or deughars and priests or pujaris are now only representative tradition of Deori culture and nothing more than that and their influence on Deori society is also negligible. There are evidences of conversion of religion among Deoris who has given up their traditional religion and converted to some other religion. Lately Deoris became conscious about their ethnic identity and ‘Autonomous Council’ in Deori habitat areas is formed by the Government of Assam after considering their demand for it (Deori, 2013, p. 100-101).

Deori traditional festivals and some of its rules and regulations: the main festival of this community is Bisu. The folk starts the festival by offering puja in the deoghaars. Its celebrated in the month of April or *imesu bisu*^{xi} and in the first Wednesday and if there is any hindrances like (birth or death of person) in the main pujari’s home or in his relatives’ then the

bisu puja is postponed to a Wednesday of the second or third week of the month as it is considered as a polluted time in the Deori society. While organizing this bisu puja at the very onset the deoghaar is cleansed with the surroundings. Some banana, gram, pulses, sugarcane (for proxaad) and incense sticks, red-sandalwood, *satful*^{xii} and kemaru leaves (specially needed for sprinkling holy water on the people) earthen lamps, beetle nuts and leaves are gathered on lump sum. The place for sacrificial offering is set at that time and in one corner of the deoghaar surrounding along with other necessary utensils. If someone questions what puja does the Deori folk celebrates then the answer to it would be: a) swattik puja (mah proxad noboidya is given) b) rajaxik puja (sacrificial offerings is given) c) tamasik puja: the offering meat is treated as pious food and served as community feast in the *soraghar*^{xiii} and in that area women are not allowed to enter. In the *kemesu bisu*^{xiv} which is celebrated in the month of January also known as makarsamkaranti in the first Wednesday of the month. In this bisu meiji is made and grand feast is arranged by the village folks after offering prayers they starts to sing and dance for the whole day. In the holy shrine *pancha puja*^{xv} is offered: a) invoking of the deities b) prashad is offered c) sacrificial offerings to the deities d) offering of bhog e) lightening of earthen lamps and then starts the puja rituals. Many bisu delicacies are prepared such as *til-pitha*^{xvi}, *chira-doi*^{xvii}, *narikol ladu*^{xviii}, and other *jaa-jalpaan*^{xix} like *akhoi*^{xx}, *kumol saul*^{xxi}, *sunga saul*^{xxii}, *bora saul*^{xxiii} with *doi*^{xxiv} and *gur*^{xxv}, *suje-kaazi*^{xxvi} are eaten and served to the guest as well. Though this bisu is celebrated only for one day but it is continued for a week in the Deori society. The folk invites their neighbours, kith-kin for lunch, dinner party in this bisu.

Asiring bisu^{xxvii} is celebrated in the month of October or ahin which is also known as the kati bisu. This is one of a seasonal celebration and in this bisu earthen lamps are lighted in the paddy fields of the folks, tulsi plant is planted in the courtyards of the home. Earthen lamps are lighted and placed in the entrance gates of homes in order to greet Laxmi devi (the goddess of food and money) to their home a local belief of folks that on this auspicious bisu Laxmi devi

visits to homes and thus the folks keeps their home and surroundings clean and tidy. In this bisu the farmers sow seeds of rice, grains and thus their granary remains empty at that month of the year thus, this bisu is also known as kongali bihu. Deori people wear self woven new clothes in each of the bisu's. They have the rule and tradition of wearing complete white on these auspicious events and while going to their holy shrines. They have the tradition of celebrating the night bisu too. In the months of *phagun*^{xxviii} and *Chaitra*^{xxix} the young groups of the folk creates *xomojua bihu khula*^{xxx} and starts rehearsals of bisu dance performances. The younger ones give *bihuan*^{xxxi} to the elderly village people and also of the family and seek for blessings for the year. In the night during supper or dinner the daughter in laws have to serve their local brew suje to the elder people of the house before starting the meal. In the end there is the ritual of *rajkebang*^{xxxii} and *nadit nao utuwa*^{xxxiii} where they stop practising bisu for the year.

The Deori folks celebrates bisu performances very systematically; they have the tradition of starting with spiritual offerings in the very first Wednesday of the month in holy shrine or their deoghaars and followed by taking it to the village with first performance of deodhani and then to the home of borpujari then the next office bearers of the folk council and then the husori is followed to be performed in every of the house not a single home is left in their community. In the folk songs of Deori: *bihugeet*^{xxxiv}, *biyanaam*^{xxxv}, *aiinaam*^{xxxvi}, husori, aborbo, hurai rangoli there people can find the stories of the Deori lores, ballads. When there was no spoken or written language or common dialect of the community in earlier days then the folk used to communicate by singing and dancing on their lores and ballads which is commonly known as Deori folk tradition. In the folk music of the Deori community one can find themes on the feelings and emotions, nature, scenic beauty of village, the simple rustic life of the community. Also, one can find about the norms and rituals, festivals, the roots and

origins, the agrarian lifestyle of the Deori community in their folk songs. Specifically in the bisu folk songs, these themes are found:

Kundilor agarit gudakoi ximolu

Tate loi kuruwai bahi kina/

Sadiya rajyat oi sarixal guxani

Taloike namaskar koru kina//

Kundilat upajil kundilor Deori

Mongohot upajil lune kina//

Goi nu goi thakute amoni lagile/

Jaidamot jiraiye jau kina//

The above mentioned song's theme is based on the origins and roots of the Deoris the Kundil Nagar, there it is mentioned about Sadiya (Kundil Rajya) in this place the *sarixaal* of Deoris are located. The *sarixaal* are as: a) the people residing near Dibang river the Dibangiya clan respectively worships the “bura- buri xaal” or “thaanghar” b) the people residing near the Borluit river the Borgonyan clan respectively worship the “tamreshwari xaal” c) the people residing near the Tengapani river the Tengapaniya clan worships the “boliyababa xaal” and d) the people residing in Pat sadiya are the Patorgonyan clan worships the “patorxaal” this clan no longer exist these *sarixaal* is mentioned in the folk song which the Deori people sings and recalls their ancestors and roots and pays homage. Even today the Deori society maintains this culture. It can be found in the folk song as:

Erimot erilu kerimot bandhilu

Joidamot patilu than/

Joidam parbator pora sai pothiyalu

Sadiya putola ghura;

Miri dekhilu Mishimi dekhilu

Aru dekhilu hura//

In the above folk song it is mentioned about the roots and origin of the Deoris their holy shrine Jaidam parbat, their ancestral places like Sadiya, Changkul, Laibari, Lafabari, Sakati-Saliha, Manasbhoomi, Tinimuni Faat, Mohong are mentioned in their many such folk songs. The daily lifestyle of Deori folks, about rituals, farming, repartee, love and unity, talks of woman, are the themes of their folk songs such as:

Kaloi xasili jopar bor kapur

Kaloi xasili dhon/

Jopar bor kapur jopate posibo

Harotu gojibo bon//

Ami tinibhoni tinita jotor aiye xoru-xuta kate

Amar tini bhoni jai tinifale aiye rausi kande/

Sadiyar jiyari nanibi kokaideu ugha ghura hen ghure

Gorusur raijyor jiyari nanibi kokaideu

Lukor ghore ghore fure/

Noraiye nomale nora jongfai

Mishimiye nomale japi,

Aii sarixale nami ahile

Xunore jokhola kati//

The song is about a ballad/local belief or folklore of the Deori community, the lore of *xunor jokhola*^{xxxvii}. The song says why are we buying clothes, why is it needed for? Specially sang by woman, about three sisters who if goes out of notice from their mother without her knowledge the mother starts weeping. They says about types of women, then woman of Sadiya spins like the top (maybe light in character, or works like a spin), and others moves from home to home

in search of gossip. They speak of the Goddesses of the Sarixaal coming down to earth in the Xunorjokhola.

The Deori language got its official status in 28th January of the year 2005 (Deori, 2017, p. 39). The Deori folk songs primarily are the Aborbo geet and Hasoti geet. The borgonya and the Dibangiya clans of the Deoris sing the Hasoti geets as the Hurai rangoli geet. The folk songs are specifically sung at the thaanghar or bihukhula, its also sung in along with the bihu husori geet. In the earlier days the females and the males of the Deori community used to sing songs separately but in today's time it is found that in the Dibangiya clan both the male and female sings song jointly. One of a specific dance form of the Deoris is the Deodhani Nritya. In the month of April the three clans of Deori the Deodhani dance form happens. That specific person be it a male or female whom the Deity possesses it is mandatory for him or her to be pure. It is believed that the deity possess not any other person except for the one who has been possessed earlier and this process continues years and after in the month of April. As per rituals the pujari or the head priest offers prayers to the possessed person (as for the folk he/she is the deity) and offers him/her the seat of their deity for the day, they consider that person as their deity.

An important quality of this deodhani is that the person possesses divinely powers of predicting the future and fortune of the Deori folks at the time of possession where he/she completely losses the conscious state of mind and works and answers as per the possession. The *pomiya*^{xxxvii} has to perform prayers and offerings as the deodhani suggests. As the deodhani steps the threshold of the deoxaal the head priests sprinkles holy water with *kimaru*^{xxxix} leaves (camphor tree leaves or eupatorium odoratum) on the possessed person offers a holy bath, takes the person inside the thaanghar *manikut*^{xl} and drapes with new white ethnic dress crowns with gold and bronze flower transforming and an effort to give the person a deity-like look escorts and brings out, offers the highest (1st) seat rank in the deoxaal made of banana leaves. The folks

who gather in the deoxaal offer prayers to the deodhai deity and the deity sprinkles *xaantijol*^{xli} with kimaru leaves and bless the gathered folks. The folks had to put on clean dress specifically white (ethnic attire) and enter deoxaal to perform their folk musical tradition, and the songs performed in the deoxaal are mostly religious in nature. It is found that sometimes the deity gets angry and shivers while performing this shamanistic dance form, at this time the instrumentalists tries to make the deodhai calm down by performing deodhani dance and songs, plays the droom, xengxeng and sometimes the shell. When the deodhai gets tired of performing the shamanistic dance form they are taken to the *xadura bedi*^{xlii} for rest. After foretelling the fortune, future of the folks, the deodhai is made to taste burnt cotton rolls, and the spilled blood of ducks, pigeon, hens, as sacrificial offerings, during this specific time droom, xengxeng, shell, big cymbals are played on very high and fast note along with chanting of *Devi stuti*^{xliii}, or deodhai mantras. When the possessed person gathers consciousness the shamanistic performance is called off and the goddesses' ornaments are taken back to keep in the thaanghar manikut and with due respect the person goes back to the gathered folk. On the last day of bisu uraba when deodhani is invited for the last day the *namoti*^{xliv} starts singing as:

Xeuti oi hai hai/

Malati oi hai hai//

Hatot kar dhonu lo na dodai/

Mar oi bali sorai//

Here the singer sings: calling xeuti malati that means everyone in the village to clear the road as *guxani*^{xlv} have stepped on earth whatever comes on the way of guxani shall be removed. On this bisu uraba day the priests makes a boat of banana tree stems which is known as sora naw, and decorate the naw (boat) with colourful flowers to bid goodbye to the deity and send on the naw. After prayers and offerings to the deity the namoti starts singing the last of the song:

Oo lohori pranor bai/

Fulam gamusa loi naw meli jai//

Here the singer sings goodbye song saying that the deity is their very own who knows everything that resides within them and sets to go back to the heavenly abode on the boat with a floral *gamusa*^{xlvi} specially made for the deity. When this song is sang the beats of the percussionists raises the tempo so does the cymbal players. The naw made for the deity is hold by four persons and dances accompanied by droom and sengseng towards the riverside. Just after the naw the possessed person or deodhani dances with tremendous energy steps to riverside. One noticing factor is that while setting this naw on the river to let it float the possessed person tries to jump into that river for that the pomiya persons hold the person tight so that no mishap happens. The folk splashes water of the river and bids goodbye to their deity with utmost devotion. Once the boat gathers it pace with the wind the possessed person gathers the conscious state of mind.

The deori folk musical tradition is a composition of real art and grace. The bisu dance of the Deoris is divided into two parts: a) Tandav nritya b) Kaushik nritya. The Tandaav Nritya is a dance form of the lord Shiva (Mahadev) a belief of the community, specially performed by the male folk of the Deoris. The Kaushik Nritya is a dance form of Goddess Parvati a belief of the community, specially performed by the female folk of the community. The folk musical tradition of the Deori beholds grace and aesthetics.

The folk believes that about more than seven thousand years ago lord of the lords Shiva and goddess Parvati made their dance forms. The folk believes that their dance forms style and postures are like that of the petals of a lotus flower which sways gleefully in a light breeze and with this they try to showcase how easygoing, gentle and hospitable in nature, with their postures of dance one can find out that they are non aggressive in nature as they dance and sing playfully they do not hold any war cries or any such dance forms. Siri bisu of the Deoris is an important part of the Deori folks. There are little differences that can be found amongst the

three clans of the Deoris. The tengapaniya and the borgonyan clans celebrates the siri bisu rituals on the month of chaith in *shuklapaksha navami tithi*^{xlvi} on a collective note; the folks of village by going to the *borpujari*^{xlvi} home or any elderly's home/village headman's home with gua paan xorai kneels in the courtyard seeking permission for siri bisu performance. The Dibangiya clan celebrates it from the month of Fagun itself. The preparation for the bisu festival takes place from the month of Fagun (last of March). One Wednesday of the month of Fagun is selectively chosen to perform the ritual of bhakat maka harerua, where the village folks collectively do the work of inviting bhakat and offers rice, simply vegetarian food platter is served to the invited bhakat, no meaty delights, fish and local brew is served. This ritual is mandatory to perform it is a tribute to the ancestral bhakat mokha, thus it is known as bhakat saul khuwa ritual. The day when this ritual is performed in that very night siri bisu is celebrated amongst the chari deori in the lawn of their respective homes. From the next day onwards in that same area the youths of the village performs bisu dance after having dinner, the instruments used while performing this siri bisu dance: pepa (wind pipe), droom and xengxeng.

Except for the Dibangiya clan both the Tengapaniya and the Borgonya clan performs bisu dance separately. The village folks start dancing from around 7pm onwards till 10-11pm they wrap up. There are no immoral acts to be found in this siri bisu the folks perform it with ethics and follows moral codes likewise the siri bisu continues for at least one and a half month till the Bisu uraba the last day of Deori bisu festival. Then in the month of Bohaag the siri bisu happens mainly in the day of uruka and this bisu happens in the night and continues till the break of dawn, the folk splashes water makes muddy potholes and puddles dances and smears mud to each other to mark themselves as truly agrarian considering themselves as the children of soil this is the adiri bisu of the Deoris. Some of the Siri bisu songs sung by males or *igaba deka*^{xlix} are:

Bornoi xuoni bogikoi bali oi

Luitor xuoni gora

Monore xuoni toradoi lahor

Junotkoi jeuuti sora/

Here the igaba deka or boys indicates for an *igaisi ibasi*^l or girl of his love interest by saying that the mighty river is beautiful with the white silver sand and also the embankments are nice too but for my mind and heart beautiful and nice you (Toradoi, an imaginary female character or lady of love interest) comparing her to the moon that her beauty also fails the enchanting moon light.

Ibasi or the girls replies:

Ram sui ram sui nimoh igaba oi

Ramne sitai kolija xabem

Na sui na sui nimoh igaba oi

Na aiyo koliza xabem/

Here the girl replies the boy: Saying too much that Ram is good Ram is good oh handsome boys Ram has eaten the liver of Sita saying too much that you are good you are good oh handsome boy you too have eaten my liver (taken away the heart).

The siri bisu is not limited only for the youths, folk of all age numbers makes merry dancing. Some dance steps of the female folk in this dance are that of how one sow seeds, reaping of crops, farming etc. The old folks request everyone to come and join in this merry making for at least once by singing:

Hasoti oi aah umolungoi

Hasoti hasoti korona deuhot

Rongakoi hasoti thoisu boi/

Here the old folk calls out for everyone in the village to come and participate in the dancing and singing the entire enjoyment and they also says that for everyone they have weaved and

kept a red *hasoti*^{li} specially for their loved interests. In the early morning before wrapping up the bisu young boys and males specially performs friendly wrestling match amongst themselves and returns back home to start their day of Bisu celebration. On the eight day that is on the Thursday there is this bisu uraba ritual. On the last day or the *bisu uraba*^{lii} the deodhani performs again for the last time of the year. The possessed person is escorted and greeted from home with droom and xengxeng to the *guxanixaal*^{liii}. The deodhani droom beats is played differently to make the deu perform dance. The deodhani again foretells the future and fortune blesses the folks by sprinkling holy water with kimaru leaves. The village folk elderly, youths, kids forms a circle holding hand in hand and sings aborbo and lahariya songs dance on it gleefully. The youths form a large circle covering the holy shrine and perform dances on lahariya songs followed by aborbo songs. Before the sunsets the folk leaves thanghaar, then moronghaar, and step by step performs last bisu dances goes back to the open area where first day bisu dance was performed.

They dance to the fullest and to the west side of the village the folk goes to open field plays a game of *dhup guti*^{liv} bids goodbye to bisu festival for the year. After leaving and bidding goodbye to bisu no one should look back and it is taken seriously. They believe that one should not look back as the Gods and Goddesses gets offended if someone looks back after leaving bisu for the year, if someone does folks would not be able to concentrate and work on any other things except for dancing and merry-making. While a group performs this ritual others lit *jaak*^{lv} in their gateway entrances of home. They folks cry and gets sad on performing this last ritual as a prolong one and half months of merry-making, dancing comes to a closure. Another important performance of the Deoris is the husori. The deoris say it as hisori. There are certain steps to be followed before performing husori or hisori. The deori husori is different from the Assamese bihu husori, the deori folk perform it with some rules. Performing the husori in

bohagiyo bisu is a mandatory factor for the Deoris. The people have to go through a certain process before performing husori the folks have to seek permission in the Guxanixaal.

The village folk cannot perform husori every year on their own, for them seeking allowance or permission from their deity (as local traditional belief) from the chari-deori, head priest of the Deoxaal is a must. Once granted the permission only the youths preferably males are allowed to perform the husori dance. This husori performance starts in the afternoon from around 3pm. First it starts in moronghaar of Guxanixaal. From the day of bohagiyo bisu siri bisu is not performed the husori performance wraps up in the same place from where it started initially the folks make it sure to dismiss it in the same place by atleast 7pm in the evening. This bohagiyo bisu celebration and husori performance continues for eight days. When there is need of monetary help in the village the folk has to request the chari-deori and elder ones before performing. The village folk the performers had to plead for performance in the Magiyo bisu itself by offering a pack of tamul-paan to the chari-deori and other office-bearers to perform in the Bohagiyo bisu. If the permission is not granted then no one can perform husori in the village. The process of seeking permission for husori performance is known as hisori maga.

In one village only one troop of performers are allowed to perform by the village prayer hall council. The money which the performers gather after performance is exclusively for the matters related to village upliftment. A meeting is called in the village before performing husori where some schemes are introduced (like the amount of contributions to be made by the folks according to their status of living), a fixed pay is not there for all the villagers there are variations: a) contributions for the *pujari parixadh*^{lvi} b) contributions for the rich class c) contributions for the lay-man. There is a selection process of the performers of husori, the selection committee consisting of the elder experienced folk music performers (who knows the stanzas of husori songs, the *pods*^{lvii} and *guti-malati*^{lviii} of husori songs). The experienced elderly

husori performers select the husori troop consisting of –a namoti, the three *nasaniaar*^{lix}, and the dresses to be worn by the performers, one *dhan-bharali*^{lx}, atleast five *santari*^{lxi}, and one *husori niyantok*^{lxii}.

The role of husori niyantok is very important for the person has to monitor every aspects of the husori and leads the troop. The person who is given the charge of a namoti in husori also plays an important role; the namoti is the stirring bearer of the troop. The namoti has to wear different attire from the troop. The namoti wears a *muga paguri*^{lxiii} and *muga suriya*^{lxiv} and *enga sula*^{lxv} a specially prepared attire for the husori performance, wears a golden jewellery and silver ornaments, a silver *kordhoni*^{lxvi} in the waist, sometimes instead of a paguri the namoti wears a *mukut*^{lxvii}. This specific dress is worn only by the namoti only while performing a husori. Sometimes a namoti is seen wearing loud make up to make the person look more attractive. The namoti is the main attraction factor of the husori troop with the attire, make up, dancing steps, singing husori songs, expressions etc., and compels Deori audience also others to watch the husori performance for hours. The role of nasaniyaar is also important.

In the husori performance the women folk do not play any role thus, the man dresses up as woman and performs in husori, it is different from the Assamese bihu husori where both the woman and man performs husori unlike the Deori husori. The nasaniyaar have to follow the dance steps and where namoti goes during the performance. The other male fellow performers carry a bamboo stick which they call as *tokamari*^{lxviii} and strike on a bamboo by forming a circle which acts as beats to the husori songs. They have to make a sound with legs girip girip while performing. The husori songs are not those of flirtatious love songs or comedy songs the themes are of societal norms, day to day life, or praising of God, ancestral stories etc. there is a process of performing husori dance, the folks have made this process from their own creative mindset. In the courtyard of the respective houses where the husori has to be performed, three freshly cut bamboos are placed as the demarcation lines for performance only

the performers can enter that area and the rest be audiences, the entrance or the gateway to the houses are kept open. The namoti and nasaniyaar performs within the space of the placed bamboos they cannot trespass the borders. The other performers beats the bamboos with a stick and makes leg movement (girip girip) giving it a rhythmical sound to the songs sung by namoti and to the dance performed by nasaniyaar.

Husori starts in the guxanixaal (holy shrine) during the bisu puja on Wednesday of the month of April. The office bearers of the Deoghar contribute accordingly as the amount proposed by the husori committee. The folks offers *xorai*^{lxxix} to the performers as token of respect and gratitude for performing; the xorai consists of tamul-pan, proposed amount, deori gamusa or seleng sador, they are treated with suje-kazi. The gamusa, *seleng sadors*^{lxxx} received are distributed amongst the namoti and nasaniyaar during the performance. Sometimes those gamusas and seleng sadors are sold and with the amount received a feast is arranged amongst the husori troop. The performers pour the suje before sipping shouts victory and gives blessings to the family. The small section of the amounts received is distributed to the daily wage earners of the village to have a *jaluk khuwa*^{lxxxi} feast; the bulk sum is kept for the matters concerning village upliftment.

If in case a husori performance fails to get over within a week of the bisu festival then it's a mandatory task for the folks to wrap it up on the 11th day of the month preferably a Sunday following the bisu uraba rituals. Also if it fails to get over on the 11th day the performers has to seek re-approval of performing husori, if it does not get over then the folks cannot perform the bisu uraba ritual. On the ritual day of bisu uraba is the Deori *pitha bisu*^{lxxii} where the folks make bisu pitha a consistency made of rice powder and jaggery (sweet fretters). This bisu pitha is offered to guests and kids and one who fails to finish bisu pitha packs it to home thus, people get to know who makes better bisu delicacies in the village. Once the bisu uraba ritual is done

the folks after coming back to home keep their folk musical instruments and do not perform any musical performances until the *Xaun puja*^{lxxiii}.

The end of *Puh*^{lxxiv} month is known as the samkranti. The next day of samkranti first Wednesday the folk celebrates Magiyo bisu. If the first Wednesday turns amabaisya then the next Wednesday is chosen to celebrate it. Meiji is constructed with piles of woods and bamboos on the night before magiyo bisu that is the *uruka*^{lxxv} night. According to the folk belief the youths has to construct meiji, and the youths have to take bath and wear wet clothes before constructing. Two meiji are constructed generally, one represents the purush and the other prakriti. The purush meiji is made little taller than the prakriti, a grand feast is arranged by the folks in the corner of the village in the uruka night people the whole night by dancing and singing bisu songs till the break of dawn. When the sun rises up the folks light up the meiji, the meiji has to be lighten up by the same group of youth who constructed the meiji again after taking bath accompanied by droom and xengxeng, songs and dance circles round the meiji for five times and finally lights up offering prayers to the Fire god.

In both the bisu Magiyo and Ibaku Bisu there is the performance of musical instruments, folk dance and songs. It is a remarkable thing to notice that the songs sung and the beats of droom are never played or sung on the first days of bisu its specifically played and sung on the last day of bisu or bisu uraba day.

Vitality of Jaidam Fest of the Deoris:

Jaidamor pora sai moi pothiyau

Sadiya putola ghura/

kundilor agore gudakoi ximalu

tate loi kuruwai bah/

Sadiya raijyat sarixal guxani

Taloi k exewa koru/

This song here speaks of the Jaidam hills the ancestral roots of Deoris. The way to Tezu through the Jaidam hills gives a picture of a Daakbunglowe situated in the place of Sunpuwa located in Sadiya. People says that before reaching the place of Kundil roots and reminiscences of *Simalu*^{lxxvi} tree can still be found.

What is Jaidam of the Deoris? This is a place which includes origin story of the Deoris from thousands and thousands of years ago. History says that king Bhishmaka set up his dynasty in a place called Kundil. In the reign of King Bhishmaka places like Sadiya, Kundil and Jaidam have gained civilization. In order to spread religious spirituality amongst his subjects the king has built many temples and one of such highly spiritual temple is the Tamreswari temple. The head priests or pomiyas of the Temple was chosen to be the Deoris by the king. It is found that many historians have stated many statements on the history of this place. Archaeologist Lijum Roniya in his book *Geography of Arunachal Pradesh* he has mentioned about the Tamreswari Temple: “according to the archeologist the famous Tamreswari temple was constructed by king Bhismaka” (Deoris, 2019, p. 17). Formerly the priests of the temple was Mishimis, later on the Deoris took over the charge of priest. Thus, the elder people of the community remember their past origin and say that: Adis, Mishimis etc., were the neighbours to the Deoris and brother places to them. There used to be the bond between these communities. The age of Bhismaka was Dvapara Yug or age. Thus, it is a matter of immense pride for the Deoris that their very existence occurs right from the Dvapara yug and from King Bhismaka’s tenure they have made their settlements in Jaidam, Sadiya also have succeeded in worshipping the charixaal and following their responsibilities. In the folklores and folksongs it is found:

Jaidam parbator boliyababa guxani/

Taloiku exewa koru ki na//

Sadiya rajyote charixaal guxaani /

Taloiku exewa koru ki na//

In the folksongs of Deoris the mentioned charixaal guxaani are: kundimama or Gira girasi, pisadema or boliyababa, pisachi-demasi or tamreswari kechaikhati and patarshaal mandir. In these guxaani xaal the pomiyaas offered puja in satvik, tamsik and rajsik ways; the ways followed in the Vedic age for the wellness and prosperity of the living beings. The Jaidam hills known as Maanbhoomi or the worship place of boliyababa in the language of the Khamtis (community). Near the Jaidam hills flows the Tengapani river and where the Deoris resided in the initial days. In the places of Jaidam, Sadiya revolves the origin story and culture codes of Deori community. After so many years there are only reminiscences of Jaidam place now.

The Deoris had to bear an exodus for survival of their community. History says unable to bear the attacks of Mann, other tribal communities they had to flee for the survival of their community, as Deoris were very easy going race who hates enmity. But due to over growing survival threats from other communities the Deoris had to leave their ancestral places and flee to other places for their survival and restoring of identity. Flipping the pages of History we get to know that Mann attacked in the year 1821, the other tribal communities' revolt started in the year 1825 and then the Treaty of Yandaboo was signed in the year 1826 during these years there was unrest and terror in the corners of the country around the years 1826-1829 the four clans of Deoris had to escape for their lives on boats rowing in chest of the mighty Brahmaputra river from their ancestral places Jaidam, Sadiya and Kundil and had to settle here and there. Thus, the Deoris sadly mourns this saddening truth of them by singing the folk songs of lamentation remembering their ancestral past.

For years and years the community had to lead a nomadic life until they found places for settlement. The Dibangiya clan settled in the north bank of Brahmaputra, Tengapaniya and Borgonya clan settled in the south bank of the Brahmaputra. The community adapted the new environment surrounded them both the clans Tengapaniya and Borgonya had to give up their

dialect due to assimilation with the Assamese community. But interestingly, the community still spells their *beejmantras*^{lxxvii} in their local dialect; the pomiyas chants these mantras in their own dialect even in today's date. The last clan Patorgoyan is believed to have merged with other communities residing in Assam, it is said that they were so scared to reveal their identity thus, they didn't claim back for their loss of original identity rather were relieved and happy to have embraced other community's identity, thus, the jimochanyas consider this clan to have extincted its nowhere to be found, if approached to other communities about this matter, folks denies to accept this and says this history is distorted as here comes the sentimentality of identity.

The Jaidam fest amongst the Deoris plays a crucial role. The word Jaidam itself is an emotion of mixed feelings for the Deoris, years of struggle to restore and keep their tradition and language alive amidst survival unrest, this community centering these ancestral places tried to maintain the fraternity the essence of brotherhood with their neighbouring communities thus, Jaidam, Sadiya and Kundil are the words that bears the identity of Deoris. Thus in order to pay homage and ancestral tribute the Deoris has come up with idea of ethnic celebration naming it as Jaidam utsav in the recent years. Deoris hails from the Burmese family of Tibet Mongolia. They believe that they have come down to the plains from the hills, *dukiya kinu ma*^{lxxviii}. The folk belief of the Deoris states that Kundil Nagar is derived from the word "Kundimama". One can find out in the Hasoti songs:

Xunore jokhola Rupor hatamari aii charixaal name

Kundilot upojil Kundilor Deori

Mori mori upojil june ki nu...

Here it is mentioned about the Goddess of charixaal who descends down through a golden ladder and silver railing, the Deoris are born in Kundil but after so much of hurdles and life

threats they are still struggling to keep their identity intact even in recent days. They start Bisu with puja xewa:

Du gone agujune baba kundi girana

Bassale mamana juni/

Bassale agujune nou girala juna

Jouwa sajenoi noni//

This mentioned prayer means oh lord kundimama prayers for you and to the worshippers prayers for you please forgive us if we unknowingly make any mistakes while singing the songs.

Within the area of Deoghaar songs like *aborbo*, *atudedua*, *lahariya*, *hoiki yohe*, *simpai*, *lurungjama*, *mi giba*^{lxxix} etc. are primary folk songs sung and performed. Aborbo dance is highly related with the Deori Deoghaar, in this song everyone holds hand and forms a circle the namoti starts the initial stanza of song and the rest follows the song and dances. The aborbo song is specially loved by the female folk of the community. Deoris are agrarian community so nature worshipping is common amidst them. When there is need of rain the chari-deoris pray to Kundi mama to pour rain:

Ye dusiya radi radiyo

Nonua radi radiyo

He piosire sirena sare sorojibem o

Kundire soro jibem o/

This song means that who have created Heaven, Hell and Earth? For us (Deoris) Kundimama is the sole creator and thus, if we sing songs praising our sole lord Kundimama, then he might have pity upon us and bless us with rain. This song is a belief of the agrarian folk especially in the season of farming and cultivation.

Apart from this, aborbo songs holds the ancestral identity of the community:

Aborbo nahanga abor bose

Abo muke nahang o mure dugai

Pidi pale pihinga sare bohan

Garosire sironga sare niyan

Sire sire sironga johi jopan//

In this song it means that the Deoris in the phase of survival attack how hard it was for them to overcome situations and how from once residing peacefully with the Abor and the Mishimi brothers than had to face attacks and in that situation praying kundimama for a solution they got the vibe of escaping for their lives to the plains from hills. Apart from this, there are loud sheer cries amidst song and dance performing specifically by the males which act as little entertaining pauses to continuous singing. *Lahariya* is also important of all the folk songs:

Lohbai lohoriya heyy

Aharot xolale xorilore, lohbai lohoriya

Bohagot xolale maat xorilore, lohbai lohoriya

Oti senehore hator game kharu, lohbai lohoriya

Uliyai pinhijai kanore keru, lohbai lohoriya//

The lahariya dance forms are also very attractive holding each other hands the male folks perform to this song and the postures of this seems to be that of the waves of a flowing river. The namoti as soon as catches different tune to this song seer cries are a must by the rest of the performers with a change in the postures. Women folk are not debarred from performing it but inside the Deghaar woman are restrained from performing hurai rangoli dance.

Another dance form is the *simpai nritya*^{lxxx} of the Deori folk where the dancers perform forming a circle by swaying and clapping at the same time moves round and round in the same place, the namoti sings the first stanza and the rest performers sing the following stanzas and dances to the frontwards at the same time; likewise there are so many folksongs that form the identity

of the community. It is mandatory for the folk to put on white traditional attire while performing dance in the courtyard of their deoghaar but the bonse of the males and gatigi worn by the females can be of red colour also.

In each and every part of the folksongs of Deoris lies the scenario and portrayal of the Deori community right from prayers in their holy shrines, the songs of festivals, songs of love, repartee/lamentations, seasonal songs, dance forms, nationalism songs etc; it's a folk belief for the community that from times immemorial like a flowing river they have carried and handed over their traditional identity specially their lores, ballads, songs, dances, religion, ethnic attire, gastronomy, language, traditional beliefs etc., to generations and after. They say that today also the three rivers the Tengapani, Borno and Dibang rivers are flowing with full force and till when these river flows the identity of Deoris will flow and flourish, the folks shall try to contribute as much as they can hold their identity. For the Deoris bisu puja is one of the important socio-religious festivals of Deoris. The bisu-puja is generally performed in their shrines located in every Deori villages advised by Deudhai. It is a general tradition that a bisu must start on Wednesday. If in a particular month of the year the first Wednesday happens to be samkranti or amabaisya (new-moon) then the bisu-puja must be deferred to the next Wednesday. But at this instant in time bisu puja is observed without considering the day also. The tradition of performing bisu husori in time-honoured way is lessening amongst the youths and in the villages as well (Deori, 2013, p. 98). Deoris are known for conservative in nature. It is evident from their profession while working as priests in the temples of Sadiya during Chutiya and Ahom kingdom. To know them well it is very important to study the present and past socio-cultural life. We can observe the socio-cultural transformation as a result of acculturation with different ethnic groups and adaptation in the new ecology where they have settled. Now, transformation is seen in every attributes (dress, habit, family types, languages, house types, occupation, tradition etc.,) of Deori culture.

The Deori culture means a little amount of work culture in the form of tradition only. So, it is established that Deori culture is changed significantly and all those forbidden works in the past now become suitable works for Deoris. As a result of rapid change within a short period, deughaar, the educational center of Deori culture, and the pomiyas, both have lost the previous characteristics, which were found prior to 1950. Now the Deori culture is about to extinct, it is preserved only as a traditional manner among them. The thaam or deughar and priests or pomiyas are now only the representative tradition of Deori culture and nothing more than that and their influence on the Deori society are also negligible. Lately Deoris become conscious about their ethnic identity and 'autonomous council' in Deori habitat areas is formed by the Government of Assam after considering their demand for it (Deori, 2013, p. 101).

Folk Music and the Community; A Process of Canon Formation

Because the social basis of a community is continuously in flux, the folk music canon is always in the process of forming and of responding creatively to new texts and changing contexts. Folk musical canons are formed as a result of the cultural choices of a community or group. These choices communicate the group's aesthetic decisions-for example, its preference for one medium of musical activity over another. The theoretical basis of the canon thus emphasizes the internal motivations for cultural expressions. Its portrayal of external influences stresses that these too, are choices made by the community, namely the products of decisions to accept or reject (Wong, 1984, p. 11). As socially motivated choices, a community's canons bear witness to its values and provide a critical construct for understanding the ways the community sorts out its own musical activities and repertoires. The anchoring of folk music canons in community values depends, furthermore, on the community's particular historical awareness, its conceptualization of folk music and musical activities during its past and the way these bear on the present. Folk music canons therefore articulate cultural values both diachronically and

synchronously. The formation of a folk music canon comprises the many facets resulting from the complex interrelations of folk music and community (Wong, 1984, p. 41-43).

The processes of canon-formation result from a community's transformation of cultural values into aesthetic expression. Different communities shape and express folk music canons in various ways. Some canons may be defined by their sameness which might be evident in stylistic and formal coherence. The community accordingly emphasizes centrality by concentrating in its canon those features that it regards as salient to the core of its musical practices. It is through such processes that the community intentionally traditionalizes its culture (Steiner, 1975, p. 353). Musical behaviour throughout the community might therefore invest special meaning in the types of folk music that are widespread and well known in the community.

Conclusion

It is a natural step from this image of simplicity and spontaneity to believing that traditional music "reveals especially the individual views, customs and prejudices of people" (Engel, 1866, p. 8). Anthropologists have long seen music as a unique source of information about a culture. Alan Lomax argues that "since a folksong is transmitted orally by all or most members of a culture, generation after generation, it represents an extremely high consensus about patterns of meaning and behaviour of cultural rather than individual significance" (Lomax, 1967, p. 213). He holds that "expressive behaviour may be one of the most sensitive and reliable indicators of culture patterns and social structure. Apparently, as people live, so do they sing" A.P. Merriam suggests that since song language is often more permissive than ordinary speech, music can answer questions which if asked directly would probably not be answered, or with the greatest reluctance: "There is little doubt that song texts present an

extremely fruitful potential for the understanding of deep-lying values and sanctions, as well as problems, of a given group of people” (Merriam, 1964, p. 206).

To see folksong as “living history,” a rag-bag of quaint and amazing snippets to be rifled for convenient examples is to reduce it to the level of mere illustrative material, fascinating maybe but marginal. It encourages the view of traditional music as a solidified anachronistic “survival” giving glimpses of old ways of life, rather than a dynamic element of culture and a focus for human interaction (Elbourne, 1976, p. 464). Alan Lomax maintains that since song is usually a group communication, texts are likely to be limited to those matters, attitudes, concerns, and feelings on which the community is in maximal accord. If this is not the case, a song is unlikely to hold the audience and will probably not pass into oral tradition, where acceptance means that consensus has occurred continually over time: “thus, in theory, song texts ought to be heavily loaded with normative cultural indicators” (Lomax, 1968, p. 275).

It would appear that traditional music can reveal a great deal about social and cultural patterns, but it should not be seen as simple reflections (Lomax, 1976, p. 465). A. L. Lloyd, while maintaining that ballads reflect the time and place in which they crystallized, remarks that the reflection “is not direct, not without distortion...the reflection of social reality provided by the ballads is often blurred because so many ghosts of so many pasts are looking back out of the mirror.” It is striking how often themes which are foreign to the mode of life and experience of a group are found in their traditional song. It is vitally important to study actual musical behaviour in any society-the structure of the relationship between creator, form, performer, and audience (Lloyd, 1976, p. 466). It is also important to explore the institutional structure of traditional music before drawing conclusions from its content alone. It may reveal much useful information about the society from which it springs, but it is not a simple mirror of social or cultural phenomena. That image is too mechanical, too static, for traditional music

does not just “reflect” social structure. It helps create it (Lloyd, 1976, p. 468). As George Steiner has written in another context:

So far as language is mirror or counterstatement to the world, or most plausibly an interpenetration of the reflective with the creative along an “interface” of which we have no formal model, it changes as rapidly and in as many ways as human experience itself (Steiner, 1975, p. 19).

Traditional music, ethnic music, popular music, people’s music etc., myriad terms used in various contexts to designate the genre of expressive behaviour more generally calls folk music reflects a wide range of concepts and ideologies. The various rubrics applied to folk music have derived from two fundamental considerations of social organizations. The first emphasized the primacy of the group, or community itself; the second laid greater emphasis on the role of place, whether geographically, politically, or culturally situated (Abrams, 1972, p. 32-33). These two considerations differ according to the relative weight they assign to internal and external processes of cultural production. When group or community is seen as the source of social organization, folk music originates internally and is shaped by the needs and practices of the group; when a concept of place predominates, folk music responds to such external developments, as the intensification of nationalism and the influence of musical genres not specific to the group.

Folk music is inevitably considered to be a performed genre, it is essential to consider its social basis. Who performs? To whom are performances directed? Is folk music shared broadly throughout a community? Or is it maintained by a small group of specialists? The answers to these questions differ significantly from culture to culture, indicating further the vastly different social bases that folk music may exhibit. As a performed genre, folk music can live in a community only through repetition or re-creation, both of which characteristically

require performer and audience. Folk music is therefore distinct from folklore genres that can survive as artifacts, which may or may not assume new life depending on their relation to a community's social basis over time. In short, folk music requires a vital social basis for its continued practice. The close interrelation of folk music and its social basis has been central to many theories of folk music and in some of these theories, folk music and social structure are inseparable; they mirror each other. If music stands in such close relation to society, it clearly exhibits considerable power: "It is an attribute of power in all its forms" (Attali, 1985, p. 6). If texts are used as historical records by a group, they may be useful in reconstructing the history of a culture. However, it is often difficult to judge the authenticity or accuracy of the material, which cannot always be taken at face value (Lloyd, 1976, p. 464). The folklorist Violet Alford, for instance, typifies the antiquarian approach to traditional music as a kind of buried treasure:

Embedded in our folk song and ballads we can find glimpse of our legends and history, valuable sidelights on anthropology, ethnology and a strange and alarming psychology. Digging these out is an absorbing occupation, if nothing more, for folksong is a mirror of man (Alford, 1952, p. 123-124).

"Music creates political order because it is a mirror form of sacrifice" (Attali, 1985, p. 25). Such power is rarely lost upon those who would envision a canon of folk music with an especially ideological resonance for society (Wong 1984). This ideological function is undoubtedly one of the primary motivating forces for the formation of new canons of folk music. Folk music has not, however diminished in its symbolic role of distilling and representing a community's social basis; rather, it has responded to a changing social basis by changing itself, absorbing different repertoires, and reflecting a stylistic congeries. If change and identity are simply matters of choice, how far can one go towards choosing one's own folk music? Folk music, therefore, is not simply the practice and property of a single ethnic group, but it may have very different functions when the settings for its performance shift. The same

musical ensemble may perform both inside and outside the ethnic group; it may perform in settings in which ethnicity is simply taken for granted and in those that demand a clear statement about ethnic values to those who are at best vaguely familiar with the ethnic group, as, for example, on the stage of a folk festival that promulgates a new theme each year. To understand music is to understand the social basis for human expression. Folk music is the crystallization of the cultural core. As folk music is structured, so too is the rest of the society.

The location of folk music at the cultural core has persisted to the present day, even though the reasons and motivations for insisting on such location have proceeded along different paths and contrasts greatly. Both Enlightenment and early romantic writers often portrayed folk music as a bridge between the natural and the civilized worlds. Both humans and animals naturally produced song, but for the former there were also an inherent order and the ability to express emotion. For Herder and subsequent generations of writers on folk music, it is the language of soul and heart; folk music encapsulated the cultural core before society complicated it. The social bases of folk music are very different, at one level, religion determines cultural boundaries, at still other levels generational cohesion and the availability of technology shape the formation of musical repertoires and styles. Folk musical traditions hold deep socio-cultural significance, serving as a bridge between generations, preserving heritage, and fostering community identity. These traditions often reflect the historical, social, and cultural narratives of a region, shaping collective memory and shared experiences. The evidence of multiple cultural boundaries in folk music, whether the result of performers' choices or a part of the tradition, usually testifies to considerable creativity in folk music, such creativity has no doubt always been a force for change in folk music, but it is even more widespread in the folk music of industrialized and multiethnic societies. Here the very presence of cultural boundaries is more extensive, as are the choices necessary to negotiate them. But as these choices multiply, so do the processes of change and the varieties of folk music itself.

When different ethnic communities and social groups come into contact, the interrelation of cultural core and boundaries becomes more dynamic. As one is forced to recognize other traditions, one is more sharply aware of the characteristics of one's own, and folk music in there plays a pivotal role. The institutionalization of ethnic folk music demonstrates considerable resilience and the ability to change. The institutions of ethnic culture do not simply reaffirm tradition from within; they may also strengthen ethnicity by allowing and then controlling the mixture of a group's traditions with those of other groups and external society in general.

Folk Festivals also serves as an institutional mechanism whereby ethnicity is made manageable. Many folk festivals reduce the active process of ethnic identification to several common denominators, most commonly food, dress, and folk music. The social basis of folk music is constantly in flux. That, flux, however, is not freely determined by any choices made by any group perceiving self-identity. It is instead, a flux that results from the dynamic interrelation of core and boundaries. This dialectic couples persistent change with conservative tendencies that stem change. Necessitating the dialectic folk music's essentially performative nature. As a genre of expressive behaviour, folk must be learned, and some form of repetition is requisite. Folk music cannot be acquired at will; it restricts, to some extent, the openness to choose and share identity. If the social basis of folk music changes according to certain constraints, it changes nonetheless.

Folk songs passed down through generations to contemporary genres is a cornerstone in the formation of collective and individual identities, this musical style are not only a means of artistic expression but also serves as markers of cultural pride, defining who a group is and where it comes from, for many, listening to and performing on such music is an affirmation of one's cultural identity, helping to preserve traditions and pass them on to future generations.

Folk Music is far more than just an art form or a source of entertainment—it is a vital component of cultural identity.

Notes:

- i. Betel nuts and leaves.
- ii. Local brew served in bamboo cups.
- iii. The worshipping place specially the temples of Deoris.
- iv. Kundi means Lord Mahadeva and Mama means Goddess Parvati of the Deoris.
- v. Shiva of the Deoris.
- vi. Goddess Kali of the Deoris.
- vii. A person irrespective of gender who is possessed by the deity of the Deoris.
- viii. The new moon day of the lunar calendar according to the Deoris.
- ix. The dance performance accompanied by folk songs and musical instruments specially performed during the Bisu festival is the bisu husori performance of the Deoris.
- x. The holy place of the Deoris where spiritual, devotional activities takes place.
- xi. The bisu celebrated in the month of April also known as ibaku bisu by the Deoris.
- xii. The word means blessing or a desert flower, which is much like Jasmine flower. It is considered as a pious flower and is used while offering prayers to the deities by the Deoris.
- xiii. The area adjunct to the holy deity room where woman are not allowed to enter, where the priests and other deoghaar officials of the Deoris are allowed to sit and rest.
- xiv. The magiyo bisu of the Deoris which is celebrated in the month of January is also known as kemesu bisu.
- xv. The five types of puja performed by the Deoris.

- xvi. Rice flute cakes where black sesame seeds and jaggery is added as stuffing; it is basically a sweet delicacy specially prepared in both the bisu festivals magiyo and ibaku bisu of the deoris. It is served with tea.
- xvii. A sweet delicacy specially prepared in both the bisu festival of the Deoris it is made of flatten rice where curd is added with jaggery.
- xviii. Sweets prepared of coconut by adding jaggery or sugar to it.
- xix. Sweet delicacies prepared from rice powder.
- xx. Puffed Rice.
- xxi. It is instant rice which requires no cooking. It is rendered fluffy and can be consumed just after soaking in water for few minutes. It is made from bora saul (sticky rice) by soaking over night and then boiling and sun-drying for further use.
- xxii. Rice which is cooked in hollow bamboo tubes; a sticky type of rice.
- xxiii. It is variety of glutinous rice found in Assam. It's a soft rice variety which is pounded and used to make rice cakes popularly known as pithas.
- xxiv. Curd or yogurt.
- xxv. Jaggary made of sugarcane.
- xxvi. The local brew of Deoris; the side dish consisting of salty, spicy items such as fries and curries etc is together known as suje kaji.
- xxvii. The kati bisu celebrated in the month of October is known as asiring bisu amongst the Deoris.
- xxviii. It is the last month of the Hindu calendar.
- xxix. It is the first month of Hindu calendar
- xxx. A common ground or area specially made for the bisu rehearsals of the Deoris.
- xxxi. The bonse or gamusa a piece of cloth specially woven during the bisu which is offered to near and dear ones as token of love and respect.

- xxxii. Also known as rajkema is one of a major ritual of the Deoris.
- xxxiii. The ritual where a boat is made of banana stems and leaves by the folk and is set in the river which is marked on the last day of bisu or in the bisu uraba day of the Deoris. It is performed as a ritual where the Deoris bid goodbye to bisu festival for a year and doesn't play any musical instruments or perform bisu dance for a year.
- xxxiv. Songs sung during the bisu festival is known as bihugeet; these songs are specifically folk songs.
- xxxv. Songs sung during marriage ceremonies from both the sides (bride and groom); there are singers who consecutively sing biyanaam from the beginning of the rituals of marriage till the end of the marriage ceremony. These songs are sung only in marriage ceremonies but not other festivals.
- xxxvi. These are more of spiritual songs sung by the elder group of women folk of the community; this aiinaam are sung specially when in the village one is suffering from pox, measles etc. a local belief that if one sings spiritual songs worshipping goddesses (aii) the person recovers from illness. These songs cannot be sung elsewhere in any other occasions except for these.
- xxxvii. Golden Ladder; a folk belief of the Deoris where the Gods and Goddesses descends from heavenly abode to the earth through a golden ladder.
- xxxviii. The head priest of the Deoris commonly called as pomiya.
- xxxix. Camphor tree leaves commonly known as kimaru paat by the Deoris.
- xl. It literally means the jewel hut, it is an independent room located towards the eastern end of a prayer house; it is the place that represent's the Lord's seat.
- xli. Holy water which is sprinkled with camphor leaves on the folks during holy, special occasion of the Deoris.

- xlvi. Altar of Gods; the highest of seat in order or rank; a seat of highest rank after God or Deity the possessed person is given a seat followed by the head priest, other office bearers of the holy shrine and then the common folk of the Deoris.
- xlii. It is one of the most eloquent and longest of the Devi Mahatmyam's four hymns. It throws light on the concepts of good and evil, fate, free will, karma and divine grace. The hymn praises Durga as good fortune in the dwellings of the virtuous and misfortune in the abodes of the wicked.
- xliii. The singer specifically of folk songs, one who leads the troop of folk song singers.
- xliv. Goddess, Devi, Female deity is known as Guxani.
- xlv. A specially woven piece of cloth with floral prints on both the ends; it is gifted as token of love and respect to elder people or near and loved ones on bisu festival.
- xlvi. The first fortnight between New moon day and full moon day is called Gaura Paksha or Shukla paksha; the period of waxing moon or brightening moon. The navami tithi means the ninth day in the lunar fortnight of Hindu calendar. It is considered auspicious to make all kinds of new beginnings in this shuklapaksha navami tithi.
- xlvii. The head priest of the Deoris.
- xlviii. Handsome young man in the Deori Dialect.
- l. Beautiful young girl in the Deori Dialect.
- li. A waist tie which holds a small knife and beetle nuts and leaves.
- lii. The last day of bisu festival of the Deoris.
- liii. The altar of Goddess, Devi, female deity
- liv. It's a rural game rather an old game played by the village kids or folk by tying big knot in one of the end of a gamusa and the other end is like the tail of the knot which resembles more of a ball with a tail; an open space is chosen and an area is made by drawing four lines parallel and in between a line is drawn separating two consecutive

spaces; Two teams are made of 4 or 6 persons and one has to throw that tail ball to the other team and if the ball touches the one of the other team that one has to be out. It is more or less same like the Kabbadi game.

- lv. Smoke lit from hay; it is specially lit in the evening in the gateway or near the cowshed to chase the mosquitoes.
- lvi. The council of priests; the council is considered as the law makers of the Deori society; the council plays a vital role in the community programs.
- lvii. The stanzas consisting of repetitions in a song.
- lviii. The lyrics and wordings of a song in the Deori dialect.
- lix. The dance performers in the Deori dialect is known as nasaniyaars.
- lx. The one who collects money that is offered to the dance troop while performing husori.
- lxi. People who are specially given the charge of inspection of the rules and regulations that are to be followed by the husori troop while performing.
- lxii. The person who is especially given the charge of monitoring the husori troop from day 1 till the last day by the pujari parixxadh and husori committee of the Deori community.
- lxiii. A turban made of silk cloth.
- lxiv. A dhoti or the lower cloth specially worn by the males which is made of silk.
- lxv. A specially prepared attire or the upper cloth worn by the males and for the namoti (singer) in particular for the husori performance
- lxvi. A belt made of old coins of silver trinkets to be worn by the singer of the husori troop.
- lxvii. A crown made of cloth and trinkets just to be worn by the singer (namoti) for the husori performnance.

- lxviii. Bamboo sliced and made as clappers; this bamboo clappers acts as an instrument while performing in the husori dance it helps in giving the beats to the songs sung and helps the dancers to gather pace and change steps as per the strikes of the clappers.
- lxix. It is tradition to offer a sum of money to the husori troop after performance by the owner of the family in whose courtyard husori performance had taken place. The xorai is a platter specially of bronze where a sum of money (it has to be even number of rupees like 11/-, 51/- 101/-, 501/-, 1001/- etc., accordingly round amount is not given generally) the money is wrapped in freshly cut and washed banana leaf along with it some bisu delicacies and suje is given and is covered with a gamusa. The owners had to bring it to the troop and forward it seek for blessings on their knees and the dhanbharali asks the owner to touch the xorai after giving blessings for the family; after the lady of the family touches the xorai is accepted by the husori troop.
- lxx. It is a hand-loomed piece of cloth specially woven for the males; on the top the males drape a chadar (a long piece of cloth) known as seleng chadar.
- lxxi. A feast where the Deoris prepare culinary/food items adding black pepper to it. A special feast where each item is made adding black or common pepper to it. The Deori village folk enjoy this feast together.
- lxxii. This bisu is specially celebrated by making several bisu sweet delicacies made of rice powder (pithaguri), coconut, sesame, jaggery or sugar as fillers (commonly called as pithas); rice powder flutes, rice cakes of different size, shapes and varieties and is offered to guests in large quantities.
- lxxiii. The shravan month (July to August); a puja specially offered in the holy shrine during this month a ritual of the Deoris. As it is done in the month of shravan or saun in common dialect thus, it is known as saun puja.
- lxxiv. The last of December and the first week of January is the puh mah (month).

- lxxv. The night before the Bisu is known as the uruka.
- lxxvi. Silk- cotton tree or Bombax malabaricumsci tree.
- lxxvii. The beejmantras or bija mantras are ‘seed’ mantras which are super powerful and are used in invocations of specific Divine Beings. It is the shortest mantra, which is believed to have formed from the sound waves created when the universe evolved to form. The beejmantras are very powerful words that are used in the invocation of gods and goddesses. One such powerful beejmantra is the chanting of the sound ‘om’.
- lxxviii. Coming down from hills and settling down in the plains is dukiya ki nu ma in the Deori dialect.
- lxxix. Deori folk songs that is to be performed within the area of Deoghaar or inside the holy shrine of the Deoris. These are a mixture of folk and devotional Deori folk songs often performed by the elder folk of the community.
- lxxx. One of the attractive folk dance form of the Deoris. It is performed in a circle by the performers.

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When Oceans Tune Human Being: A Musical Case Study on Some Famous Bengali Folk Songs

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Abstract

Being a part of ecocriticism, blue ecocriticism focuses on the significance of the ocean in the environment. Although oceans cover 70% of the world, the colour green comes to mind whenever we hear “ecocriticism.” In the 19th century, history takes a turn through work on oceanic knowledge and the technology of oceanography, known as Maritime Studies. This field explores waterways and, importantly, the cartographical scope of maritime history. Alongside geographical and cartographical perspectives, another significant interdisciplinary field, blue humanities, examines the links between the ocean and human beings, with art and literature playing key roles. This paper shows how some famous twentieth-century Bengali folk songs popularise novel aspects of the ocean in literature. The *bhatiyali* songs (songs of ebb) by Bangladeshi folk musician Jasim Uddin’s *Amay bhasayili re* and Mukul Chowdhury’s *Ore neel dariya* evoke the sea’s inexplicable vastness and depth. On the other hand, S.D. Burman’s *Ke jas re bhati gang baiya* and Abdur Rahman’s *De de pal tule de* portray sea routes as the easiest ways to travel and communicate. The sea invites us to meet ourselves, defining the soul’s liberty as within, not without. The line *bondi hoiya monoya-pakhi haai re* in *Ore neel dariya* shows how the vast ocean frees the self, letting the caged soul travel the world through its blue currents. These folk tunes reveal how the oceanic blue can versify human expression and inspire self-reflection, making us more humane.

Keywords: oceanography, bay of bengal, blue humanity, bengali folk songs, bhatiyali music

Introduction

The term 'ecocriticism' even though ideologically refers to the study of environmental issues and the possible intake for its sustainability. Yet with due time somehow this focus has become a bit green-centric absenting the existence of 'blue' within its sphere. But does blue not exist or contribute anything to nature or mankind? It is needless to mention that water and specifically the oceans all over the world are responsible to keep the whole natural balance of this earth. Necessarily, it should be a global approach to study nautical or marine history to know the ways of the major waterways, the history of navigation, ships, seafarers, and the predominant national as well as regional history of these oceans.

However, 'blue humanity', as called by Prof. Steve Mentz the literary historian, shifts into a deeper level of oceanic study apart from the technical, geographic, economic, and academic subject of oceanography. There awaits a less explored genre of study concentrating on the relationship of the ocean with mankind. This paper explores how there is rarely a few oceanic literary studies in humanities. It goes apt recalling how John R. Gillis in his paper *The Blue Humanities: In studying the sea, we are returning to our beginnings* quotes David Helvarg saying "more is known about the dark side of the moon than is known about the depths of the oceans".

Researching on seascape of the great delta of the Bay of Bengal this paper discovers a kind of deltaic form of relationship among the ocean, the folks and another significantly relevant feature to include as the third angle is the language and tune of the 'bhatiyali' music. The primary argument of this paper holds on one hand the regional significance of the ocean and the history of the folks, and on the other hand the interplay of bhatiyali music being the centre connecting the two poles. Bhatiyali music is a form of Bengali folk songs composed in colloquial language and mostly sung by and for the boatmen, fishermen, and those who choose

the ocean as their path with the murmurs of the water, the whistling of the winds and rhythm of tide and ebb. Specifically, there are four aspects discussed in different sections of this paper with the annotations of four different bhatiyali songs.

Firstly, a transition from the rustic and pastoral description to the streaming of '*dariya*' to its deeper singularity or oneness with human being. Ecocriticism is not all about the pastoral and green aspects of the nature. Not just the trees or plants that hold significant role in human society, but the oceans too. Secondly, marine exploration that fulfils one's silent craving to return to home and also liberates the self in the process of this oceanic tour. Before technological and industrial development in the transport system, sea-routes used to be the only way to travel. It might take them days or months to reach their home or destination, but in the meantime the oceanic routes therefore became the medium of human emotions engaging them with each other. Thirdly, how blue humanity centres on '*bhatigaan*' the songs based on the history of the people living near the coastline of the Bay of Bengal. This exclusive form of Bengali folk songs, bhatigaan solely deals with the lifestyle of its neighbourhoods, how they survive and how ocean becomes an integral part of them. Most importantly it expresses how the phase of partition does vividly acknowledge the attribution of the ocean uniting emotionally the geographically separated people. Even if people were separated for the partition between two nations, the oceans help them not only to navigate rather also to connect and communicate them with each other. Finally, it shows the ocean transcending from cartographical limitations to touch the level of spiritualism through the ultimate guidance of the '*murshid*' or the almighty. For the devotees to reach Mucca or Madina the route of Bay of Bengal used to be the only way to travel. Thus, it unfolds several historical as well as musical aspects surrounding the route from the river Ganga, Padma, or Tista connecting to the Bay of Bengal and all these aspects are addressed in several songs of bhatiyali music.

Objectives

The primary focus of the paper is to find out how the relationship between the ocean and human beings is so eloquently expressed through some Bengali folk tunes known as *bhatiyali* songs mainly based on the great delta of the Bay of Bengal. This musical case study observes the lyrics, tune, emotion, and context of the songs to interpret its significance in the life of ordinary people like boatmen, fishermen or other residents living near the coastal areas. It researches on how ocean is not just related to them as a geographical travel-route, but also a passage to their emotional connection with their loved ones. As if the ocean not only feeds them helping them out to bring their bread and butter but also assists them to find their home.

Materials and Methodology

Selecting the four key songs- "*Amay bhasaili re*", "*Ore Neel Dariya*", "*Ke jas re bhati gang baiya*" and "*De de pal tule de*" as the primary texts this paper with the methodologies of blue humanities and eco-musicology comes to the fact how music transports the conversation between the ocean and mankind. As per the research transparency and ethical guidelines, there should be mentioned some other books, articles, and journals taken as secondary sources to establish a logical argument impartially. As a secondary text Sidney I. Dobrin's *Blue Ecocriticism and the Oceanic Imperative* is almost a mandatory reading. To analyse the argument of this paper logically texts like Rila Mukherjee's *The Indian Ocean: Historians Writing History* in analysing the marine history and Amitav Ghosh' *The Hungry Tide* etc. have been significantly subsidiary. And without reading Kallol Lahiri's published Bengali novel *Indubala Bhaater Hotel* written on the psychological trauma of the people after the partition of Bengal, this paper could never have met its argument reasonably.

Discussion

A Transition from green to blue:

Even though the umbrella term eco-criticism used by William Rueckert primarily refers to the genre of literature on ecology, the major study concentrates on land-based criticism. Most of the time critics emerge their literary works on green nature and the environment. Wordsworth's *Prelude* and *Tintern Abbey* are earlier examples of how such literary representations stood against the mass transformation from natural to mechanical works during the French Revolution regenerating the significance of human relationships in terms of the sustainability of the greenery.

To talk about ecocriticism most of all talks about the environmental crisis and the possible ways to sustain nature where the green side fits by default in their mind. Whereas the earth is three-fourths (75%) covered with water bodies, how is it logical not to mention it in ecocriticism? Sidney Dobrin does rightly address this literary gap through the phrase "blue deficit" in his *Blue Ecocriticism and the Oceanic Imperative*. It initiates the need to include a vast chapter of marine literature or blue ecocriticism as a part of ecocriticism.

On the other hand, in Bengali music also there is a prominent transition from pastoral music to oceanic compositions. Since folks of both Bengal and Bangladesh are closely related and very much dependent on the Bay of Bengal it is quite impossible not to find any trace of it in music. The familiar environmental ideology of "green" thus very much absent include the "blue" as a part of it and together they make the Bengali folk musical genre a bit more enriched.

While Arun Chakraborty composes a pastoral lyric spotting the rustic charm of the red hills of Purulia and it becomes more famous by Bhoomi band

"Lal paharir deshe ja

Rangamatir deshe ja"

We find the Bangali *pallikabi* Jasimuddin deviating from his pastoral creations contributes the famous bhatiyali music dedicating the Bay of Bengal:

"Amay bhasaili re

Amay dubaili re

Okul dariyar bujhi kul nai re

Kul nai kinar nai naiko dariyar pani

Savdhane chalaiyo majhi amar bhanga tori re"

This song of the ocean portrays the limitless waterbody of having no outline or boundary. The singer requests the boatman to take him carefully on the small boat in this vast ocean. In fact, it is that limitless ocean itself which either drowns us or teaches us to survive and reach home safely. The depth of the blue current invades the deeper thoughts lying in our hearts that *dariya* is often compared to as the oceanic depth of our minds. In *Alien Ocean: Anthropological Voyages in Microbial Seas* Stefan Helmreich does rightly illustrate: "the oceans will not wash away our sins but rather drown us in them".

Now '*dariya*' can be referred to this entire vast world. Decoding its words, it can be said that the singer is in the midst of the world where no periphery could be seen. With a small boat of life, he or she has taken a hike where life itself will teach him, guide him and make him drown in it. And from choosing the land as a safe path to going for the uncertain waterway of ocean to reach the destination marks a shift of knowledge- from known to unknown.

From seascape to liberty of the soul through *bhatiyali* music:

From the very primary stage of civilisation hydrographical charts, nautical invasions, and navigational instruments dominated all over the world politically. Trade, travel, communication, colonialism, monarchs and in fact human civilisation would never have flourished without the maritime approach. And according to the history of marine exploration the greatest delta and the world's largest Bay of Bengal has been playing a vital role in running as the conduit between the East and the West in terms of trade, commercial exchange and culture etc.

We travel through seas, overseas within country or even throughout the world. From Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, to the Romantic poem of Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariners* to the Romantic novel of Melville's *Moby Dick* or Stevenson's *Treasure Island* seascape has always been identified as the natural splendour and limitless route to reach the destination. But apart from its transoceanic contributions, there is a cultural perception of the ocean vividly illustrated in Bengali folk music.

For instance, the song written by Mukul Chowdhury not only portrays the technical transportation through seas but also bringing someone to home:

"Ore neel dariya, amay dere de chhariya

Bondi hoiya monoya pakhi haay re

Kande roiya roiya..."

This song is very personal not only for the boatmen but also for those who have to travel for their profession and stay far away from their families. The language of music and tune here redefines that travelling through the ocean someone can get the feeling of returning home. The

waterscape can be a mere technical route to travel for anyone. But there is a difference between going to the destination and returning home. There is a cultural imagination and perception of coming to one's shelter from the place one belongs to. To interpret philosophically traveling through the vast blue current throws the light on the yearning to set the caged soul free and finally visit the person dwelling in the world within, not without.

Ocean to unite during separation:

Whereas oceanography holds on the chemical and biological features, the ancient history of and the coastline atmospheric conditions due to the ocean, oceanic criticism concentrates on the understanding of human life with it. No matter how wild, untameable and uncertain an ocean can be the total health of the mankind and even the earth are dependent on it. The whole existence of the earth and the livelihood of the individual cradle on the liquid basin of ocean. And here lies the significance of studying oceanic criticism to understand human relationship with its blue currents.

To overcome the deficit of ecocriticism this literary genre of blue ecocriticism not only gives birth to a new dimension of natural study in literature, visual art, films and music. Rather it also explores how ocean is connected to human life. The climatic as well as cultural adoption in terms of oceanic atmosphere play a vital role in marine literature. Maurya's fate to struggle and losing all the male members of her family in J.M Synge's *Riders to the Sea* or Santiago's ironical reward even after constant industrial effort in Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea* show the individual lifestyle and their psychological struggle to survive throughout life being determined of never giving up in the hostile environment of the coastal areas.

Similarly, in Bengali folk music also poets explore the vastness of the sea showing the influence of the ocean, its forms of wave and the coastal lifestyle and life stories of the nearby inhabitants in their musical compositions. Especially, the song of ebb or the downstream known

as 'bhatiyali' the musical genre of the boatmen consists of their lifestyle depending on and their emotional bond with the sea. These songs evoke how the Bay of Bengal has been a crucial part of their livelihood both in their economical and emotional need manifesting the literary genre of blue humanities.

The ocean or even these *bhatiyali* songs have not only been a part of their travel route but they also pertain to their stories, their struggle and their history. For example, the famous song sung by Shachin Dev Burman and written by his wife, a contemporary great lyricist Mira Dev Burman born in Cumilla (Bangladesh) unfurls the story of a woman requesting the boatmen to address her urge to her brother to visit her own motherland in the context of Bengal partition:

"Kejas re bhati gang baiya

Amar bhaidhon re koiya

Naiyornitokoiyatora, kejas

Bochhor khani ghura gelo, gelo re

Bhaiyer dekha pailamna, pailamna

Koiljaam ar puira gelo, gelo re

Bhaiyer dekha pailamna

Chhilam re koto asha loiya,

Bhai naailo gelo gelo

rather mela choila, tora kejas..."

To translate this heart-wrenching sentimental piece of lyrics it can be said that it has a pivotal role not only in the musical world but also in the history of both East and West Bengal. In the context of the Bengal partition, it retells the story of the speaker who is separated from her family residing in *opar Bangla* what is now Bangladesh communicating to her own brother. Post-marriage she requests the boatmen to convey her urge to her brother to ship her there in her *desh bari* which is her own motherland. A year has passed and she is still waiting for the arrival of her brother to come and take her away there at her home. And in communicating with her brother and visiting her homeland the ocean plays the most vital role.

How do folk songs transcend the cartographical boundary through the music of ebb:

Since *Baul* music even following the traditional styles and forms of Bengal folk compositions is essentially enrooted in Sufism the mystical practice to attain the Almighty. On the other hand, *bhatiyali* music is originated from the history of the boatmen and the nearby residents. Since, the sound of water is the most familiar thing for them, *bhatiyali* music specifically portrays the story of the ups and downs of ordinary people with the rhythm of the tide and ebb of the waterways. Sometimes, these songs are addressed to their loved ones, sometimes to the sea itself, and sometimes to the almighty.

For the final instance, here is a folk song by Abdur Rahman Boyati which is *bhatiyali* in its form, yet immensely rich in spiritualism of the wandering tune of *baul*:

"De de pal tule de, majhi hela korisna

Chhere de nouka, ami jabo madina

Duniyai nabi elo, maa aminor ghore

Hasile hazar manik, kandile mukta jhore

Dayal murshid jar sakha, tar kiser bhabona

Amar hridoy majhe kaba, noyone madina..."

Invoking the boatman of a small sailing boat, this bhatiyali song brings a picture of the water-route from the river Ganga or Padma to the distant bank of Madina of Arabia, the second holiest city after Mecca for the people following the religion of Islam. These monasteries preach humanity, equality and brotherhood through Sufism. The singer psalms in the praise of the monotheistic prophet Hazrat Muhammad who is biologically born to Aminah. To elucidate spiritually it eulogises the prophet as the lord and the ultimate saviour from all the misery of the earth. Once again, the ocean here becomes the path to reach the holy place of the almighty. However, it can be said that the song transcending the cartographical boundary touches the ground of mysticism through its ultimate submission and staunch devotion.

Conclusion:

However, this paper on blue humanity here not only refers to the oceanic study in terms of its relationship with humanity. It not just focuses on the contribution of the ocean as a conveyer. Rather, it brings on the meaningful omnipresence of music in not just representing the rhythm and song of ebb, but also in portraying the history of those ordinary folks residing nearby the Bay of Bengal. Observing and researching their history marine historian Rila Mukherjee in her *The Indian Ocean: Historians Writing History* finds that there is a significant play of memory and desire as well giving examples of the contemporary novels of Amitav Ghosh' *The Hungry Tide* and Kunal Bose' *The Japanese Wife* etc.

The research clarifies the significant shift from the rustic tune to the 'blues' referring to the ocean as well as a Western interpretation of the Hindustani raga '*desh*'. The vastness of the sea and its cultural imagination does perfectly match the depth of one's mind. Seascape engages

itself enroute to the sea wanderers to their loved ones, to their homes. Sometimes, it is the streams of the ocean that run in the human stream of consciousness bringing on thousands of memories along with it. The ocean, the music, and the boatmen meet and become the conveyor of a woman waiting for his brother to take away to her geographically separated motherland. In fact, it is the ocean that helps a staunch devotee to meet the ultimate place of holiness crossing the waterway boundaries to reach the door of utmost spiritualism.

Apart from these selected four songs there may be so many other bhatiyali songs as well. But to bring the four aspects of blue humanities in terms of ecomusicology these four tunes have no other substitute so far. To conclude, it can be said that the ocean tunes the folks to visit down the memory lane and ruminate the moments with their loved ones having a silent desire of returning to home. And the bhatiyali form of music not only accelerates it but also let them break their solitude and express their untold and unheard desire through words.

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Mankirdias: A Study on the Silent Erosion of the Socio-Cultural Heritage of an ethno-nomadic tribe

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Abstract

The onslaught of modernity has been nowhere more telling than it has been on the lives of the country's indigenous people and their socio-cultural and economic mosaic. Introduction of modern technologies and expansion of industries have made deep inroads into their natural habitat. In fact, modern lifestyles and changes have proved to be a double whammy for them. They killed the demand for their forest-based products while the tribe was denied access to their primary sources of living. Mankirdia of Odisha, one of the 13 PVTGs in the state, are a case in point. Despite government interventions, the Mankirdia community continues to face challenges such as socio-economic marginalisation, poor access to education, lack of healthcare and erosion of their traditional knowledge. The present study is an attempt to throw light on the socio-cultural life of the Mankirdias and to flag the systemic assault on the ethnic-nomadic community. It would also suggest ways to preserve their socio-cultural and linguistic heritage. It would also highlight the need for introducing culturally sensitive strategies to preserve their culture and heritage while improving their living conditions.

Keywords: Mankirdias, PVTGs, indigenous, tribals, Odisha, ethnic-nomadic community, monkey

Introduction

Odisha, one of the major states in the country in terms of its tribal demography, is home to 62 types of tribes including 13 particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs). Tribals account for as much as 22.84 percent of its population. They eat monkey (mankad) meat and that is why they are called Mankirdias. The Mankirdias are one of the lesser known, semi-nomadic ethnic groups. Locally known as Birhors, the Mankirdias, by nature, are docile, upright and honest. They are intimately connected with the nature making them to lead a laidback life. They take pleasure in wandering in jungles and hilly areas. Nature fascinates them. Their socio-economic life is intertwined with forests. Yet, their life is beset with challenges. They have little access to education, healthcare, sanitation, markets and so on. They speak Munda language although they are not completely unfamiliar with Odia. Peripatetic by choice, lately they are forced to permanent settlements, far away from their original habitats. They live in tandis and kumbhas (dome like leaf houses). The size of Mankirdia population has been dwindling over years. According to 2001 census, the number of people of this community was 1,050 which has increased to 2,222 in 2011. Years of neglect and lack of economic support have forced the tribe to relocate to places far away from forests. At present, members of the Mankirdia community are found in Kaliapani and Daitari mines areas of Jajpur and in Bishoi, Jashipur, Kaptipada, Karanjia and Khunta block of Mayurbhanj districts.

Objectives of this study

There have not been enough studies on the Mankirdias. Whatever work has been done, they have been mostly in the realm of their socio-economic lives. Not much has been said about their culture and traditions. There have been a few media reports studies by and NGOs. The SCSTRTI, Govt of Odisha, has some publications on PVTGs, including on Mankirdias. There is a need to provide insight into the present state and status of the Mankirdias. This study is an

attempt to facilitate actions for the security and development of the Mankirdia tribe and ensure preservation of their socio-cultural heritage.

Methodologies

Primary raw data was collected through household surveys, group discussions, interviews and observations. Research scholar Ranjan Kumar Khanda met community members at their hamlets and had extensive interactions with them. He met Bhadra Hembram and Ramdas Dak of Durdura in Mayurbhanj district, Sadhu Hembram, Jhampa Singh and Sania Singh of Kaliapani near Daitari mines areas in Jajpur district.

Houses and settlements

The Mankirdias are mostly wanderers. They travel long distances in jungles in search of games and forest produce. They sometimes cross the state and return after two to three years. They live in tandas and kumbhas (dome like leaf structures).

Tandas – Tandas are basically temporary leaf hutments. They are set up after the suitability of the site is tested and endorsed by the Dehury (the priest). It is usually set up at a place close to water bodies, weekly hats (market place) and forests. An average Tanda comprises 10 to 15 families. In a Tanda there are kumbhas (leaf huts) where individual families live and there are two other huts in the Tanda, called ‘dhugala’, that are used by unmarried boys and ‘kudi ada’ used by unmarried girls for sleeping in nights. In one separate kumbha, Tanda deities are enshrined.

Kumbha: Kumbhas are simple structures, made of twigs with leaves of sal trees. They are window less units which are good enough to prevent leakages. The average height of a kumbha is about five feet with a circumference of 46 to 50 feet. Mankirdia families take a few hours to erect a kumbha. They are also used to house domestic animals and household articles.

Food habits

What makes the Mankirdias stand out among the other indigenous tribes is their habit of consuming monkey meat. Besides feeding on forest produce, they catch birds, hares, deer etc with the help of traps and nests. They sell various types of ropes called sikur, pagha barehi, kodadgha, meronijoda, dhaunri in the markets for cash. They collect barks, roots, honey and fibres from the forest to sell them in the markets to supplement their income. During scarce period, they eat mango kernel. Their staple food is rice which they buy from the market. They are fond of alcoholic drink locally known as handia and mahuli which their women prepare at homes. Mankirdia males smoke and chew tobacco.

Table-1

Local Term	Mankirdia Term	Manner of Use	Daily out turn
1.Sika (Sling)	Sikur	Used in carrying poles for carrying things on shoulders	2 pairs per head
2.Pagha (Halter for cattle)	Pagha	Rope for tethering cattle	20 pieces per head
3.Barjao (Rope for drawing water)	Barehi	Used for drawing water by means of pots from wells	20 pieces per two persons

4.Panda Chhati (Halter foe buffalo)	Kodadgha	Ropes in which buffaloes are tethered	8 to 10 pieces per head
5.Chheli pagha (Halter for goat)	Meronijoda	For tying goats	20 pieces per head
6.Jaunli (Rope used during harvest)	Dhaunri	For tying cattle at the time of harvest	10 to 12 pieces per head

Socio-cultural life

They practice the cult of ancient worship as they believe after deaths, the deceased continues to influence the fate of those living. The headman of the tanda, the smallest socio-political unit, is known as Mukha. He acts as the priest and commands respect from among the community members. Customary disputes are discussed and resolved in tanda council. They eat cooked food in the homes of Saantals and Kolhas but it is not the other way round. However, Mankirdias do not accept cooked food from the Muslims, SCs and the Kharia tribes. Prior to marriage, Mankirdia boys and girls spend at least two years in dormitories to learn the lessons of life from their seniors before their marriage proposals are negotiated and finalised. They

practice monogamy. They have patriarchal and patrilineal systems. They practice marriage by negotiations, exchange and elopement. Music and dance are an integral part of their rituals and festivals. Folk songs are an important part of their oral traditions. Songs are passed down through generations and are rendered during festivals, marriage ceremonies, hunting and harvest cycles. Songs often describe nature, spirits, animals and tribal legends. Their music instruments are simple and they include clappers, drums, and flutes made of bamboo or wood. Their dances are typically group performances held during festive occasions and ceremonial rituals. Both men and women participate in the dance.

Festivals

Festivals celebrated by Mankirdias include Maghe Parab (harvest festival), Jani Parab (dedicated to female deities), Karama festival (worship of karama tree), Sohari/Bandana (cattle worship and thanks giving to nature's spirit) and Chiata Parab (dedicated to forest spirit held in the months of March and April). They wear simple, handmade clothes usually made from coarse cotton or locally available forest materials. Men usually wear a small loin cloth locally called languti. In colder seasons, they wrap a coarse cloth or shawl around their upper bodies. Women wear a short sari-like cloth that covers their waist and part of upper body. It is tied under their arms, leaving the shoulders open. They do not use blouses or petticoats. They use beads, shells, forest seeds, sometimes metal wires or aluminium pieces in their ornaments such as necklaces, bangles, earrings, anklets and toe rings. The Mankirdia style of dress and ornaments reflects their deep connection with nature. Modern influences have crept in the way they dress themselves and the ornaments they use. Traditional healing practices are reflected in their belief system and community rituals. The ojha or gunia is the traditional healer in the Mankirdia community. They act as spiritual guides, herbalists and folk doctors.

Religious practices

Mankirdia households of Durdura in Mayurbhanj and Kaliapani area of Jajpur districts have converted to Christianity that has resulted in major changes in their religious practices. Earlier, the Mankirdias worshipped elements of nature. They worshipped sun as their supreme deity whom they address as ‘logobir’ and budhimai. They practiced ancestor worship for the purpose of enjoying good health and achieving success in hunting and collection of forest produce. Every clan had its own deity for which a small leaf hut is constructed in the tanda and food and prayers are offered to the deity. Now, all Mankirdia households practice Christianity. They have shunned almost all their traditional religious practices, including worship of ‘logobir’ and ‘budhimai’.

Language

They speak a language known as Mankidia or Mankirdia which is considered a dialect of the Munda or of Austroasiatic language family, especially related to Kharia or Mundari. The Mankirdias of Kaliapani area speak Biradha language. A few common words from the Mankirdia dialect are given below.

Kudum – forest, tendu- forest tree used for bidi, Jal-water, Khuda- god or spirit (used by Mankirdias in (Durdura). Jiba- Sinoaabu, Mu Khaibi – Jaasabu, Jatra-jatra, Hata-hat, Sangagatisinua, Mela-mela Sakala-setaena, Sanja-aayopena, Rati- nindaaana, Namaskar-juhar. Kunia-hechina, Bhata-mandi (Odia – Biradha). The Biradha language is the traditional language spoken by the Birhor tribe (another local name for the Mankirdias). Birhor belongs to an Austroasiatic Munda sub-group. The Mankirdia language is not well documented, and many of their words are borrowed from their surroundings, tribal or regional languages like Odia, Mundari or Kharia. Their vocabulary often includes forest-related and nature-based terms as they are traditionally hunter-gatherers and rope- makers. Their language is not

traditionally written; it is mostly spoken. Their vocabulary shares similarities with other Munda languages like Santali and Ho.

Folk songs of Mankirdias

As per the data collected from kaliapani and durdura mankirdias sing their songs in local language sadri .sadri plays avital role in shaping their daily communication, cultural practices and social identity. Sadri belongs to the Indo – Aryan Language family. It is widely used as Lingua franca among various tribal groups, including Mundas, Kharias and Mankirdias. It contains many borrowed words from Odia and Hindi. Sadri language is primarily associated with the Mankirdias and is spoken in Keonjhar, jajpur and Mayurbhanj district of Odisha and in the areas bordering Jharkhand. Sadri reflects an imprint of several regional languages such as Odia, Sambalpuri, Jharkhandi, Keonjhari dialects and Bhojpuri. The Keonjhari and Jharkhandi dialects have influenced the phonetic and intonational characters of Sadri. Mankirdias speak Biradha. However, after their conversion to Christianity, they sing songs in Sadri during their prayers.

Song 1

“Jungle re mora jeewan re saathi

Har din tor naam re baati

Chingari jaisi tor hasi,

Mor man re lagay masti.”

Odia

“ଜଙ୍ଗଲ ମୋ ଜୀବନ ସାଥୀ

ନୀତି ତୋ ନାମେ ଜଳାଏ ବତୀ

ହସ ତୋର ଚିଙ୍ଗାରୀ ଭଳି

ମନେ ଆନନ୍ଦ ଦେ ତୁ ହସି

English

Oh forest, you are my beloved

Everyday I light a lamp in your name

Your smile is like a flame

Which feels my heart with joy and pleasure

Song no-02

“Jungal Jungal sab kuchh det hai

Ped ke niche hamara ghar hai,

Hawa bole, panchi gaaye,

Jivan hamar jungal ma aaye.”

Odia

“ଜଙ୍ଗଲ ଜଙ୍ଗଲ ସର୍ବସ୍ବ ଦିଏ

ଗଛର ତଳେ ଆମରି ଘର

ଘରେ ଆମରି ପବନ ବୁଲେ

ପକ୍ଷୀ ଗାଏ ଗୀତ

ଜୀବନ ବନ୍ଧା ଆମ ଜଙ୍ଗଲେ ଜଙ୍ଗଲେ ।”

English

Oh forest, you have given us everything in life

Beneath your trees we live

Your breeze whizzes past our homes

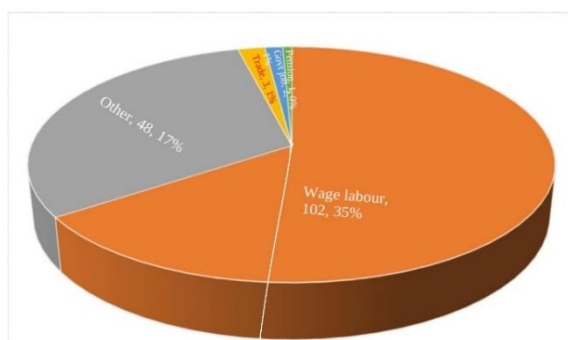
Birds cheep

Our life is tied with you

Socio -cultural transformation

With the loss of their natural habitats and dwindling demand for their wares, the Makirdias have been reduced to penury. They have been forced to migrate to urban pockets and near industrial places in search of work. The government, on its part, has also taken a few measures for their upliftment. The govt interventions can be broadly classified as follows: PVTGs development programme, cash schemes such as KALIA, PM-KISHAN and BALARAM scheme, Self Help groups (SHGs), establishment of Ashram schools.

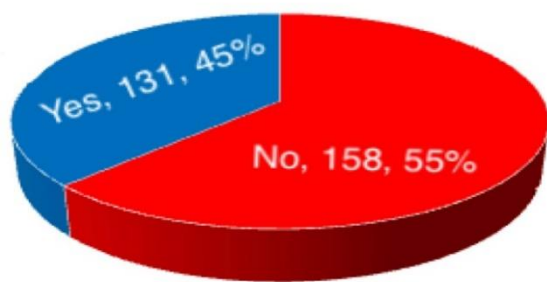
Chat-01



48.17% -depends on forest,35%-wage

labour,only two person's have some kind of regular salary job,other includes producing rope items .

Chat-02



45% of mankirdia population

availed KALIA scheme,survey based on rangamatia,mahalibasa,kendumundi and durdura panchayat,survey conducted by Debabrata padhi, Barsha das,Archana satapathy(ph.D Research scholars of Departmaent of Odia,Ravenshaw University,cuttack.

PIC -1 (Dialogue with Jhampa Singh)



Pic -2 A Mankirdia house at Kaliapani



PIC-3 (Dialogue with Sadhu Hembram of Durdura, Mayurbhanj)



PIC-4 A house model of

Mankirdia



Summing up

The Mankirdia tribe of Odisha, once known for their unique lifestyle, rich cultural identity and symbiotic relationship with forests, now faces the grave challenge of social dislocation and cultural erosion. The intrusion of modernity, urbanisation, industrialization, deforestation, displacement and socio-economic marginalisation have disrupted their traditional livelihood, weakened their social structures, and diluted their indigenous knowledge systems. Govt interventions, though well-intentioned, have failed to protect their long-held practices. While we cannot deny the need for their socio-economic development, we must show sensitivities to protect and preserve their unique characters. Development should be rooted in their traditional values. We cannot impose development from top in the guise of bringing them into mainstream and in the process uproot them from their roots and thereby risk losing their identity and way of life. Preservation of culture is not only vital for their survival but perpetuation of India's diversity and tribal mosaic.

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LITERATURE

Myths, Tradition and a Pilgrimage towards Liberation in *Raja Rao's The Serpent and the Rope & Kanthapura*

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Abstract

The attempt of Indian readers to comprehend Raja Rao is to pin one's faith on Indian *puranas* and myths. In *The Serpent and the Rope*, Raja Rao has to move heaven and earth to touch upon all aspects of life, while in *Kanthapura* he relates the narrative to the *Sthalapurana*, where Indian village life, seen as a microcosm, is bound to the greater myth of India. This connection extends further to Kenchama Devi. A great human figure like Gandhi, or the divine king Rama, is believed to have walked through that village to awaken people's sentiments toward the greater achievement of freedom. The *Serpent and the Rope* is an all encompassing epic marching towards fulfillment of truth in one's being bringing into account variegated repercussions of myths, histories, philosophies, politics, religions and diplomacies laden with stalwarts and pioneers in the past. An international scene is the greater arena of life for *Ramaswamy* to toe the line while he is in search of truth of the absolute, a detachment of the man of the world to forsake all illusions to access the perfect or the illustrious one. These cumulative experiences bring him to the knowledge of the Supreme. At this point, the tremors of the world no longer prick or harass the pilgrim who has reached his destination in Absolute Truth, untouched by the transient factors of life. Madeleine, meanwhile, dances to the tune of *Ramaswamy* by attempting to glimpse daylight through the practice of Buddhist self-realization.

Keywords: myths, liberation, metaphysics, scriptures, truth

The march of *Ramaswamy* from illusion to reality, from the outer and bigger world, the serpent towards recognition of his individual self, the rope and *Moorthy*'s growing faith in *satyagraha*, passive resistance and non-cooperation to overcome colonial servitude designed by the British to attain Indian Independence with Gandhi as the pivot and pioneer of non-violent rebellion are a firm stand of Raja Rao as the typical Indian mind to foreground Indian mythical tradition and soul-force or moral force as the chief weapon of man against unruly subjugation, colonial suppression and spiritual degeneration. *Ramaswamy* in *The Serpent and the Rope* is introspective enough to discriminate within himself his love-affairs with the lady, *Savitri*, his association with *Saroja*, *Laxmi*, *Catherine* and others. He, in course of time, is able to access at the reality transcending above the illusion of life. The goody-good feelings and pleasing belongingness with ladies prove him very tough and the purpose of life towards liberation of his self pricking within himself seems a possibility by undoing transitory, temporal or ephemeral associations. The concept of veracity of the non-dual self lies in not both illusion and reality but the oneness of the outer and inner self being immortal and indestructible. One has to be either the rope or the Serpent, not both. The liberation lies in transcending *maya* or illusion by virtue of his experiences to negate his illusory vision and undertake the reality of the rope to undo the alluring and deluding serpent.

Rao's *Kanthapura* carries the microcosm of the villagers of Kanthapura towards fulfillment of the urge of emancipation of the people from British Wrath; the weapon less Indians worship Gandhi as an *avatar*, *Kenchamma* as the powerful deity to offer them moral strength at each crisis. Gandhi had convinced in his principles to use non-violence, as the greatest weapon to defeat any powerful weapon in the world. *Moorthy*, the staunch *Gandhian* is chosen as the sole leader to carry all his local people to access at the zenith of success, the liberation of Indian nation along with the perfection of the individual soul polished with the means of passive resistance, *satyagraha*, fasting and non-cooperation. Recurrent violent

treatments and imprisonment are reacted with tolerance and peaceful resistance taught by Buddhist texts to Gandhi.

The *Serpent and the Rope* is an inner quest within the self encompassing the international scenario and *Kanthapura* is a national scene felt by each individual of *Kanthapura*. The outer self is realized in the inner and vice-versa. People who are naturally impulsive and violent believe in being non-violent. Gandhi's austere practices backed by scriptures seem real in *Kanthapura*. *Madeleine*, the French wife of *Ramaswamy* practices Buddhist religious ways even without the presence of *Ramaswamy*. *Ramaswamy* is addressed as *Krishna* and *Madeleine* is the authentic beloved of *Ramaswamy*. The French school teacher, *Madeleine* bears ethereal love for him. Each one is ready to hold out the olive branch for the other. Savitri, who loves *Ramaswamy* is advised to be obedient to her husband, *Pratap*, without bearing much of fuss for *Ramaswamy*. Being obedient, she is the chaste lady to protect *Satyaban* of the Indian myth.

The unfathomable depth of philosophies, myths and puranas characterize Raja Rao's fictions which is a symbiotic relationship, the umbra inside the penumbra, the base within the superstructure, i.e. the materialistic relationship between *Ramaswamy* and *Madeleine* seems to touch intermittently their longing for spiritual manifestations, Buddhist effervescences and their quest to overcome illusions by transcending worldly entanglements to reach the super-conscious beings felt within each one. *Kanthapura* presents an assimilation of Gandhian tradition, native ways of life prompted by scriptures to be adapted as the spiritual ventures of Indians to win their material cause of obtaining freedom from the tyrannical foreign government. *Moorthy*, an adept in Gandhian principles seems trustworthy for the local followers to take towards liberation which is, at the same time, both national and individual. In order to win one's cause of freedom of the province from foreign rule, one has to put up with a good disposition of oneself, not being afraid of violent suppression of force, *lathis*, British

guns and imprisonment. Similarly, *Ramaswamy* in *The serpent and the Rope* falls in love with Madeleine to progress in the metaphysical cause of learning recognition of the non-dual self; involvement in life does not present a felt effect of material prosperity. Rather, it pricks *Ramaswamy*, the Indian mind synthesized from the epics of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, with several repercussions of Indian mythical tradition, not a confused bend of mind but an elated being marching towards truth, discovering temporal associations as fickle and untrustworthy. The obstacles of life do not restrict his inner exhilaration, rather it teaches that one should not be cowed and terrified by displeasures created by loss of one's relatives, kith and kin, separation from time to time from one's beloved, fiancés and crises of one's family. *Ramaswamy* does not turn turtle when he comes away from Madeleine in France to conduct the marriage ceremony of his sister, previously the death ceremony of his father and several other occasions of his family. *Savitri* longs for him but to retrace back that she should love her husband as *Savitri* of the Indian myth expresses her chastity for *Satyaban* and *Ramaswamy*, himself advises *Savitri* for such socially honoured practices in her life. One should pick and choose trustworthy social practices to reach quickly the final motto of life, detachment from worldly strangles. Further, *Ramaswamy* mentions about other girls as his company like *Saroja*. He says. "*Saroja* was a strange sensation for me." (Rao, 2014, p. 49). However, *Ramaswamy* has learnt from India that a lady who is neither one's wife nor one's concubine should be treated as a sister. Thus, *Ramaswamy* feels *Saroja* a sister. *Ramaswamy* reminds also *Sukumari*, a younger girl than *Saroja*, an associate of *Saroja*.

According to Alan W. Watt myth is to be defined as a complex story, no doubt some fact and fantasy, which for various reasons, human beings regard it as a demonstration of the universe and of human life. The oneness with the Indian mythical tradition reverberates throughout; Brahmanism is upheld through *Ramaswamy* illustrating presentation of *Brahma* and spread of knowledge with a touch of holiness in each walk of his life. The Hindu tinge of

mind of the novelist reminds *Vivekananda* and *Ramakrishna* as exemplary figures to disseminate the spark of divinity all around the world. Nature shelters the sacred river the Ganges to breed holiness along the long stretch of miles and the Himalayas stand upright as the highest mountains pointing to higher echelons of life. *Vedantic* ideas are propagated to enchant throughout the world the *Advaita* philosophy laying bare the ways of living taking us towards infallible Truth. Christian humility is portrayed as beautiful along with grand longing for Sanskrit lessons of the enlightening Indian myths. Indian and western lives seem to synthesize into a unity by the coming together of *Ramaswamy* and *Madeleine*. The Muslim religion with Prophet *Muhammad* as the pioneer gives God an authentic place and a solid pedestal among the Muslim devotees of the world. Thus, every religion seems a quest for freedom of one's being. The metaphysical essence of life is discussed to recognize the ultimate soul, the supreme divinity that can settle all conflicts, all queries and is a panacea to put an end to the tremors of human species. Raja Rao asserts, "But life is so much more intelligent than we are to understand. Marxism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Hitlerism, the British commonwealth, the Republics of the United States of America; all are so many names for some unknown principle, which we feel but cannot name. For all the roads as the *Gita* says, lead but to the Absolute." (Rao, 1960, p. 90). The Absolute or the Almighty is the Truth. Raja Rao says, "Krishna fought himself against himself, through himself and in himself, and what remained is ever and ever himself – the Truth" (Rao, 1960, p. 101). The *vedantic* ideal preaches that illusion or *maya* cannot affect the Truth. Rao says, "*Maya* is *Maya* to *Maya* – *Maya* cannot be where *Brahma* is" (Rao, 1960, p. 110). Further Rao interprets knowledge and the individual self. He says, "so knowledge has knowledge of I through knowledge which means knowledge is the I". (Rao, 1960, p. 112)

The stream of thoughts that is reflected by the novelist illuminates the readers with the sparks of ancient myths, history, international politics and proximity with nature adding to his

presentation. Stalin, the Russian leader, Hitler, the ambitious dictator during the Second World War, Trotsky, the pure rebel and Aurobindo, who believed in the *Advaita* philosophy of *Shankara* influence his expressions of deep thoughts. Raja Rao intermingles in his flow of the stream of meditative utterance *Radha* and *Krishna* along with *Brindaban* as an embodiment of ethereal love on the lap of nature. Nature participates with their love. Rao says, “Radha’s smiles enchant the creepers and the birds” (Rao, 1960, p. 212). *Ramaswamy* expresses his fondness for *catherine* though he longs for *Madeleine* and claims *catherine*’s mother to be his first wife. The happenings of the present and the repercussions of the past are integrated into the narrative. The myth of the Indian race seems to penetrate into his mind. Rama, the representative god of *Treta Yug* sends his wife, *Sita* into exile after overhearing the broadcast of the washerman. The purity of Ayodhya’s queen, *Sita* was challenged by the common people that she was inwardly allured by the demon king, *Ravana*. Thus Rao, maintains the coherence of the mythical past with the nascent thoughts of the present.

The universal philosophy of man’s attempt towards self-realization is portrayed by Raja Rao through *Ramaswamy* who represents the Indian mind taking us towards a culmination of cosmic life with in the human mind. He presents to the readers a synthesis of the past and the present, the native and the foreign, the personal and the social, the individual and the universal, the self and the cosmos, and the mundane along with the supra-mundane. It is a *mahapurana* or the greater epic illustrating Indian philosophy in the ways of life of the whole world and *Kanthapura* is treated as a *purana* pinpointing Indian moral, religious and spiritual principles to win the secular cause of life, i.e. freedom from British subjugation. Non-violence is the supreme weapon to end all injustices. *Rama* of the epic is Gandhi in *Kanthapura*, the British government is *Ravana* and *Bharatmata* is *Sita*. The myth of *Ramayana* is reincarnated in *Kanthapura*. Raja Rao himself says about *Kanthapura*, It is a classic resurgent India told in poetics, almost in a mythical style. The myth of *Savitri* and *Satyaban* is reflected in the *The*

Serpent and the Rope. Metaphysics is coloured with enthusiasm and mysteries of life. India is enchanting, recreates and emits fragrance and sweetness despite being complex and unfathomable. The sight of *Brindaban* is presented as such, “wherever there be no pain, Savitri, my love, that is where Krishna plays the flute and the cows come and listen to the music, their faces uplifted, their ears stretched against their wide white shoulders. And the trees will flower and the peacock spread his wings and the gods will come to see this festival of life.” (Rao, 1960, p. 364) Divine music disseminates purity, elation and enlivens the world.

The stalwart, Raja Rao depicts love, marriage, myths, legends keeping his premonition on the spiritual quest in *The Serpent and the Rope* and national freedom in *Kanthapura*. *Ramaswamy* is the sole marcher in his spiritual venture and *Moorthy*, is the best disciple of Gandhian ways well versed in leading the people. Raja Rao uses symbols, imageries and allusions to make his creative works look grand, enlightening and panoramic in outlook. He illustrates the conflict between history and anti-history through Stalin and Leon Trotsky. He indicates about zero which is not affected by any other number and without it numbers cannot be created. Spiritualism is such a concept of the self which can radiate all around but it remains not destroyed. Zero is impersonal and hints at nothingness. In other words, individual self is not defined by objects and experiences. It represents the non-dualism of *Advaita Vedanta* and the unification of individual soul, *Atman* with God (Brahman). The stream of consciousness with scattered impressions and patches of memories emitted from Raja Rao is a comprehensive account of the myth of *Radha* and *Krishna* centered around *Brindaban*, the *Savitri-Satyavan* myth of the *Mahabharata*, Buddhist repercussions on self-realization, international hegemony of Hitler, the divine outburst of *Advaitism* of *Vivekananda* and *Ramakrishna Paramahansa*, the depiction of *Shiva* as “*Shiva*’s head is the Kailas,” the picture of the city of Benares on the bank of the Ganges touching the ancient myth of Raja *Harischandra*, the modern politics of communism and socialism and the sacred dictations of *Bhagvad Gita* and *Upanishads*.

A probe into the greatness of India lies in understanding both the struggle for self-hood and the interplay of the outer universe with the ideas appearing in the individual. The self is one and indestructible transcending dualism. Life, in course of time, transcends illusion to reach the truth which is the essence of all religions. *The Serpent and the Rope* mentions the truth of life that every individual can realize. It keeps at a distance the pain and pathos of life created by *maya* or illusion. One who overcomes illusion can experience the bliss of life or *Mahananda*. One who remains in illusion cannot arrive at the blissful state of one's being. Tremors and tortures of life, a hell, in another way, captivates him. To attain the joys of life, one needs to be detached from within despite living in the world. We must be sincerely involved in the world to experience detachment, i.e. the heavenly bliss. For one, the world is hell due to ignorance and for the other; the world is heaven by virtue of his knowledge. The serpent is a grand attraction to offer pain later on and the Rope is accepted being purged of infatuations to experience permanent joy.

Spiritualism is a struggle being between the devil and the deep sea. One interest is towards the Black Madonna or Madeleine attractive with her long nose, fine hands, dark and deluding eyes. The other is the desire to roam inside India as a Buddhist monk. Knowledge is spontaneous while being in the struggle and its culmination is wisdom.

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Illusion or Devotion? Transcendental Love and the Subaltern Woman in Hindi Cinema Posters

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Abstract

This research explores how transcendental love is visually portrayed in selected Hindi cinema posters and how these visual narratives position the female protagonist. Hindi films like *Rockstar* (2011), *Laila Majnu* (2018), *Maqbool* (2003), *Haider* (2014), *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960), *Devdas* (2002), and *Meera* (1979) reflect stories where love goes beyond emotion and becomes devotion, sacrifice, or spiritual surrender. While these narratives celebrate passionate transformation, they often depict women as silent, divine figures, marginalised, symbolic, and emotionally distant. This paper analyses seven film posters to examine whether divine love in visual culture empowers or erases the female voice. It questions whether these women are spiritually liberated or visually framed to fulfil male transcendence. Using feminist film theory, subaltern studies, and semiotic analysis, the study identifies how Bollywood posters glorify suffering, spiritual silence, and emotional intensity in female characters. Through close readings of colour, composition, posture, and gaze, the study finds that women are often idealised as goddesses or martyrs, with their bodies becoming symbols of devotion rather than subjects of agency. Male figures, in contrast, appear as seekers or rebels, guided by the woman's symbolic presence. The research concludes that although transcendental love in these posters seems divine, it often conceals the structured silence of the female protagonist. What appears to be spiritual depth may be a cinematic illusion, reflecting deep-rooted gender dynamics in visual storytelling.

Keywords: transcendental love, subaltern women, hindi cinema posters, feminist visual analysis, devotion and illusion

1. Introduction

Love in Hindi cinema has always been more than a feeling. It is a journey, a conflict, a form of resistance, and often, a sacrifice. In some stories, love transcends physical connection; it evolves into devotion. This transcendental love becomes spiritual, even divine. It consumes the characters, drives them to madness, or elevates them to sainthood. Films like *Rockstar*, *Laila Majnu*, and *Mughal-e-Azam* are not ordinary love stories; they are visual and emotional revolutions. They transform love into a spiritual journey, where pain becomes prayer and separation becomes union. These stories are celebrated on screen and off, especially in their posters, which offer powerful, symbolic visuals of this transcendence. But what about the women in these stories? In such narratives, female characters often appear glowing, sacred, or veiled in silence. They are worshipped, remembered, or mourned. Their presence is powerful, yet passive. Their love seems pure but silent. These portrayals raise important questions: Does this divine love liberate the woman, or does it hide her suffering? Are these women shown as spiritual agents or as background figures to male transformation? This research focuses on how these ideas are reflected in Hindi cinema posters. Posters are not just advertisements; they are visual messages. They tell stories before the audience watches the film. They influence how we see characters, especially women. By analysing posters from seven selected films, this paper explores how transcendental love is used to frame, elevate, or silence the subaltern female protagonist. Using feminist theory, subaltern studies, and visual semiotics, the study asks: Is this devotion real or imagined? Does the divine image of love empower women, or turn them into symbols of suffering? Through a close reading of visual elements such as colour, gaze, and composition, this paper reveals how the concept of devotion can sometimes become a subtle illusion that conceals deeper inequalities. In this study, the term subaltern woman protagonist refers to female figures in Hindi cinema posters who are visually present yet symbolically silenced. They lack voice, agency, or narrative control. These women often exist

as symbols of purity, devotion, or sacrifice, rather than as autonomous subjects. Their presence is structured by visual codes that promote submission or spiritual elevation, rather than social or emotional empowerment. In posters, they are frequently depicted in passive postures, veiled imagery, or positioned behind male leads, which visually reinforces their status as subalterns. Ultimately, this is not just a study of posters. It is a reflection on love, silence, and the powerful images that define women in Hindi cinema.

1.1 Research Problem

Hindi cinema often presents love not as a temporary emotion but as a deep, spiritual journey. In films like *Rockstar*, *Haider*, or *Laila Majnu*, love transforms into devotion, madness, or sacrifice. The posters of these films capture this transformation through rich symbols—soft lighting, close-up faces, divine poses, and intense gazes. But within this spiritual storytelling, female characters are usually silent, still, and glowing, as if they belong more to myth than reality. This visual silence raises a critical question: Is transcendental love in Hindi cinema a way to liberate the woman or to erase her voice? Do these posters celebrate the woman's inner strength, or do they use her image to highlight the male journey? Are we seeing devotion—or illusion? While these posters appear poetic and spiritual, they may also reflect hidden gender inequality. This research investigates whether the subaltern woman, as represented in these posters, is a spiritual subject or just a beautiful background to the male protagonist's transformation.

1.2. Research Objectives

- 1) To analyse how transcendental love is visually represented in selected Hindi cinema posters.
- 2) To examine the role and positioning of the female protagonist within these visual narratives.

- 3) To explore how silence, devotion, and spiritual imagery affect the portrayal of subaltern women.
- 4) To interpret poster elements like gaze, posture, space, and colour using feminist and subaltern theories.
- 5) To evaluate whether these posters present true empowerment or maintain traditional gender hierarchies.

1.3. Research Questions

1. How do Hindi cinema posters represent transcendental or spiritual love?
2. What visual elements are used to depict the female protagonist in these posters?
3. Does the portrayal of love empower the subaltern woman, or turn her into a symbol of sacrifice?
4. How do these visual narratives reflect gender dynamics in spiritual love?
5. Are these posters presenting a real emotional/spiritual experience, or simply a cinematic illusion?

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study offers a fresh way to look at love and gender in Hindi cinema, not through full films, but through their posters. Posters are the first impression of any movie. They shape public expectations and reflect deeper cultural values. By analysing posters from seven selected films, this research shows how love becomes both a poetic idea and a political message. The study is important for visual culture, feminist film studies, and South Asian cinema research. It focuses on how images of women—especially silent, spiritual ones—can reveal deeper truths about gender, power, and devotion in popular culture. It also connects Indian cinematic representation

with historical figures like Meera or Radha, opening space for comparison between mythology, religion, and media.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section explores previous academic work on women's representation in Hindi cinema, the concept of transcendental love, subaltern theory, and visual semiotics. Each area connects directly to this paper's focus on how transcendental love is visually constructed in film posters and how women are positioned within those visuals.

2.1 Representation of Women in Hindi Cinema

Scholars have long studied how Hindi cinema portrays women. In many films, the female protagonist is either idealised as a pure, spiritual figure or sidelined as a supporting character to male ambition. According to Shohini Ghosh (1997), mainstream cinema often limits women to emotional, sacrificial, or symbolic roles. Laura Mulvey's (1975) concept of the male gaze further explains how women are often shown as objects to be looked at, not as active decision-makers. In romantic or spiritual films, this gaze becomes softer but still controlling. Studies by Shoma A. Chatterji (2008) argue that even powerful female characters are framed through patriarchal lenses. Their pain becomes aesthetic; their silence becomes spiritual. This observation aligns with many Hindi film posters, where women are shown glowing, veiled, or gazing away, not speaking, not acting.

2.2 Transcendental Love in Cinema and Culture

Transcendental love in cinema refers to love that goes beyond the physical; it becomes divine, obsessive, or symbolic. Films like *Rockstar* and *Devdas* present love as suffering, where characters dissolve their ego in devotion. Sufi and Bhakti traditions in Indian culture often celebrate such love (Dasgupta, 2003). Female saints like Meera Bai turned their love for God into poetry and protest. However, in cinema, this transcendental love often centres the male

experience. The woman becomes a reason for the man's transformation. Scholars like Kavita Singh (2015) argue that this divine framing hides gender imbalances. The woman is no longer a person; she becomes a path to salvation for the man.

2.3 Subaltern Theory and the Silent Woman

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's famous essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) asks whether marginalised voices, especially women, can truly express themselves in dominant systems. In cinema posters, the female protagonist often appears quiet, spiritual, or tragic. These images may seem beautiful, but they also reflect the structured silence Spivak describes. When a woman is represented as divine or glowing but has no visible agency, she becomes a subaltern figure, present in the frame but excluded from action. Scholars like Lata Mani (1998) also suggest that even spiritual roles, when framed by dominant structures, can silence real female voices.

2.4 Semiotics and Poster Analysis

Posters are cultural texts. They combine colour, symbols, body language, and layout to create meaning. Roland Barthes (1964) introduced semiotic analysis to study how images carry deeper cultural codes. For example, soft lighting around a woman may signal purity, while a downward gaze may suggest submission.

Posters are not random; they are designed to shape audience perception. Griffin (2001) writes, Posters are strategic, not random; they are cultural messages dressed as advertisement. Analysing these visuals reveals how certain values like devotion, silence, and femininity are repeated and reinforced through imagery.

In Bollywood, posters often show women as divine, passive, or distant, especially in films where love is portrayed as spiritual. By using a semiotic lens, this research decodes these visual strategies and connects them to gender and power.

2.5 Cultural Foundations of Devotional Love in Indian Visual Narratives

The spiritual framing of romantic love in Indian cinema posters draws deeply from cultural traditions such as the Bhakti and Sufi movements. Figures like Meera in devotional poetry or Radha in Krishna lore embody love that transcends the personal and merges with the divine. This tradition has shaped Indian aesthetics, where the woman's love is shown as sacred, suffering, and spiritually redemptive. In modern Hindi cinema, especially in poster design, these archetypes influence how women are positioned, not merely as romantic partners but as spiritual muses whose devotion elevates the male protagonist. However, this visual strategy often converts female agency into decorative silence.

The literature shows a consistent pattern: in Hindi cinema, women are often silenced through visual symbols. Spiritual love stories may seem progressive, but they often repeat old gender hierarchies. Subaltern theory helps us see how silence is structured, while semiotics helps decode how posters create meaning. Together, these studies provide a strong base for analysing how transcendental love and subaltern women are visually represented in Hindi cinema posters.

2.6 Research Gap

While many scholars have explored the representation of women in Hindi cinema, most of this work focuses on film narratives, character development, or dialogue. Few studies directly address how cinema posters, as visual texts, frame gendered themes, especially in the context of spiritual or transcendental love. Moreover, feminist readings of Bollywood often highlight objectification and agency, but they rarely analyse how divine love and devotional imagery are used to visually silence or elevate women. Similarly, subaltern theory has been applied in historical or social studies, but not extensively in the visual discourse of cinema posters. While transcendental love has been discussed in the context of Sufi and Bhakti traditions, its representation in mainstream Hindi film publicity materials remains under-examined. The

intersection of transcendental love, subaltern silence, and poster aesthetics is mostly missing in existing scholarship.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research draws on three core theoretical approaches to examine how transcendental love and subaltern women are represented in Hindi cinema posters: Feminist Film Theory, Subaltern Studies, and Semiotics. These frameworks help us decode how meaning is created visually, how women are positioned in cultural narratives, and how silence can reflect deeper power structures.

3.1 Feminist Film Theory

Feminist film theory helps analyse how women are portrayed in cinema and related visual media, such as posters. Laura Mulvey's (1975) concept of the male gaze explains that in most visual culture, women are often shown as passive objects meant to be looked at by male viewers. Their purpose is often to support the male character's journey, not to lead their own. In posters of transcendental love films like *Rockstar* or *Devdas*, the female character often appears soft, emotional, or veiled, visually sacred, but inactive. Feminist theorists argue that such visual framing may appear spiritual, but it continues to deny women full agency.

3.2 Subaltern Theory

Subaltern theory focuses on those who exist outside of dominant power structures, those who are unheard, unseen, or misrepresented. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's question "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) is central to this study. In many Hindi film posters, female protagonists are physically present but visually muted. They rarely engage directly with the viewer; their eyes are downcast, their mouths closed, their bodies still. These silent, divine images reflect how cinema posters can turn women into sacred symbols but exclude them from

speaking roles or active representation. The woman becomes a vessel of meaning, not the creator of meaning.

3.3 Semiotic Theory

Semiotics, the study of signs and symbols, helps decode how meaning is visually constructed. Roland Barthes (1964) developed key ideas about how images carry connotative meanings that go beyond what is immediately visible. In posters, signs like light, colour, space, and posture all contribute to how a character is understood. For example, a glowing woman placed in the background with soft light and closed eyes may suggest purity or devotion. But such symbols also carry hidden meanings of passivity and sacrifice. This research uses semiotics to closely examine how film posters frame the female protagonist and spiritual love through visual choices.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section explains how the study was conducted. Since the focus is on Hindi cinema posters, not the films themselves, the research follows a qualitative and interpretive approach using tools from semiotic analysis, feminist visual theory, and subaltern studies.

4.1 Research Design

This is a qualitative study based on visual analysis. It focuses on how transcendental love and the subaltern female protagonist are visually constructed in selected Hindi cinema posters. The aim is to understand what meanings are created through symbols, composition, body language, and colour. The research is interpretive and draws conclusions by closely reading the visual signs in each poster. These signs are then analysed in the context of feminist and subaltern theories to explore deeper social and cultural meanings.

4.2 Sample Selection

Seven Hindi film posters were selected with the help of convenience sampling. Based on the presence of transcendental or spiritual love narratives and visibly passive or symbolic female protagonists. The films span different decades and reflect a range of visual styles:

S. No.	Film Title	Year
1	Mughal-e-Azam	1960
2	Meera	1979
3	Devdas	2002
4	Maqbool	2003
5	Rockstar	2011
6	Haider	2014
7	Laila Majnu	2018

4.3 Data Collection

High-quality posters of the selected films were collected from the IMDb online platform. The chosen posters were all main promotional posters those released before the film to represent its narrative visually. No fan-made or secondary versions were used. All posters analysed in this research are used strictly for academic and educational purposes under fair use guidelines.

4.4 Method of Analysis

Each poster was analysed line by line using a semiotic codebook designed for this study. The analysis focused on four key categories: Visual Composition, Gender Representation, Spiritual Imagery, Silence and Power. These categories helped identify recurring visual patterns that reflect deeper meanings about gender, devotion, and subalternity. Visual signs were decoded using Barthes' semiotics, interpreted through Spivak's subaltern lens, and compared with feminist readings of devotion and silence.

5. POSTER ANALYSIS

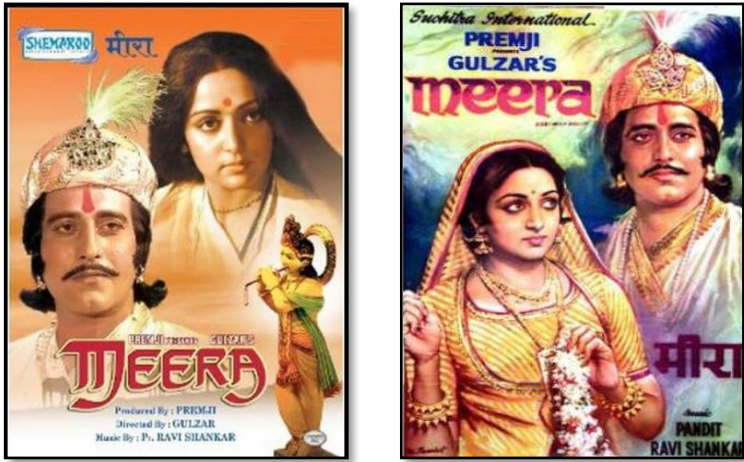
This section presents the visual analysis of seven selected Hindi cinema posters using the codebook framework outlined earlier. Each poster is read through a semiotic lens, highlighting how transcendental love is visually represented and how the female protagonist is positioned, either as spiritually empowered or symbolically silenced. The analysis focuses on four main categories: Visual Composition, Gender Representation, Spiritual Imagery, Silence and Power. Each poster is examined individually.

5.1 Mughal-e-Azam (1960)

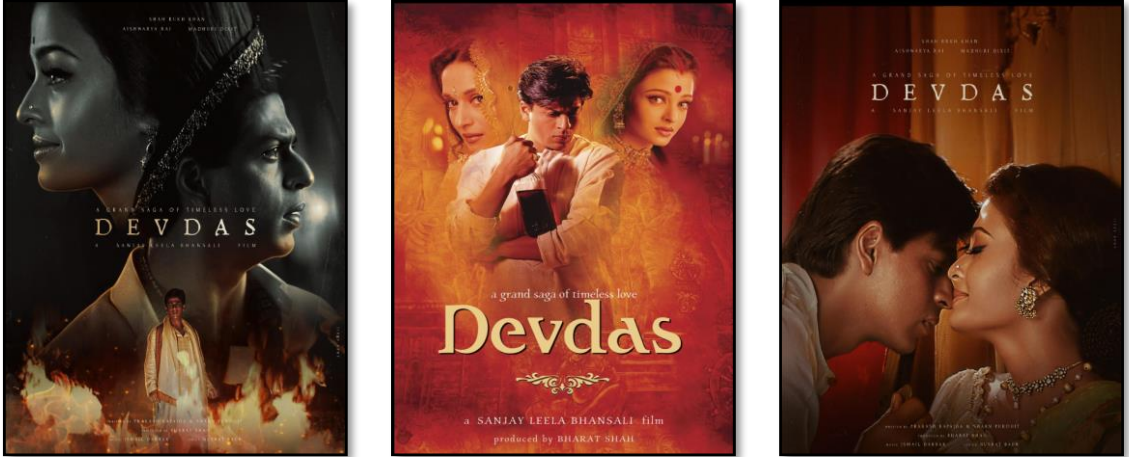
	
Poster Observation:	The female protagonist is depicted in dependent, silent poses, eyes lowered, hands shackled. The male protagonist is either centred, protective or in a soldier's posture.
Visual Composition:	Anarkali dominates visually but only as a romantic ideal. Her emotional pain is turned into visual beauty.
Gender Representation:	She is a dancer, lover, and prisoner, never an agent. Her expressions show inner strength, but are never active.
Spiritual Imagery:	Veil, chains, classical dance pose, and prison light evoke saint-like suffering.

Silence and Power:	Anarkali is the most visible but the most silenced. Her devotion to Salim is shown as spiritual faith, even when punished.
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5.2 Meera (1979)

	
Poster Observation:	Both Female and Male protagonists are visible in the poster. Her expressions are calm, devoted, and glowing.
Visual Composition:	The female protagonist dominates visually but is framed by the male protagonist and the status of the Hindu god, Lord Krishna.
Gender Representation:	Meera's representation is devotional. Her love is for the divine, not for a man. She is pure, not passive.
Spiritual Imagery:	Religious symbols, soft saffron light, and saintly poses make her an icon of devotion.
Silence and Power:	Unlike the others, Meera's silence feels voluntary. It is self-chosen, not structured. Her devotion is her voice.

5.3 Devdas (2002)

	
Poster Observation:	Female Protagonist 1 Paro (Aishwarya Rai) and Female Protagonist 2 Chandramukhi (Madhuri Dixit) are shown in glowing light, with Devdas in shadows or emotional collapse.
Visual Composition:	Devdas is central in most posters. The women are either side figures or symbolic pillars of support.
Gender Representation:	Paro and Chandramukhi are serene, nurturing, and lit with soft tones. They do not protest or resist.
Spiritual Imagery:	Their love is painted as divine forgiveness. Their pain becomes decorative, meant to elevate Devdas's downfall.
Silence and Power:	Both women are spiritually powerful but socially muted. Their emotional voice is turned into a poetic sacrifice.

5.4 Maqbool (2003)

	
Poster Observation:	Nimmi (Tabu) stands beside Maqbool, often in dim lighting. Her expressions are intense but quiet. Sometimes her eyes are closed or shaded.
Visual Composition:	The male lead is central. Nimmi is close but emotionally isolated, never looking directly at the viewer or confronting the scene.
Gender Representation:	Maqbool appears in action, guns or movement. Nimmi's posture is static, hidden in shadows.
Spiritual Imagery:	Muted tones, religious iconography, and traditional attire show suppressed divinity. Nimmi is a cursed oracle, not a prophet.
Silence and Power:	Her power is indirect; she influences from behind, like Lady Macbeth. But in the poster, this power is invisible. Her silence hides agency.

5.5 Rockstar (2011)

	
Poster Observation:	The poster depicts the male protagonist (Ranbir Kapoor) in a messianic pose, arms open and eyes closed, as if in spiritual ecstasy. Female protagonist (Nargis Fakhri) appears behind or beside him, either blurred or distant, her face half-lit with a soft expression.
Visual Composition:	Jordan dominates the centre. Heer remains in the background or profile view. Spatially, she is not equal; she exists to support his transformation.
Gender Representation:	Jordan's face and body express rage, pain, and freedom. Heer's presence is still, silent, and romanticised. She looks away, never making eye contact with the viewer.
Spiritual Imagery:	Flames, stage lights surround Jordan. Heer's imagery includes outfits, soft glow, suggesting purity.
Silence and Power:	He does not speak visually. She's a soft echo of memory or muse, reinforcing the idea that her silence fuels his music and madness.

5.6 Haider (2014)



Poster Observation:	Haider (Shahid Kapoor) is often shown screaming or floating in snow. Arshi (Shraddha Kapoor) does not appear in the poster; only show their back is shown, disappearing.
Visual Composition:	Haider takes visual control. Arshi is small, fragile, and often fades into light.
Gender Representation:	Haider's expressions show pain and defiance. Arshi's presence in the poster is not shown. So, we say that the female protagonist's absence of voice.
Spiritual Imagery:	Snow, shrines, Kashmiri clothing, and light halos give the poster spiritual depth. Arshi becomes a figure of sacrifice.
Silence and Power:	Arshi's silence is not a choice; it's imposed. Her love is visualised as pure and patient, not powerful.

5.7 Laila Majnu (2018)

	
Poster Observation:	Laila and Qais stand apart under a snowy sky, with a flowering swing that evokes romance. Laila's gaze is cast downward, dressed in soft tones.
Visual Composition:	Qais is placed in a dominant, sometimes larger position. Laila appears smaller, serene, and often faces away.
Gender Representation:	Qais looks at her in love, while Laila gazes downward, away. This contrast subtly shows her as passive and spiritual.
Spiritual Imagery:	Background, traditional clothing and emotion they spread in the poster imply their love is divine. Laila is lit with an ethereal glow.
Silence and Power:	Laila's visual silence mirrors historical storytelling; her devotion is visible but wordless. She represents longing, not decision.

6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section brings together the poster analyses to highlight recurring patterns, contradictions, and visual strategies. It focuses on how transcendental love is portrayed in Hindi cinema posters and how this portrayal affects the representation of subaltern female protagonists.

6.1 Transcendental Love as a Male Journey

Across all seven posters, transcendental love is framed as a journey or transformation, but it is primarily the male character who undergoes this journey. Whether it's Jordan (Rockstar), Devdas (Devdas), or Haider (Haider), the male figure appears as the seeker, the sufferer, or the rebel. He is placed at the centre, active in posture, expressive in emotion. The female character, in contrast, is visually present but narratively quiet. She is shown as an enabler of transcendence, not as someone who experiences it herself. Her image becomes symbolic: she represents purity, memory, silence, or the divine muse. This reveals a gendered division where love elevates the man but freezes the woman into stillness.

6.2 Structured Silence of the Subaltern Woman

Spivak's concept of the "silent subaltern" applies strongly here. In nearly every poster, the female protagonist does not speak, not even through her gaze. Her eyes are often closed or lowered. She rarely confronts the viewer. Her silence is not random; it is structured by design. She appears spiritual, but her spirituality replaces her agency. In *Laila Majnu* and *Maqbool*, the women are visibly present but visually pushed to the side. Their bodies may glow, but their voices are absent. Their silence is aesthetic, wrapped in soft light and symbolic beauty. This visual silence hides deeper social silencing.

6.3 Devotion as Decorative, Not Liberating

In many posters (Devdas, *Mughal-e-Azam*, *Rockstar*), devotion becomes a decorative tool. Female love is portrayed as beautiful suffering. These women are often glowing, praying, or positioned beneath men. Their devotion is not shown as liberating or active; it is passive, ornamental, and made to look divine. Only in *Meera* is this narrative somewhat challenged. *Meera's* devotion is not toward a human lover but toward a god. Her silence feels chosen, her love feels self-possessed. This suggests that true transcendence, when centred in the female

subject, may lead to empowerment, but only when it is detached from romantic patriarchy. This aesthetics repeat across decades from *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) to *Laila Majnu* (2018). They visually echo saints, goddesses, or mythical lovers like Radha or Sita. But in doing so, they also lock female characters into mythic silence, instead of modern empowerment.

6.5 The Disappearing Female Subject

Ultimately, the female protagonist in these posters is not the subject of the story, but the symbol of it. She is a mirror, not a voice. Whether she is veiled (*Haider*), caged (*Mughal-e-Azam*), or glowing (*Devdas*), she rarely exists as a full character. She is present to complete the man's story, not her own. This finding challenges the idea that spiritual love in cinema is progressive. Visually, it often erases the woman in the name of divinity. The love is transcendental, but the woman is reduced to a beautiful absence.

7. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

7.1 Conclusion

This research explored how transcendental love is visually represented in selected Hindi cinema posters and how these visual choices position the female protagonist, either as a spiritual subject or as a symbolic subaltern. The analysis of seven posters (*Rockstar*, *Laila Majnu*, *Maqbool*, *Haider*, *Mughal-e-Azam*, *Devdas*, and *Meera*) revealed clear patterns. In most cases, transcendental love is visually framed as a male journey, where the woman becomes a silent muse, a glowing symbol, or a divine sacrifice. Her body is often aestheticized through soft light, veils, downward gaze, or traditional costumes. These elements may seem empowering on the surface, but often reflect a deeper visual silencing rooted in patriarchal tradition. Only in *Meera* does the woman emerge as a self-driven spiritual subject, whose silence feels voluntary and powerful. In other posters, female characters are not seen acting but existing beautifully, painfully, and quietly. Their devotion becomes part of the male character's

growth, not their liberation. By applying feminist theory, subaltern studies, and semiotics, this paper reveals how Hindi film posters use transcendental love to soften the control of women through visual beauty and divine framing. This love, though poetic and spiritual, often becomes a cinematic illusion, presenting oppression as devotion and silence as depth.

7.2 Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies can expand this visual analysis by comparing poster representations with full film narratives to examine whether the visual silence of women persists in dialogue and plot. Audience reception studies using surveys or focus groups may reveal how viewers interpret female devotion as empowerment or erasure. Exploring regional and independent cinema posters could uncover alternative gender portrayals. Further inquiry might also focus on male characters, analysing how transcendental love shapes masculinity in visual media. With the rise of digital platforms, OTT and AI-generated posters offer symbolic and remixed aesthetics. Future research can assess how these innovations challenge or reinforce traditional depictions of spiritual femininity and subaltern silence in Hindi cinema.

7.3 Limitations

This study does not analyse full film narratives or dialogues. It focuses only on official film posters, which are designed representations, not complete stories. Also, interpretations vary with individual viewers, but the method ensures consistency by following a structured visual analysis approach.(Agung & Saputra, 2023)

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**The pictures used in this paper were located using Google Images for illustrative purposes.*

APPENDIX 1

Table 1: Mughal-e-Azam (1960)

S. No.	Category	Criteria	Poster Observation
1	Visual Composition	Placement,	Anarkali is depicted in a poster, but in a submissive posture. Salim is distant or looming. They are close to each other.
		Framing,	
		Spacing	
2	Gender Representation	Gaze,	Anarkali's eyes are lowered; her hands are shackled, pure and trapped.
		Posture,	
		Body Language	
3	Spiritual Imagery	Light,	Religious architecture, glowing light, veils, dance pose, she is saint-like.
		Colour,	
		Symbols	
4	Silence and Power	Expression,	Her voice is not present; her body speaks of sacrifice. Visually central but politically erased.
		Stillness,	
		Motion	

Table 2: Meera (1979)

S. No.	Category	Criteria	Poster Observation
1	Visual Composition	Placement,	Meera is the sole figure, centred and elevated in the frame. The male counterpart is shown.
		Framing,	
		Spacing	
2	Gender Representation	Gaze,	
		Posture,	

		Body Language	Her gaze is upward, devotional but conscious. She holds a tanpura with calm grace.
3	Spiritual Imagery	Light,	Temples, rivers, saffron or white clothes all point to sainthood. No romantic object.
		Colour,	
		Symbols	
4	Silence and Power	Expression,	Her silence feels voluntary. Unlike others, her stillness signifies strength, not oppression.
		Stillness,	
		Motion	

Table 3: Devdas (2002)

S. No.	Category	Criteria	Poster Observation
1	Visual Composition	Placement,	Devdas is central and conflicted; both women are shown on either side, glowing but still.
		Framing,	
		Spacing	
2	Gender Representation	Gaze,	Paro looks patient, Chandramukhi is calm; neither looks confrontational. Devdas shows intensity.
		Posture,	
		Body Language	
3	Spiritual Imagery	Light,	Divine lighting surrounds women. Chandramukhi holds a lamp. Traditional costumes symbolise inner purity.
		Colour,	
		Symbols	

4	Silence and Power	Expression,	Both women embody sacrifice and quiet strength. Their silence serves Devdas's emotional arc.
		Stillness,	
		Motion	

Table 4: Maqbool (2003)

S. No.	Category	Criteria	Poster Observation
1	Visual Composition	Placement,	Maqbool is central, active. Nimmi stands beside, partially visible, less lit.
		Framing,	
		Spacing	
2	Gender Representation	Gaze,	Nimmi's gaze is intense but lowered. Maqbool's posture suggests action or tension.
		Posture,	
		Body Language	
3	Spiritual Imagery	Light,	Minimal use of religious imagery, but shadows and red tones suggest moral conflict and cursed devotion.
		Colour,	
		Symbols	
4	Silence and Power	Expression,	Nimmi is voiceless in the frame; her expression holds intensity, but her silence is constructed.
		Stillness,	
		Motion	

Table 5: Rockstar (2011)

S. No.	Category	Criteria	Poster Observation
1	Visual Composition	Placement	

		Framing	The male protagonist is central, large, and expressive. The female protagonist is either in the background or a faded memory.
		Spacing	
2	Gender Representation	Gaze,	Jordan plays the guitar, eyes closed, suggesting freedom via music. He looks downward, passive, with no direct eye contact.
		Posture,	
		Body Language	
3	Spiritual Imagery	Light,	Stage lights form a halo around Jordan.
		Colour,	Heer is shown with soft lighting, white clothing, signifying purity.
		Symbols	
4	Silence and Power	Expression,	He is emotionally distant, silent. Her stillness symbolises both devotion and loss of power.
		Stillness,	
		Motion	

Table 6: Haider (2014)

S. No.	Category	Criteria	Poster Observation
1	Visual Composition	Placement,	Haider dominates. Arshi is small, placed in the lower portion or faded in light.
		Framing,	
		Spacing	
2	Gender Representation	Gaze,	Haider looks directly or up; Arshi avoids the viewer's gaze, posture is prayer-like.
		Posture,	
		Body Language	
3	Spiritual Imagery	Light,	

		Colour,	Snow, costume, and structures of the background evoke purity and spiritual loss.
		Symbols	
4	Silence and Power	Expression,	Arshi is the image of devotion, but not of dialogue. Her stillness is portrayed as spiritual restraint.
		Stillness,	
		Motion	

Table 7: Laila Majnu (2018)

S. No.	Category	Criteria	Poster Observation
1	Visual Composition	Placement,	Qais is prominent and larger. Laila appears soft and spiritually distant.
		Framing,	
		Spacing	
2	Gender Representation	Gaze,	Qais looks upward or into the distance.
		Posture,	Laila's gaze is turned away or downward.
		Body Language	
3	Spiritual Imagery	Light,	Background includes a mountain, snow, clouds, glowing atmosphere; Laila wears pastel-toned clothes, evoking Radha-like devotion.
		Colour,	
		Symbols	
4	Silence and Power	Expression,	Laila appears still, introspective. Her quietness symbolises love, but also disempowerment.
		Stillness,	
		Motion	

Rivers in Odia Literature

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Abstract

Rivers in Odia literature form a unique and engaging theme, rooted in ancient contexts yet resonant in modern writings. Across world literature, rivers have been described abundantly; the U.S. Geological Survey notes the existence of nearly three million rivers worldwide. However, the essential concern is not their sheer number, but the way they are imagined, symbolized, and represented in literary traditions. Writers across ages have used rivers to reflect shifting perspectives on nature, culture, and human life. These depictions often reveal how attitudes toward the natural world have evolved with time. Within this larger framework, the role of rivers in Odia literature stands out as distinct, offering a perspective that is both regional and universal.

Keywords: rivers, science, myths, history, symbol, beauty, disaster

Introduction

Odisha is one of the flood-prone states, primarily because it is drained by a number of peninsular rivers like the Mahanadi, Brahmani, Baitarani, and Subarnarekha. These rivers, while nourishing the land, have also historically caused devastation, shaping the lives and memories of the people who dwell along their banks. The paper is divided into four groups: the science behind myths centering on rivers, history, rivers as symbols, and rivers as beauty and disaster. Odisha's rivers are not only geographical entities but also cultural signposts that have shaped local imagination for centuries. Each of these thematic groups allows us to explore how rivers move fluidly between myth and material reality, embodying both sustenance and threat. In this way, rivers in Odisha stand as powerful forces of nature as well as enduring motifs in cultural and historical narratives.

Science behind Myth

There are works in Odia literature that were once regarded as myths but have later been reinterpreted through the lens of science. *Chandrabhaga*, a notable poem by Radhanath Roy, is often compared to *Apollo and Daphne* by the Roman poet Ovid because of their strikingly similar narratives. In both poems, we witness a conflict between the god of love—known as Kamadeva in the Indian context—and the god of power, represented by the Sun. What deserves greater critical attention, however, is the context of Roy's poem, which has rarely been examined. Here, the poet not only weaves mythic imagination but also offers insight into the extinction of the Chandrabhaga River, a phenomenon later corroborated by scientific reports. For your information, this Chandrabhaga River is not the River Chenab. This ancient River is said to have flowed about 2 kilometres from the Konark sun temple in Odisha. Scientists from the Indian institute of technology Kharagpur used satellite images and field data to identify the river's channel in 2016. This is the second such finding after the Saraswati River. This is

something that was mentioned by the poet 130 years ago. Mahayatra another work of the poet inspired by the Swargarohan Parva of Sarala Mahabharata, is also very unique in this context. In this work, we can see the mythological facts related to the creation of Chilika Lake of Odisha, according to the mythology created by Sarala Das, which is told by Agni dev to the Pandavas when they visit all the places of pilgrimage in Odisha. After the destruction of Yaduvansha, Sri Krishna's chakra, after killing Pradumna, did not return to Shree Krishna. According to Agni dev, when that chakra falls down, Kaliyug will begin from that day. During their conversation, the wheel fell into the sea, and the great flood began. What remains after the cataclysm came to be known as Chilika Lake. From that day, the second name of Neelachala Khestra became Chakra Tirtha. According to the report by marine archaeologist Sila Tripathy of the national institute of oceanography in Goa, it was first stated that Chilika Lake was once part of the Bay of Bengal. Some other studies reveal that due to tectonic movement it was separated from the Bay of Bengal through a barrier split near Palur, the important port of Kalinga, or current Odisha, around 4000 years ago. From all this discussion, we can conclude that what science is talking about today was mentioned 501 years ago in Odia Mahabharat by Sarala Das. We often discuss kaliyuga, but how it practically started is beautifully explained by Sarala Das in the context of Chilika Lake formation.

History behind Myth

In Sarala Mahabharata, we find descriptions of many ancient rivers. Prachi is one of them, considered one of the most sacred river basins in the state. In the Mahabharata, many descriptions have been made about the antiquity and importance of the Prachi River and the valley. Before this, in the 12th century, the Odia poet Jayadev also gave some indication about this valley in his Geet Govinda, which harmonizes with modern historical facts. Recently, in 2018, the Archaeological survey of India (ASI) carried out excavations at Bharatihuda and Jallarpur near Niali and unearthed valuable evidence of a civilization that is 3500 years old,

which, if established, would be far older than the Indus Valley civilization. In the 1960s, the modern poet Guruprasad Mohanty also provided some indication of the antiquity of Prachi River and valley in his long poem *Kala Purusha*, whose description is not only historical but also important from scientific point of view. The Prachi River and civilization had significant importance in ancient Utkala; the reason behind it not receiving any importance in modern Odisha, the author is blames on the passage of time. In modern times, where individuals have become rootless, what will be the root of a nation? To describe this more clearly, the author has taken *Cascuta* or *Nirmili lata*, which is commonly known as dodder. Here we may think that just because the post modern man is rootless, that is why the writer takes the dodder vine as a symbol. However, if seen from a scientific point of view, this symbol is perhaps even deeper. In postmodern times, people are confused about their gender because it is considered that there are more than two genders existing today. That is why the writer takes *Nirmuli lata* or *Cascuta* as a symbol, because *cascuta* is a hermaphroditic vine, which has both male and female sexual organs.

Beside this, another great river of Odisha, the *Daya*, flows near the *Dhauili hills*. This river is famous because it is historically associated with the *Kalinga war*, a pivotal battle that led to Emperor *Ashoka's* conversion to Buddhism, as the war is believed to have been fought on its banks. The river turned red with the blood of the fallen soldiers, which is said to have profoundly impacted *Ashoka's* views on violence. This history is criticized by many of the historian as well as Economists, like *Sanjeev Sanyal*, in his work- *Ashoka*, the not so great published on 22-11-2015 in *Swarajya Magazine*. In 1987, the renowned Odia writer and scholar *Surendra Mohanty* wrote a novel named *Ajivaka Ra Atahashya*, which incorporates the *Daya River* and the *Ajivaka Samradaya* that emerged around the same time as Buddhism and Jainism. The author has long shown the difference between the form and reality of *Ashoka*s as presented to us. In this novel, he has described *Ashoka* as a great politician.

Mahanadi, which is great in name, is another significant and large peninsular river of Odisha, often referred as the lifeline of Odisha. This river is a silent observer of the happiness, sorrow, prosperity and failure of the state. It is mentioned in ‘moonlit in Mahanadi’ or Mahanadi re Jyotshna Vihar by Mayadhar Mansingh. In this poem, the poet reflects on his experience sailing on the Mahanadi in a boat on a moonlit night, recalling the glorious past of Odisha, formerly known as Kalinga. The Bay of Bengal was known as Kalinga sagar (Kalinga sea), indicating the importance of Kalinga in Maritime trade, although the current scenario is quite different.

Symbolic

Except science and history, rivers have also been depicted as deep symbols in Odia literature. For example, in Sarala Mahabharata, there is a description of a blood river, which used as a symbol of fear, death, self analysis, self- discovery and repentance. With the help of this blood river, Sarala Das described Duryodhana as an Anti hero. What is today a modern concept, Sarala Das described it 600 years ago. Before Sarala Das Duryodhana’s remorse would hardly have been seen in any other Mahabharata. Another important part of this section is the deep psychological analysis, which is a 19th century concept. However, in the 15th century, Sarala Das described duryodhana’s psychology in such depth that is truly unbelievable. We often see love affection in the field of women. However, unknowingly, after spreading the river of blood over the son who had fallen on his face, the grief of Duryodhan’s heart, which has been described, is indescribable.

Jhada by Bhagabati Charana Panigrahi is another wonderful symbolic work that has become dynamic by cantering on the river Ganga. In this work, the author has highlighted the hidden tendencies, like survival instinct within a person. This means that when it is a matter of your life, you forget love and all that. It is also very obvious that in a life- threatening situation,

the brain prioritizes immediate self- preservation, causing a temporary suppression of other emotions like love, which are considered less crucial for survival in that moment.

An evening on Krishna River is another great symbolic novel by Surendra Mohanty. Here, the river Krishna symbolizes Odisha, and the evening represents independence. There are many controversial statements about the Bhakti movement. Among them is a statement suggesting that many followers of the Bhakti sects were homosexual so as the emporer Pratap Rudra. This is very cleverly articulated in this work.

The other side of River by Bhanuji Rao represents the body and soul. This side of the river represents the body, which is full of darkness, while the other side symbolizes the soul, which is used as a symbol of salvation.

Besides all of these, influenced by Post -colonial thinking, writers of Odia literature have given importance to even a small river flowing in this land. Here, we can see both the calm and fierce rise of the rivers. The Ancestor by Gopinath Mohanty, we see a beautiful picture of the Muran River, which is not only beautiful but also spiritually connected to the tribals of the Koraput district. The conflict between East and West Odisha is portrayed by the Brahmani River in Bhanumati Ra Desha by Sachidananda Routray. The beautiful description of Muntei River is found in the story by Gourahari Dash. Odisha is a flood- prone state. The Brahmani, Baitarani, Rusikulya and Mahanadi rivers are the main rivers in Odisha that cause flooding. In many literary works, we see the descriptions of flood and their terrible forms. The flood in the Kushabhadra River described in the poem “Biswajivanapathe” by Radhamohan Gadanayak. The flood in Baitarani is described in “Fanged water” by prashna ku mishra etc.

Conclusion

The rivers of Odisha have inspired not only Odia writers but also authors from outside the state. Anita Agnihotri’s *Mahanadi: The Tale of a River* and its sequel *Mahakantara* vividly portray

the Mahanadi and the Indravati. Her novel *Mahuldiha Days* beautifully describes the Brahmani River, while Rabindranath Tagore's later works contain evocative depictions of the Kathajodi. Such representations highlight how rivers of Odisha transcend geographical boundaries to enter broader literary imaginations. Though countless works celebrate these rivers within Odia literature, my focus has been on critically reflecting upon select examples. These depictions affirm the rivers' enduring role as cultural, ecological, and aesthetic forces shaping the creative expressions of writers across time and space.

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LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY

Cohesive Devices in Undergraduate Argumentative Writing: A Comparative Analysis of Topic-Induced Variation

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Abstract

This study examined grammatical and lexical cohesive devices in argumentative essays written by undergraduate learners, applying Halliday and Hasan's (1976) framework. A comparative analysis of 78 essays across two topics—social media age restrictions ($n = 37$) and online versus physical shopping preferences ($n = 41$)—revealed significant patterns in cohesive device deployment. Key findings indicate pervasive overreliance on additive conjunctions (e.g., *and* in 89–94% of essays) with frequent ambiguous third-person reference occurring in 43–51% of scripts, minimal use of substitution and ellipsis ($< 2\%$ of total cohesive ties), and statistically significant topic-induced variation, with shopping essays exhibiting higher cohesive density (17.3 vs. 15.7 ties/100 words, $p = .022$) and greater adversative conjunction diversity (24% vs. 12% sophisticated forms). The study identified lexical repetition (e.g., *social media* repeated 3–15 times/essay) as the primary cohesive strategy, reflecting limited synonymy deployment. Proficiency-level analysis revealed that B2 writers demonstrate 23% greater conjunction diversity and 31% fewer ambiguous references compared to B1 peers, suggesting developmental progression in cohesive competence. Cross-linguistic interference patterns emerged, with Telugu L1 influence evident in demonstrative overuse and causal conjunction preferences. Pedagogical implications highlight the need for explicit instruction in reference management, conjunction diversification, and task-scaffolded writing curricula targeting intermediate-level L2 writers through genre-specific cohesive strategy training.

Keywords: cohesive devices, academic writing, argumentative essays, Halliday and Hasan, L2 writing, proficiency development

Introduction

Cohesive devices—grammatical and lexical elements that create textual unity—are foundational to coherence in academic writing (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). In argumentative genres, effective deployment of reference, conjunction, and lexical cohesion enables writers to construct logically structured, persuasive discourse that guides readers through complex reasoning processes (Connor, 1996).

While cohesive competence is a well-established predictor of writing quality across multiple assessment contexts (Crossley et al., 2016), research consistently identified systematic challenges among L2 learners, including ambiguous reference chains that disrupted textual flow (Hinkel, 2001), mechanical conjunction overreliance that compromises rhetorical sophistication (Reid, 1992), and constrained lexical variation that limits stylistic range (Laufer & Nation, 1995).

The significance of cohesive competence extends beyond surface-level textual connectivity to encompass deeper rhetorical awareness and audience consideration. Skilled writers strategically deploy cohesive devices to signal logical relationships, maintain thematic progression, and create persuasive emphasis through strategic repetition or elegant variation. In contrast, developing L2 writers often struggle with this strategic dimension, treating cohesive devices as mechanical linking tools rather than rhetorical resources for constructing compelling arguments.

Undergraduate students, in particular, occupy a critical developmental stage where basic sentence-level accuracy is established but discourse-level sophistication remains emerging. They struggle to strategically manipulate cohesive devices to serve rhetorical goals, often producing essays that are grammatically correct but lack the sophisticated cohesive architecture

characteristic of advanced academic writing. This developmental position makes them ideal participants for investigating how topics affect cohesive device selection and deployment.

Prior studies have predominantly examined cohesive patterns in homogeneous task contexts (e.g., single-topic argumentation), providing valuable insights into general developmental patterns but limiting understanding of how contextual factors shape cohesive choices. Yet little research compares how task type—specifically, position-taking (e.g., social media regulation) versus comparative evaluation (e.g., online vs. physical shopping)—shapes cohesive strategy selection within homogeneous learner populations.

This gap is particularly critical, given mounting evidence that task complexity influences not only syntactic complexity but also discourse-level features including cohesive device sophistication (Skehan & Foster, 2001).

The cognitive demands of different argumentative topics may fundamentally alter writers' cohesive strategies. Position-taking tasks require writers to construct linear arguments supporting a single stance, potentially favoring additive and causal conjunctions that build cumulative support. In contrast, comparative evaluation tasks demand explicit contrast signaling and balanced presentation of multiple perspectives, potentially eliciting more sophisticated adversative conjunctions and complex reference management across competing viewpoints.

The present study addressed this gap by analyzing cohesive devices in 78 undergraduate argumentative essays across two distinct topics: social media age restrictions ($n = 37$ essays), requiring position-taking; and online versus physical shopping preferences ($n = 41$ essays), requiring comparative evaluation. Guided by Halliday and Hasan's (1976) comprehensive taxonomy, the study aimed to investigate: (1) the distribution and accuracy of grammatical

cohesion (reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction) across the two topics; (2) patterns in lexical cohesion (repetition, synonymy, collocation) and their relationship to argument development; (3) topic-induced variation in cohesive density and sophistication; and (4) proficiency-level differences in cohesive strategy deployment within intermediate-level writers.

The findings showed how topic demands shape cohesive strategy selection while revealing developmental constraints that persist across task contexts, offering empirically-grounded insights for academic writing pedagogy.

Literature Review

Cohesion—the grammatical and lexical relationships that create textual unity (Halliday & Hasan, 1976)—represents a critical dimension of academic writing proficiency that bridges sentence-level accuracy and discourse-level coherence. Halliday and Hasan's (1976) foundational taxonomy categorizes cohesion into reference (personal, demonstrative, comparative), substitution (nominal, verbal, clausal), ellipsis (nominal, verbal, clausal), conjunction (additive, adversative, causal, temporal), and lexical cohesion (repetition, synonymy, collocation, general nouns).

This comprehensive framework remains central to contemporary analyses of L2 writing development, providing both descriptive tools for corpus analysis and pedagogical frameworks for instruction (Crossley et al., 2016).

The theoretical significance of cohesion extends beyond surface-level textual connectivity to encompass cognitive and rhetorical dimensions of writing competence. From a cognitive perspective, cohesive device deployment reflects writers' ability to manage multiple information streams while maintaining thematic coherence—a demanding cognitive task that

develops gradually with increased L2 proficiency (Hinkel, 2001). Rhetorically, cohesive choices signal writers' awareness of audience needs and genre conventions, with skilled writers strategically varying cohesive devices to create emphasis, maintain interest, and guide reader interpretation.

Grammatical Cohesion Challenges in L2 Writing

Empirical studies consistently identify significant challenges in L2 learners' deployment of grammatical cohesive devices across multiple contexts and proficiency levels. Conjunction overuse, particularly additive *and*, represents perhaps the most pervasive issue in undergraduate EFL writing across diverse contexts (Reid, 1992; Hinkel, 2001). This pattern often leads to monotonous syntax, compromised rhetorical precision, and reader fatigue from predictable linking patterns.

Research examining Asian EFL contexts has found additive conjunctions constituting 60-70% of all conjunctive ties, with *and* alone accounting for 85-90% of additive usage (Hinkel, 2001)—a pattern consistent with our findings of 89–94% *and* usage across both topics.

The persistence of this pattern across different educational contexts suggests systematic developmental constraints rather than context-specific pedagogical failures. Learners appear to acquire high-frequency conjunctions (*and*, *but*, *because*) early in their L2 development and continue relying on these familiar forms even as their overall proficiency advances. This entrenchment effect reflects cognitive economy principles, where learners prioritize communicative efficiency over stylistic sophistication under production pressure.

Reference management poses equally persistent difficulties, with ambiguous pronoun antecedents appearing frequently in intermediate-to-advanced L2 writing across multiple contexts (Connor, 1996; Hinkel, 2001). The complexity of English reference systems—

involving person, number, gender, and animacy distinctions—creates particular challenges for learners whose L1 systems differ significantly. Studies of Asian EFL contexts have revealed ambiguous reference in 40-50% of scripts, correlating with lower holistic coherence scores (Hinkel, 2001)—a finding that aligns closely with our observed 43–51% ambiguous reference rates.

The cognitive demands of reference management in extended discourse compound these challenges. Writers must simultaneously track multiple referents, maintain appropriate antecedent-pronoun relationships, and avoid both over-specification (excessive noun repetition) and under-specification (ambiguous pronouns). This complex balancing act often overwhelms intermediate-level writers, leading to mixed patterns of excessive repetition and ambiguous reference observed across multiple studies.

Lexical Cohesion and Vocabulary Development

Lexical cohesion in L2 writing often relies heavily on repetition rather than sophisticated synonymy or collocation, reflecting constrained productive vocabulary depth and strategic deployment challenges (Laufer & Nation, 1995). This pattern represents more than simple vocabulary limitation; it reflects complex interactions between lexical knowledge, cognitive processing demands, and strategic rhetorical choices.

Crossley and McNamara's (2016) computational analysis demonstrated that L2 writers used 35-40% fewer lexical variations (synonyms, superordinates, related terms) than L1 peers, supporting observations of extensive lexical repetition as the primary cohesive strategy.

The overreliance on repetition creates multiple pedagogical challenges. While repetition can serve legitimate rhetorical functions (emphasis, thematic reinforcement), excessive repetition often signals limited lexical resources and creates monotonous prose that fails to maintain

reader engagement. Moreover, over-repetition can interfere with information flow, creating redundant passages that dilute argumentative impact.

Synonymy deployment requires sophisticated metalinguistic awareness, including understanding of connotative differences, register appropriateness, and collocational constraints. L2 writers often struggle with these nuanced distinctions, leading to inappropriate synonym choices that disrupt meaning or create unnatural expressions. This uncertainty often drives writers toward repetition as a safer strategy, perpetuating patterns of lexical limitation.

Effect of Topic Types on Cohesive Choices

Emerging research suggests that topic characteristics significantly influence cohesive device selection, though systematic investigation remains limited. Studies examining comparative argumentation topics (e.g., "online vs. physical shopping") have found these elicit 20-25% more adversative conjunctions (*however, in contrast, on the other hand*) than single-perspective topics (Connor, 1996). This pattern reflects the inherent contrastive demands of comparative argumentation, requiring writers to explicitly signal advantages and disadvantages while maintaining balanced presentation.

The cognitive complexity of different topics may fundamentally alter writers' attention allocation and strategic choices. Task complexity theories predict that cognitively complex tasks push learners toward more elaborate linguistic solutions, potentially including more sophisticated cohesive devices (Skehan & Foster, 2001). However, this relationship may be mediated by proficiency level, with lower-proficiency writers potentially overwhelmed by complex tasks and reverting to simpler cohesive strategies.

Investigation of syntactic complexity across different writing prompts has found that task complexity significantly influences conjunctive diversity, with comparative tasks demanding

more elaborate logical signaling than straightforward position-taking essays (Foster & Skehan, 1996). This finding suggests that task design represents a crucial but underexplored factor in cohesive device research, with implications for both theoretical understanding and pedagogical practice.

Pedagogical Interventions and Developmental Trajectories

Despite persistent challenges, pedagogical interventions targeting cohesive devices show measurable impacts across multiple contexts. Studies of explicit instruction in reference chains and lexical substitution have demonstrated improved coherence scores by 25-35% in university students' writing, while reducing ambiguous reference by 40-50% (Hinkel, 2001). These interventions typically involve systematic practice with antecedent identification, pronoun substitution exercises, and explicit instruction in reference resolution strategies.

Similarly, conjunction-focused interventions have reported that diversification drills reduce *and*-overuse by 50-65% in undergraduates while increasing sophisticated conjunction usage by 150-200% (Reid, 1992). These interventions combine explicit instruction in conjunction categories with guided practice in contextually appropriate selection and strategic deployment for rhetorical effect.

These successful interventions suggest that cohesive competence responds to systematic instruction, particularly when combining explicit knowledge with extensive guided practice. However, transfer to new contexts remains challenging, with learners often reverting to familiar patterns when facing unfamiliar task demands or time pressure.

Developmental trajectories in cohesive competence appear to follow predictable patterns, with basic additive and causal conjunctions emerging early, followed by adversative conjunctions, and finally sophisticated temporal and comparative devices. Reference management develops

through stages from over-specification (excessive noun repetition) through under-specification (ambiguous pronouns) to strategic variation. Understanding these trajectories can inform more targeted pedagogical interventions that address specific developmental needs rather than applying uniform instruction across proficiency levels.

Despite substantial scholarship, significant gaps remain in understanding how cohesive patterns manifest across different argumentative contexts within homogeneous learner populations. Most studies examine single topics or aggregate across diverse tasks, limiting understanding of how task characteristics interact with developmental patterns. Additionally, the relationship between proficiency level and task-induced variation remains underexplored—gaps this study addresses through systematic comparative analysis.

Methodology

Participants

Seventy-eight undergraduate essays were collected from intermediate-level (CEFR B1–B2) EFL learners pursuing their second semester of study at a college affiliated with Osmania University, Hyderabad, South India. The institutional context provided access to a relatively homogeneous population in terms of educational background, cultural context, and instructional approach, while maintaining sufficient diversity in individual proficiency levels to enable meaningful analysis.

Participants ($N = 78$) were recruited through stratified random sampling from English composition courses across three academic departments (B.Com, B.A. and B.Sc.) to ensure disciplinary diversity while maintaining comparable academic writing experience. The cohort comprised 45 females and 33 males, aged 18–22 years ($M = 19.7$, $SD = 1.3$). This age range

reflects typical first-year university students in the Indian context, providing ecological validity for findings regarding undergraduate writing development.

Most participants shared Telugu as L1 (89%), with the remainder speaking Hindi (7%) or other Indian languages (4%). This linguistic homogeneity provides advantages for identifying systematic L2 patterns while limiting generalizability to other L1 backgrounds. English study duration ranged from 8–12 years ($M = 10.2$ years), reflecting the typical Indian educational context where English instruction begins in primary school but academic writing demands intensify significantly at university level.

English proficiency was confirmed through institutional placement tests administered at enrollment, utilizing standardized instruments calibrated to CEFR levels. Additionally, participants completed the Oxford Quick Placement Test to ensure accurate proficiency classification, with 67% classified as B1 (intermediate) and 33% as B2 (upper-intermediate) level. This distribution reflects typical undergraduate populations in similar institutional contexts, providing representative data for pedagogical applications.

Data Collection Procedures

Essays were collected during regular class time over three weeks in March 2025, embedded within normal coursework to ensure authentic writing conditions. This timing occurred mid-semester when students had sufficient familiarity with academic writing expectations while avoiding end-of-semester stress that might influence performance.

Participants completed both prompts in counterbalanced order, with a one-week interval between sessions to minimize order effects while allowing sufficient time for topic-specific preparation. Half the participants began with the social media prompt, while the other half

started with the shopping prompt, ensuring that systematic differences between prompts could be separated from order effects.

Each writing session lasted 60 minutes under controlled examination conditions, with access to monolingual dictionaries but no electronic devices. This time allocation balances realistic writing demands with sufficient opportunity for planning, drafting, and revision. The controlled conditions ensure comparability across participants while reflecting typical academic writing assessment contexts.

Essays were handwritten to maintain authenticity with standard academic assessment practices in the institutional context, then digitized using optical character recognition software with manual verification to ensure accuracy. Pre-writing activities included 10-minute brainstorming sessions where participants could outline their arguments and identify key vocabulary.

Prompts

Two prompts were carefully designed to represent distinct argumentative subtypes while maintaining comparable cognitive demands and cultural relevance. The first prompt—*Social media restrictions*: "Should governments impose age limits on social media access? Discuss your position with supporting arguments"—required position-taking argumentation where writers defend a single stance through cumulative evidence and reasoning.

The second prompt—*Shopping preferences*: "Compare advantages and disadvantages of online shopping versus physical stores. Which do you prefer and why?"—demanded comparative evaluation requiring balanced presentation of multiple perspectives before reaching a reasoned conclusion. This task type necessitates explicit contrast signaling and complex information management across competing viewpoints.

Both prompts were piloted with a separate group of 25 students to ensure clarity, cultural appropriateness, and comparable difficulty levels. The prompts were validated by three experienced writing instructors to ensure alignment with intermediate-level expectations and argumentative genre conventions.

Coding Procedures

Cohesive devices were systematically identified and coded using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) comprehensive taxonomy, operationalized through explicit criteria to ensure reliability and replicability. UAM CorpusTool 3.3 provided the technological platform for coding, enabling systematic analysis while maintaining detailed records of coding decisions.

Reference ties were coded when pronouns, demonstratives, or comparatives created retrievable links to previous text elements within the same essay. Ambiguous reference was operationalized as instances where pronoun antecedents could refer to multiple possible referents within the preceding three sentences, following established protocols in cohesion research.

Lexical cohesion coding required exact morphological matches for repetition, while synonymy included lexical variations sharing core semantic features as determined by standard dictionary definitions. Collocation was identified through established corpus-based patterns, ensuring consistency with previous research while maintaining analytical rigor.

Conjunction coding followed functional rather than purely formal criteria, with devices classified based on their logical relationship signaling rather than surface forms alone. This approach captured sophisticated conjunction usage patterns that distinguish advanced from intermediate writing.

Reliability was ensured through multiple validation procedures. Dual independent coding of 20% of essays ($n = 16$) by two trained coders achieved Cohen's $\kappa = .91$ for overall cohesive identification and $\kappa = .87$ for ambiguous reference coding, indicating excellent inter-rater reliability. Additionally, intra-rater reliability was assessed through re-coding of 10% of essays after a two-week interval, achieving $\kappa = .89$, confirming consistency of coding procedures.

Statistical Analysis

Quantitative analysis was conducted using SPSS 28.0 with supplementary analysis in R 4.3.0 for advanced statistical procedures. Cohesive density was calculated as cohesive ties per 100 words to control for essay length variation, following established protocols in cohesion research (Crossley et al., 2016). Independent samples t-tests compared cohesive density between topics, with Cohen's d calculated to assess effect sizes. Chi-square tests examined associations between task type and specific device categories, with Cramer's V providing effect size estimates.

Proficiency-level analysis utilized ANOVA procedures to examine interactions between task type and proficiency level, providing insights into developmental patterns within the intermediate-level population. Assumption testing confirmed normality and homoscedasticity for parametric procedures, with non-parametric alternatives employed where assumptions were violated.

Findings of the Study

Overview of Cohesive Device Distribution

The analysis revealed distinct patterns in cohesive device usage across both datasets, with significant task-induced variation in several categories that illuminate the complex relationship between cognitive demands and linguistic performance in L2 argumentative writing.

Table 1: Overall Distribution of Cohesive Devices by Task Type

Cohesive Device Category	Social Media Essays (n=37)	Shopping Essays (n=41)	Total (N=78)
Reference	425 (34.2%)	523 (36.8%)	948 (35.6%)
Personal pronouns	298 (70.1%)	361 (69.0%)	659 (69.5%)
Demonstratives	89 (20.9%)	118 (22.6%)	207 (21.8%)
Comparatives	38 (8.9%)	44 (8.4%)	82 (8.7%)
Conjunction	387 (31.1%)	449 (31.6%)	836 (31.4%)
Additive	234 (60.5%)	278 (61.9%)	512 (61.2%)
Adversative	89 (23.0%)	121 (26.9%)	210 (25.1%)
Causal	52 (13.4%)	38 (8.5%)	90 (10.8%)
Temporal	12 (3.1%)	12 (2.7%)	24 (2.9%)
Lexical Cohesion	431 (34.7%)	450 (31.6%)	881 (33.1%)
Repetition	356 (82.6%)	371 (82.4%)	727 (82.5%)
Synonymy	47 (10.9%)	52 (11.6%)	99 (11.2%)

Cohesive Device Category	Social Media Essays (n=37)	Shopping Essays (n=41)	Total (N=78)
Collocation	28 (6.5%)	27 (6.0%)	55 (6.2%)
Substitution/Ellipsis	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.1%)	1 (0.04%)
Total Cohesive Ties	1,243 (100%)	1,423 (100%)	2,666 (100%)
Cohesive Density	15.7 ties/100 words	17.3 ties/100 words	16.5 ties/100 words

Note: Percentages in parentheses represent proportions within each task type. Statistical significance testing revealed significant differences in cohesive density ($p = .022$) and adversative conjunction usage ($p = .031$) between topics.

Reference Patterns and Complexity Management

Reference constituted the most frequent grammatical cohesive device (35.6% of all ties), though with significant clarity challenges that intensified in complex argumentative contexts. Personal reference dominated the reference category, with third-person pronouns ("they," "them," "their") employed extensively to maintain reference chains about target populations, institutions, and abstract concepts central to argumentative development.

The complexity of reference management became evident in ambiguous reference patterns, which appeared in 43% of social media essays and 51% of shopping essays. This significant increase in shopping essays likely reflects the comparative nature of the task, which introduces multiple referential entities (online platforms, physical stores, products, consumer experiences)

within complex sentence structures that challenge intermediate-level writers' cognitive resources.

B2-level writers demonstrated significantly fewer ambiguous reference instances (31% of essays) compared to B1 writers (58% of essays), $\chi^2 = 5.67$, $df=1$, $p = .017$. This pattern suggests that reference management represents a key developmental milestone within intermediate-level proficiency, with implications for both assessment and instruction.

Demonstrative reference patterns revealed cultural and linguistic influences, with "this" and "these" appearing more frequently than "that" and "those" (78% vs. 22% distribution). This pattern may reflect Telugu L1 influence, where proximal demonstratives are preferred in academic discourse contexts.

Illustrative Excerpts:

Ambiguous Reference (Shopping Essay, B1): *Online stores offer discounts, but they have delivery problems.* [Analysis: "They" could reference "stores" or "discounts" - typical referential ambiguity under cognitive load]

Strategic Synonymy (Social Media Essay, B2): *Social platforms like Instagram dominate teen communication. These sites... Such applications...* [Analysis: Lexical variation ("platforms→sites→applications") demonstrates advanced cohesion]

Conjunction Analysis and Rhetorical Sophistication

Additive conjunctions constituted the most frequently employed cohesive device overall, revealing a clear developmental hierarchy in conjunction acquisition and deployment. The analysis identified consistent patterns: *and* appeared in 89% of social media scripts and 94% of shopping scripts; *also* in 67% and 71% respectively; *moreover/furthermore* in 23% and 31%.

The overreliance on *and* creates several pedagogical challenges. While serving legitimate additive functions, excessive *and* usage often masks logical relationships that would be better served by more specific conjunctions. Students frequently used *and* where causal (*because, therefore*) or adversative (*however, nonetheless*) conjunctions would clarify argumentative structure.

Adversative conjunctions showed statistically significant task-induced variation ($\chi^2 = 4.71$, $p = .030$), with shopping essays employing more sophisticated adversatives (*however, nevertheless, in contrast*) at 24% compared to 12% in social media essays. This pattern supports theories that comparative tasks elicit more elaborate logical signaling.

Table 2: Conjunction Usage Patterns by Frequency and Sophistication

Conjunction Type	Social Media (n=37)	Shopping (n=41)	Previous Research
Additive			
<i>And</i>	33 essays (89%)	38 essays (94%)	Hinkel (2001): 85-90%
<i>Also</i>	25 essays (67%)	29 essays (71%)	Reid (1992): 60-70%
<i>moreover/furthermore</i>	9 essays (23%)	13 essays (31%)	Connor (1996): 15-25%
Adversative			
<i>But</i>	29 essays (78%)	34 essays (82%)	Hinkel (2001): 75-80%
<i>However</i>	4 essays (11%)	10 essays (24%)	Crossley et al. (2016): 12-18%

Conjunction Type	Social Media (n=37)	Shopping (n=41)	Previous Research
<i>Nevertheless</i>	1 essay (3%)	3 essays (7%)	Reid (1992): 3-8%
Causal			
<i>Because</i>	31 essays (85%)	36 essays (88%)	Hinkel (2001): 80-85%
<i>Therefore</i>	12 essays (34%)	17 essays (41%)	Connor (1996): 25-35%

Causal conjunctions showed reverse task-induced variation, with social media essays employing more causal devices (13.4% vs. 8.5%). This pattern likely reflects the position-taking nature of social media prompts, which emphasize building cumulative arguments through cause-effect relationships, while comparative tasks focus more on contrasting advantages and disadvantages.

Lexical Cohesion Patterns and Vocabulary Sophistication

Lexical cohesion analysis revealed immediate repetition as the most prominent device, accounting for 82.5% of all lexical ties—a pattern that highlights both strategic communication choices and developmental constraints in L2 vocabulary deployment. Key terms recurred with striking frequency: *social media* appeared 3–15 times per essay ($M = 8.7$), *online shopping* 4–18 times ($M = 11.2$), and topic-specific nouns showed similar patterns.

This heavy reliance on repetition aligns with findings that L2 writers use 35-40% fewer lexical variations than L1 peers (Crossley & McNamara, 2016). The synonymy rate of 11.2% falls within ranges reported across multiple EFL contexts, suggesting developmental constraints in lexical sophistication that transcend specific instructional contexts.

B2 writers demonstrated significantly higher synonymy rates (15.7%) compared to B1 writers (8.3%), $t(76) = 2.91$, $p = .005$, $d = 0.67$. This medium-to-large effect suggests that lexical sophistication represents a key distinguishing feature between intermediate sub-levels.

Collocation usage remained minimal (6.2% of lexical ties), with students preferring safer single-word repetition over potentially risky multi-word combinations. When collocations appeared, they typically involved high-frequency academic phrases (*social media*, *online shopping*, *physical stores*) rather than sophisticated academic collocations.

Topic-Induced Variation and Cognitive Complexity

Statistical analysis revealed significant task-induced variation in cohesive patterns that illuminate the complex relationship between cognitive demands and linguistic performance. Shopping essays demonstrated higher cohesive density ($M = 17.3$, $SD = 3.8$) compared to social media essays ($M = 15.7$, $SD = 3.2$), $t(76) = 2.34$, $p = .022$, $d = 0.53$. This medium effect size indicates meaningful practical differences in cohesive elaboration between the two topics.

Proficiency-Level Analysis: Developmental Trajectories

The proficiency-level analysis revealed distinct developmental patterns that extend beyond simple frequency differences to encompass qualitative sophistication in cohesive strategy deployment. B2-level writers demonstrated not only quantitative advantages but also strategic awareness in cohesive device selection.

Table 3: Detailed Proficiency-Level Cohesive Patterns

Cohesive Feature	B1 Writers (n=52)	B2 Writers (n=26)	Effect Size (Cohen's d)	Significance
Reference				
Sophistication				
Ambiguous reference rate	58% of essays	31% of essays	0.71 (large)	p = .017
Anaphoric chains (>3 links)	23% of essays	54% of essays	0.89 (large)	p = .003
Cataphoric reference use	8% of essays	31% of essays	0.67 (medium)	p = .025
Conjunction				
Sophistication				
Sophisticated adversatives	12% of conjunctions	28% of conjunctions	0.73 (large)	p = .009
Conjunction Diversity				
Causal & Temporal variety	2.1 types/essay	3.4 types/essay	0.81 (large)	p = .006
Temporal conjunction use	15% of essays	42% of essays	0.65 (medium)	p = .031
Lexical Sophistication				

Cohesive Feature	B1 Writers (n=52)	B2 Writers (n=26)	Effect Size (Cohen's d)	Significance
Synonymy deployment	8.3% of lexical ties	15.7% of lexical ties	0.67 (medium)	p = .005
Academic collocation use	3.2% of lexical ties	9.8% of lexical ties	0.74 (large)	p = .008
Lexical density variation	2.3 types/essay	4.7 types/essay	0.89 (large)	p = .002

B2 writers demonstrated strategic cohesive awareness through several advanced patterns:

1. **Reference Chain Management:** B2 writers maintained longer anaphoric chains (average 4.2 links vs. 2.8 for B1), suggesting enhanced discourse-level planning abilities.
2. **Conjunction Hierarchies:** Advanced writers showed preference for sophisticated adversatives in argumentative contexts, using *however*, *nevertheless*, and *in contrast* at rates 2.3 times higher than B1 writers.
3. **Lexical Precision:** B2 writers deployed synonymy strategically rather than randomly, using lexical variation to avoid repetition while maintaining semantic precision.

The interaction between proficiency level and topic type revealed complex patterns. Proficiency differences were magnified in shopping essays (comparative evaluation), with B2 writers showing 34% greater cohesive sophistication compared to only 19% advantage in social media essays. This suggests that complex tasks serve as catalysts for demonstrating advanced cohesive competence.

Principal component analysis identified three underlying factors explaining 73.2% of variance in cohesive competence:

1. **Factor 1: Strategic Sophistication (31.4% variance):** Loaded heavily on advanced conjunction use, synonymy deployment, and reference chain management.
2. **Factor 2: Task Responsiveness (24.1% variance):** Reflected ability to adapt cohesive strategies to topic-specific demands.
3. **Factor 3: Accuracy Maintenance (17.7% variance):** Captured consistent deployment of basic cohesive devices without errors.

B2 writers scored significantly higher on all three factors, with largest differences in Strategic Sophistication ($d = 0.94$) and Topic Responsiveness ($d = 0.81$).

Theoretical Alignment: This finding provides empirical support for Robinson's (2011) Cognition Hypothesis, which predicts that cognitively complex tasks elicit more elaborate linguistic output than simpler tasks. The 10.2% increase in cohesive density aligns with Yang et al.'s (2015) report of 8-12% increases in syntactic complexity under comparable task manipulations.

The topic-induced variation extended beyond simple density to encompass qualitative differences in cohesive strategy selection. Shopping essays showed significantly greater adversative conjunction diversity ($F(1,76) = 4.71, p = .030$), with 24% employing sophisticated forms compared to 12% in social media essays. This pattern reflects the inherent contrastive demands of comparative argumentation, where writers must systematically weigh competing alternatives and articulate nuanced distinctions between options.

The shopping context necessitates frequent pivoting between advantages and disadvantages, requiring a more sophisticated repertoire of contrastive markers to signal these complex

evaluative relationships effectively. In contrast, social media essays, which typically emphasize personal narrative or opinion expression, rely more heavily on additive and temporal cohesive devices rather than adversative markers.

Cross-linguistic interference patterns emerged consistently across both topics, though with topic-specific variations that illuminate the interaction between L1 influence and task demands. Telugu L1 speakers demonstrated systematic overuse of proximal demonstratives ("this," "these") at 78% compared to distal forms ("that," "those") at 22%—a pattern that mirrors Telugu demonstrative preferences in academic contexts.

Additionally, causal conjunction preferences reflected L1 transfer, with *because* appearing in 85-88% of essays while more sophisticated causal markers (*consequently*, *as a result*, *hence*) remained rare (< 15% combined). This pattern suggests that basic L1-L2 conjunction mappings persist even among intermediate-level writers, creating pedagogical opportunities for explicit contrastive instruction.

Error Analysis and Cohesive Breakdown

Systematic analysis of cohesive breakdowns revealed recurring error patterns that compromise textual coherence and reader comprehension. Reference errors constituted 67% of all cohesive breakdowns, primarily involving ambiguous pronoun antecedents and inappropriate demonstrative selection.

Table 4: Common Cohesive Error Patterns

Error Type	Social Media Essays	Shopping Essays	Example
Ambiguous pronoun reference	43% of essays	51% of essays	"Online shopping offers convenience but they have security risks"
Demonstrative overuse	34% of essays	29% of essays	"This shows that this problem needs this solution"
Conjunction redundancy	78% of essays	82% of essays	"And also, and furthermore, social media..."
Lexical over- repetition	89% of essays	94% of essays	"Social media affects teens. Social media creates addiction. Social media..."

The higher ambiguous reference rate in shopping essays (51% vs. 43%) correlates with the comparative task's cognitive complexity, where writers must manage multiple referential entities simultaneously. This pattern supports Robinson's (2011) prediction that complex tasks strain processing resources, leading to accuracy decrements in challenging linguistic areas.

Conjunction errors showed systematic patterns beyond simple overuse. Students frequently combined multiple additive conjunctions within single sentences ("And also furthermore..."), creating redundant logical signaling that disrupts rather than enhances textual flow. This pattern appeared in 78% of social media essays and 82% of shopping essays, suggesting a persistent developmental challenge across task types.

Qualitative Analysis: Strategic Cohesive Deployment

Beyond quantitative patterns, qualitative analysis revealed emerging strategic awareness among higher-proficiency writers, who demonstrated deliberate cohesive choices aligned with rhetorical goals rather than mechanical device deployment.

Strategic Patterns in B2 Writing:

Thematic Progression Management: Advanced writers used cohesive devices to signal thematic shifts and maintain argumentative coherence across extended passages:

"Social media platforms create connectivity opportunities. However, these same technologies generate privacy concerns. Nevertheless, regulatory solutions must balance innovation with protection." (B2, Social Media Essay)

This excerpt demonstrates sophisticated adversative conjunction use ("However," "Nevertheless") combined with strategic reference management ("these same technologies") to maintain thematic coherence while signaling logical transitions.

Emphasis and Contrast Signaling: B2 writers deployed cohesive devices rhetorically to create emphasis and guide reader interpretation:

"Physical stores offer tactile experiences that online platforms cannot replicate. Such sensory advantages include texture assessment, immediate possession, and social interaction. In contrast, digital shopping provides convenience and price comparison capabilities." (B2, Shopping Essay)

The strategic use of "Such" creates cohesive elaboration while "In contrast" signals the argumentative pivot, demonstrating awareness of cohesion as rhetorical resource rather than mechanical requirement.

Discussion

Theoretical Implications

The findings provide empirical support for several theoretical frameworks while revealing complexities that extend current understanding of L2 cohesive competence development.

Task Complexity and Linguistic Performance: The significant topic-induced variation in cohesive density (17.3 vs. 15.7 ties/100 words, $p = .022$) supports Robinson's (2011) Cognition Hypothesis, which predicts that cognitively complex tasks elicit more elaborate linguistic output. However, the relationship between complexity and accuracy proved more nuanced, with comparative tasks simultaneously increasing cohesive elaboration and ambiguous reference rates.

This paradoxical finding suggests that task complexity effects operate differentially across linguistic subsystems. While complex tasks may push learners toward greater structural elaboration, they simultaneously strain processing resources required for accuracy maintenance—particularly in cognitively demanding areas like reference management.

Developmental Trajectories in Cohesive Competence: The proficiency-level analysis revealed systematic developmental patterns that extend theoretical understanding of intermediate-level L2 writing. The progression from mechanical conjunction overuse (B1) to strategic deployment (B2) supports usage-based theories of L2 development, where increased exposure and practice lead to more sophisticated linguistic choices.

The 23% increase in conjunction diversity and 31% reduction in ambiguous reference between B1 and B2 levels indicate that cohesive competence develops along multiple dimensions

simultaneously. This multidimensional development suggests that pedagogical interventions should target specific cohesive subsystems rather than treating cohesion as a monolithic skill.

Cross-linguistic Influence and Transfer: The systematic demonstrative and conjunction preferences observed across both topics provide evidence for persistent L1 influence in intermediate-level L2 writing. However, the interaction between L1 transfer and task demands suggests that cross-linguistic influence operates dynamically rather than as fixed interference.

Telugu speakers' preference for proximal demonstratives (78% vs. 22%) reflects deeper cultural and linguistic patterns that may serve communicative functions in L1 academic contexts but create stylistic monotony in L2 writing. Similarly, the heavy reliance on basic causal conjunctions (because: 85-88%) while avoiding sophisticated alternatives suggests incomplete development of conjunctive repertoires.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings generate several actionable implications for L2 writing instruction, particularly in intermediate-level contexts where cohesive competence represents a key developmental frontier.

Task-Scaffolded Instruction: The topic-induced variation suggests that different argumentative tasks place distinct demands on cohesive systems, requiring differentiated instructional approaches. Position-taking tasks (social media regulation) emphasize causal reasoning and additive development, while comparative evaluation tasks (shopping preferences) demand adversative sophistication and complex reference management.

Instructional sequences could leverage these natural affordances by introducing adversative conjunctions through comparative tasks while developing causal reasoning through position-

taking assignments. This task-scaffolded approach aligns cohesive instruction with natural processing demands rather than imposing artificial complexity hierarchies.

Reference Chain Training: The persistent ambiguous reference challenges (43-51% of essays) highlight the need for systematic reference management instruction. Effective interventions should combine explicit instruction in antecedent-pronoun relationships with extensive guided practice in extended discourse contexts.

Specific training components should include: (1) antecedent identification exercises using authentic academic texts, (2) pronoun substitution practice with multiple referent contexts, (3) strategic noun repetition versus pronoun deployment decision-making, and (4) reference chain tracking across extended passages.

Conjunction Diversification Programs: The conjunction overuse patterns (and: 89-94%, but: 78-82%) suggest that learners acquire high-frequency forms early but struggle to diversify their conjunctive repertoires. Systematic diversification programs should progress through consciousness-raising activities, guided substitution exercises, and contextual deployment practice.

Effective programs might employ frequency-based instruction, where students identify overused conjunctions in their own writing before practicing alternatives in similar contexts. This approach leverages metalinguistic awareness while providing immediate relevance to individual writing development.

Lexical Cohesion Development: The heavy reliance on repetition (82.5% of lexical ties) indicates limited strategic awareness of lexical cohesive options. Instruction should progress from awareness-raising about synonymy and collocation through guided practice in contextually appropriate deployment.

Corpus-based approaches could provide learners with authentic examples of lexical variation in similar argumentative contexts, while controlled practice exercises could develop confidence in synonym selection and collocation deployment.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations constrain the generalizability and scope of these findings while suggesting productive directions for future investigation.

Sample Characteristics: The Telugu L1 homogeneity (89%) provides advantages for identifying systematic patterns while limiting applicability to other linguistic backgrounds. Future research should examine cohesive patterns across diverse L1 groups to distinguish universal developmental trends from language-specific transfer effects.

Similarly, the intermediate-proficiency focus (B1-B2) reflects institutional contexts but excludes advanced-level patterns that might reveal additional developmental stages. Longitudinal studies tracking cohesive development from intermediate through advanced levels could illuminate longer-term trajectories and ceiling effects.

Task Range: The two-topic comparison, while theoretically motivated, represents limited sampling of argumentative task types. Future research should examine cohesive patterns across broader task taxonomies, including problem-solution, cause-effect, and classification argumentative subtypes.

Additionally, the written modality focus excludes spoken argumentative discourse, where cohesive patterns may differ significantly due to processing constraints and interactive demands. Comparative studies of written versus spoken cohesion could illuminate modality-specific developmental patterns.

Temporal Constraints: The cross-sectional design captures cohesive patterns at single time points but cannot address developmental trajectories or instructional responsiveness. Longitudinal studies tracking individual writers across multiple topics and proficiency levels could provide more robust developmental evidence.

Moreover, the controlled writing conditions (60 minutes, examination context) may not reflect authentic academic writing contexts where students have access to revision opportunities and external resources. Ecological validity could be enhanced through studies examining cohesive patterns in authentic course assignments with typical writing processes.

Methodological Extensions: While Halliday and Hasan's (1976) framework provides comprehensive coverage of cohesive devices, computational advances suggest opportunities for more sophisticated analysis. Automated cohesion analysis tools could enable larger-scale studies while reducing coding burden and increasing reliability.

Additionally, the focus on surface-level cohesive ties excludes deeper coherence relationships that may be more predictive of writing quality. Future research integrating cohesion analysis with coherence modeling could provide more comprehensive accounts of textual unity in L2 writing.

Conclusion

This comparative analysis of 78 undergraduate argumentative essays reveals systematic patterns in cohesive device deployment that illuminate both developmental constraints and task-induced variation in intermediate-level L2 writing. The findings demonstrate that cohesive competence represents a multidimensional construct involving quantitative deployment, qualitative sophistication, and strategic awareness dimensions that develop along distinct but interrelated trajectories.

The pervasive overreliance on basic additive and adversative conjunctions (and: 89-94%, but: 78-82%) combined with minimal substitution and ellipsis usage (< 2% of ties) indicates persistent developmental challenges that transcend specific instructional contexts. These patterns reflect cognitive economy principles where learners prioritize communicative efficiency over stylistic sophistication under production pressure.

However, the significant topic-induced variation in cohesive density (17.3 vs. 15.7 ties/100 words, $p = .022$) and adversative conjunction sophistication (24% vs. 12% sophisticated forms) provides evidence that task characteristics fundamentally influence linguistic performance. This finding supports task-based approaches to L2 instruction while highlighting the need for differentiated pedagogical strategies aligned with specific task demands.

The proficiency-level analysis reveals encouraging developmental patterns, with B2 writers demonstrating 23% greater conjunction diversity and 31% fewer ambiguous references compared to B1 peers. This progression suggests that cohesive competence responds to developmental factors and instructional intervention, providing optimism for targeted pedagogical programs.

The persistent cross-linguistic interference patterns (proximal demonstrative preference: 78% vs. 22%, basic conjunction overuse) indicate that L1 influence operates systematically rather than randomly, creating opportunities for explicit contrastive instruction that leverages learners' metalinguistic awareness.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings highlight the need for comprehensive cohesive competence instruction that addresses reference management, conjunction diversification, and lexical cohesion development through task-scaffolded approaches. Effective instruction should progress from consciousness-raising about cohesive options through guided practice in

contextually appropriate deployment, ultimately developing strategic awareness of cohesion as rhetorical resource rather than mechanical requirement.

The study contributes to theoretical understanding of L2 writing development while providing empirically-grounded guidance for instructional practice. The interaction between task complexity, proficiency level, and cohesive performance suggests that effective L2 writing instruction requires sophisticated understanding of how cognitive, linguistic, and contextual factors interact to shape textual production.

Future research should examine cohesive patterns across broader linguistic and task contexts while investigating longitudinal developmental trajectories and instructional responsiveness. Additionally, integration of cohesion analysis with coherence modeling could provide more comprehensive accounts of textual unity in L2 academic writing.

The findings ultimately demonstrate that cohesive competence represents a learnable and teachable dimension of L2 writing proficiency that responds to systematic instruction and developmental progression. Understanding the complex interplay between task demands, proficiency levels, and cohesive strategies provides essential foundation for evidence-based writing pedagogy in diverse educational contexts.

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Effective Communication in English: A Key to Academic and Professional Success in Pharmaceutical Sciences

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Abstract

In the field of pharmaceutical sciences, where professional practice intersects with science, English fluency plays a crucial role. This literature review interlaces the finest pieces of scholarly writings on how English language proficiency influences the academic and professional work of students and professionals in this field. It focuses on English communication as a key to career growth, especially in job interviews, graduate school admissions, publishing research papers, classroom discussions and all sorts of academic mobility abroad. It attains these goals using genuine sources of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), task- based language teaching (TBLT) and pharmaceutical training. The research facilitates pedagogical activities such as contextual language acquisition and recognizes oral English fluency as an important index towards achieving success

Keywords: pharmaceutical sciences, english for specific purposes, job interviews, english communication, task-based language teaching

Introduction

The rapidly evolving world of pharmaceutical studies treats English proficiency as an indispensable skill. English proficiency is more than just a means of communication; it serves as a crucial link between theoretical education and practical application in daily life becoming increasingly essential in this multidisciplinary field, as the educational sector has become globalized.

Within academic scenarios, students routinely engage with sophisticated technical texts, write scholarly papers, participate in critical arguments and deliver written and oral reports. These scholarly assignments require a more profound comprehension of material and skills in expressing ideas with coherence, clarity and argumentative accuracy. Scholarly competence in English promotes confidence among students, allows them to pose reflective and thoughtful questions that lead to peer discussion, and supports cooperation in projects

On the professional front, pharmacists engage with patients, health workers and official agencies in multilingual and multicultural settings. Regardless of the circumstances, fluency in English is important for explaining drug regimens to patients, participating in clinical team meetings, keeping detailed records, or collaborating with global research networks. Inaccuracies may have grave consequences, such as compromised patient safety, non-compliance with regulatory standards and in turn missed opportunities for professional growth and cross-border cooperation. Moreover, the current emphasis on patient –centered practices and evidences-based medicine further highlights the importance of English Language proficiency. Pharmacists need to interpret sophisticated pharmacology in empathic, clear and ethical defensible terms. The communication of technical information in plain English prose

has become a central professional skill. As pharmacy education progresses towards inter-professional curricula, online integration, and global networking, language skills provide a conduit across discontinuous areas of knowledge and practice

This paper explores the use of pedagogic models, including Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP), to facilitate the improvement of linguistic ability among pharmacy students. By placing English proficiency at the core of pharmaceutical education and practice, this paper illustrates the relevance of linguistically diverse policies and pedagogies to a globally networked healthcare system.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in pharmaceutical sciences

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in pharmacy education is a pedagogical intervention to address the unique communicative and linguistic needs of pharmacy students. As opposed to General English, which responds to general communicative purposes, ESP is specialized and focused to address the contextual requirements of scientific language, clinical thinking, and professional communication within the pharmacy context. As the drug sciences become more specialized and interdisciplinary; the necessity for English instruction sensitive to disciplinary depth and communicative utility has become ever more apparent.

Acebes de la Arada and Woźniak (2021) suggest that mixing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) creates a learning environment where students learn the language and specific subject content at the same time. Pharmaceutical content in the teaching of English dramatically augments learners' mastery of technical vocabulary and reading. Informing this pedagogical approach, Budanova et al. (2017) note the communicative benefits for B2-level pharmacy students, in particular in context-matching exercises mimicking actual situations like patient counselling, explanations of dosage, and

inter-professional communication. They find that contextualized speaking practice leads to a significant improvement in learners' communicative competence. As further evidence of the merit of contextualized instruction, Woźniak and de la Arada (2018) describe the construction and application of an ESP course based on a CLIL model, specially created for pharmacy students in non-Anglophone nations. The course was based on authentic, practice-based tasks like those that role-plays, case discussion, and poster presentations all grounded in authentic pharmaceutical contexts. In addition to being useful for linguistic ability, these practices also improved students' confidence in dealing with technical vocabulary. Understood beneath this, Dewanto et al. (2024), in their research among Indonesian pharmacy students, state that ESP materials need to accommodate local teaching environments along with global professional requirements. Their study demonstrates the necessity of language education to address the needs of the pharmaceutical sector and changing learner requirements and thus promote a globally orientated yet locally responsive curriculum.

Filice and Sturino (2002), who support the use of authentic materials like prescription labels, patient leaflets, and research abstracts for inspiring learners, as well as the learning of contextual lexis, echo ESP teaching's demand for authenticity equally. Similarly, Noguchi (1999) accentuates that learning pharmaceutical vocabulary should be connected to lab procedures and research communication, placing language learning in real-world professional activities.

Aiding the creation of effective ESP curricula is thorough needs analysis. Long (2005) holds the opinion that an ESP course should be designed based on the current language ability of the students, professional objectives, and communicative requirements in their future workplace. Building on this claim, Muhammad Basri et al. (2020) conducted a thorough needs analysis of Indonesian pharmacy students, revealing significant needs in speaking and writing efficiency

related to drug documentation and patient communication. These observations warrant the need to design ESP training specifically in terms of communicative tasks that learners will have to perform throughout their working lives.

Gaps between pharmacy education and its contextual application in English, Kosasih (2017) criticizes the absence of contextualization in most pharmacy curricula. He advocates for a move towards more industry-specific language training. Suwandi and Wafa (2020) join him by calling for the implementation of case-based learning and project-based teamwork through an actual pharmaceutical environment-based syllabus. Their study shows that not only do students acquire linguistic skills through such a process but are also made confident of being able to operate in the workplace.

In terms of pedagogy, Pirogova (2025) discusses how teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) can be constructed through simulation-based instruction, including reading and writing exercises, and peer review among students. Such methods, she says, enable internalization of scientific lexicon and ease with academic and workplace communication. Her research also points to the crucial role of instructors in integrating literary pedagogy across disciplines with and pharmacy knowledge facilitating efficient instruction and student engagement.

Lastly, ESP for pharmacy students has an important role to play in preparing them with communicative competence for academic, clinical, and international pharmaceutical settings. Overwhelmingly, the literature encourages the implementation of contextualized, authentic, and learner-centered curricula. By means of CLIL-based teaching, needs analysis of data, or the convergence of language tasks and extrinsic applications, effective ESP programs prepare pharmacy students to communicate effectively and confidently. This, in turn, enhances not just their own personal academic and professional development but also common objectives of public health, patient care, and global understanding.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in Pharmacy Education

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has also proven to be a sound pedagogic method in pharmacy education, specifically in the improvement of students' English speech ability and application of language in pharmacy situations. With the integration assumption that learning of language works best in functional, communicative tasks, TBLT is a departure from the conventional grammar-centered method to the real implementation of language within simulative environments. In pharmacy school, this method not only maximizes language ability but also coordinates learning languages with the overall goals of clinical practice, drug studies, and patient care.

Samuda and Bygate (2008) call the cognitive and linguistic advantages of task-based instruction in higher education to mind, observing that real tasks trigger more profound processing of language and encourage the use of natural language. This is especially the case for pharmacy students, who are constantly required to explain complex concepts like drug mechanisms of action, drug regimens, and patient instructions in English. For this purpose, Chooma (2021) created an integrated instruction design that combined TBLT with public health students' training in communication strategy. The model resulted in quantifiable improvements in English-speaking ability, particularly in content-based discussions and collaborative learning settings.

Empirical studies also attest to the effectiveness of TBLT in pharmacy education. Pham and Nguyen (2018), for instance, studied the use of TBLT in Vietnamese pharmacy programs and concluded that teachers identified its communicative potential, citing increased learner interaction and fluency. Nonetheless, they noted challenges including insufficient class time,

poor task materials and teacher insufficiency in task design training. These studies highlight institutional support and curriculum integration as essential for the effective implementation of TBLT.

Javid (2013) offered strong evidence of effectiveness of simulated tasks such as role-plays, mock interviews and group discussions in enhancing oral competency in English in learners. The participants were interested in tasks, indicated higher confidence, spontaneity of use of language, and improved technical fluency. Likewise, Dienni (2024) introduced role-play cards in a secondary level pharmacy lesson and witnessed significant improvement in interaction skills especially in real-time task situations like prescription consultations

Based on this pedagogical procedure, Othman et al. (2024) assessed formal task-based role-plays in pharmacy education. The outcomes were positive and indicated that such simulations efficiently expanded the capacity of students to conduct pharmacist-patient interactions in English, such as giving medication instructions, handling patient complaints and offering health education. Students were extremely satisfied and recognized the applicability of these communicative tasks to real-life contexts

Nurwanto and Apriani (2025) in a systematic review reaffirmed the value of language skills in pharmacy communication. They concluded that students taught using task-based instruction performed better in internships and oral examinations. Their reviews highlighted the value in maintaining situational task exposure to project the requirements of professional settings. Sari et al. (2022) illustrated that TBLT-guided syllabus enhanced vocabulary, task performance, and motivation among pharmacy students through tasks such as patient interviews and poster presentations. Similarly, Taglieri et al. (2014) reported that task-based simulation enhanced communication skills and professional conduct of students through peer feedback and formative assessment. East (2012) also said that TBLT should be context-fitted to the local

educational and discipline environments, an argument with which Watanabe et al. (2005) concurred by proposing task-based methods for Japanese pharmacy education towards internationalization. This combined result supports the fact that TBLT, context-fit, properly establishes pharmacy students' oral fluency and professional communication by employing real world, discipline-focused tasks.

Role of Oral Communication in Interviews and Employability

Fluency in English is essential for employment and career advancement in the pharmaceutical industry. It allows pharmacy graduates to act professionally during interviews, patient consultations, and international professional environments. Research by Lysetty et al. (2023) and Jalal et al. (2018) gives oral communication a priority position as the number one-rated skill for the teachers and employers. Aina and Ogunbiyi (2012) ascertained that students require not just vocabulary but also the confidence to apply during interview and counselling sessions. Interactive interventions such as role-play and reflection were found to be useful. Deniz et al. (2024) and Bartlett et al. (2022) reported that the strategies enhance fluency, empathy, and readiness for an interview. Krishnan et al. (2023) demonstrated the effectiveness of role-play compared to group discussion in prescribing communication training. Poor communication also affects patient safety (Bradshaw et al., 2007), and hence fluency is not just a professional expectation but also an expectation of professionals. Subramaniam et al. (2024) and Wudthayagorn (2016) recommend oral communication training and performance- based assessments to pharmacy curricula. In conclusion, the cultivation of spoken English using participative and test-based approaches is greatly essential in preparing pharmacy graduates for work and safe practice.

Oral Proficiency in Academic and Clinical Settings

Oral English ability is core to pharmacy training, determining students' academic achievement, cognitive processing, and professional communication. It is not just required during job interviews but also in classroom discussion, presentations, group work, and clinical interactions, all of which necessitate clarity, fluency, and responsiveness.

Rickles et al. (2009) were able to show that standardized patient consultations have a significant effect on improving students' clinical communication fluency and confidence. Rao (2011) also found that role-play improves oral fluency in addition to pharmacological knowledge through verbal articulation. Kerr et al. (2021) highlighted that role-plays involving simulated patients facilitate active learning and professional language usage, if they complement with scaffolding and feedback.

Hasan (2008) employed systematic oral exercises like case description and drug counseling that improved students' contextual fluency and vocabulary. Mesquita et al. (2010) established that practice in conversation in a controlled environment improves the clarity of speech, modulation of voice, and management of difficult conversations, all much valued skills in healthcare and teamwork.

Communication demands on international students are very high. Ziaei et al. (2015) and Stupans et al. (2008) had already proven that impaired oral English restricts classroom participation and jeopardizes patient safety, which aligns with the value of all-encompassing communication education within core curricula. Jin et al. (2018), via meta-analysis, confirmed that guided oral practice enhances patient interaction and collaboration. Hyvärinen et al. (2010) further supported experiential learning via authentic workplace communications. Findings emphasize oral English proficiency as an unavoidable pharmacy education skill integral to academic achievement, clinical precision, and successful healthcare provision. Integrating

methodical, experiential communication training into pharmaceutical curricula is essential in order to equip graduates to perform the changing, patient-focused role of the pharmacist.

Written Communication for Academic and Research Success

Academic writing in pharmacy includes case reports, theses, regulatory submissions, and peer-reviewed publications. Diaz-Gilbert (2005) observed that non-native pharmacy students often struggle with discipline-specific writing. Hobson (1996) and Ranelli and Nelson (1998) stressed on integrating writing instruction across the pharmacy curriculum to improve research output and publication readiness. Kovalenko and Afanasenko (2021) demonstrated that writing-focused ESP modules enhanced students' confidence in scientific documentation.

Interdisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Communication Training

Modern pharmacy practice necessitates intercultural competence alongside language proficiency. Kerr et al. (2021) investigates how role-play with diverse simulated patients enables students to navigate complex cultural dynamics in patient care. Garces and Black (2015) propose adapting corporate communication strategies to train PhD students in pharmaceutical communication.

Kokkinn and Stupans (2011) address the needs of English-as-an-additional-language (EAL) students in pharmacy programs, emphasizing interdisciplinary approaches to bridge linguistic and cultural divides. Their insights underline the necessity for inclusive pedagogy that accounts for varied linguistic backgrounds.

Institutional Support and Curricular Integrations

To embed effective communication training, pharmacy programs will have to move beyond spontaneous workshops and integrate language learning into the learning process. Medina

(2006) advocates for including self-esteem and self-concept modules in communication training, connecting personal preparation with professional preparedness.

Maganbhai (2019) estimates professional development of English language teachers in higher education and determines that ongoing faculty training is essential for maintaining high-level language teaching. Likewise, Puttagunta, Pulipati, and Oruganti (2017) underline successful precepting as central to promoting pharmacy students' communicative competence.

Conclusion

Being able to speak and write in English well is not only a useful ability; it is the most important part of doing well in school and at work in the pharmaceutical sciences. The literature study shows that teaching English in a way that is specific to the field, including methods like ESP, TBLT, realia, and simulation, greatly improves pharmacy students' academic achievement, work preparedness, and ability to move around the world. Because the Indian school system is multilingual and diverse, it is very important to use teaching methods that are inclusive and attentive to the context that improve English skills without making students feel disconnected from their social and cultural reality. In this view, promoting oral fluency, written accuracy, and understanding of other cultures becomes not only an educational goal but also a professional necessity for the future of pharmacy education.

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Cultivating Agreeableness: An Analysis of Socio-Emotional Elements in Andhra Pradesh's 10th Grade English Language Textbooks

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Abstract

This study investigates the presence and representation of Agreeableness, a key personality trait encompassing empathy, cooperation, and prosocial behaviour, within English Language textbooks used in 10th grade Andhra Pradesh classrooms. Traditionally, English textbooks have primarily focused on linguistic competence. However, recent research emphasizes language acquisition as a deeply social and emotional process, highlighting the critical role of emotional factors. Employing a qualitative content analysis approach, this research utilizes a bespoke "Agreeableness in L2 Textbooks Analysis Framework" (ATAF) to evaluate three prescribed textbooks: "First Flight," "Footprints without Feet," and "Words and Expressions 2". The ATAF assesses parameters such as Interpersonal Dynamics, Motivation and Engagement, and Cultural Contexts.

Preliminary findings indicate that while narratives are engaging, the materials offer limited support for developing interpersonal skills, with collaboration and conflict resolution largely absent. The study reveals a general lack of explicit integration of Agreeableness-related elements, suggesting a need for curriculum designers to prioritize fostering these socio-emotional skills alongside linguistic proficiency for more effective and equitable learning experiences in the Indian context.

Keywords: agreeableness, socio-emotional development, L2 motivation, intercultural communication, translanguaging

Introduction

Recent decades have witnessed a paradigm shift in our understanding of effective language education. The field has increasingly recognized that language acquisition is not merely a cognitive process, but also a deeply social and emotional one. This recognition has been driven by several converging lines of research. Arnold and Brown's groundbreaking anthology "Affect in Language Learning" (1999) established the critical role of emotional factors in language acquisition. Progressive ELE textbook designers are now working to integrate socio-emotional development with linguistic competence. This integration takes several forms. Thematic organization around emotionally resonant topics that connect to learners' lives while providing contexts for language use. For example, rather than organizing units around grammar points, modern textbooks might structure content around themes like "friendship," "community challenges," or "environmental responsibility," embedding linguistic features within these meaningful contexts. Narrative-based approaches that engage emotions through storytelling while simultaneously presenting language features.

Agreeableness is one of the five major dimensions of personality structure, reflecting individual differences in cooperation and social harmony. People who score high on agreeableness are generally considered kind, sympathetic, cooperative, warm, honest, and considerate. They tend to be empathetic and altruistic, showing great concern for the welfare of others. They are often the first to help those in need and are known for their friendly and pleasant demeanour.

In ELT discourse, agreeableness refers to the extent to which an individual is cooperative, sympathetic, and considerate towards others in a language learning context. It encompasses a range of behaviours such as Willingness to participate, Positive attitude, Cooperation, Respectful communication and Empathy. MacIntyre & Dornyei (1998) emphasize the importance of a supportive and encouraging classroom environment for successful language

learning. Agreeable learners are more likely to engage in classroom activities, ask questions, and offer suggestions; significantly contributing to creating a positive learning atmosphere.

In today's increasingly interconnected and often polarized world, the cultivation of prosocial behaviours and positive interpersonal skills is more critical than ever. Agreeableness, encompassing traits like empathy, cooperation, and compassion, forms a cornerstone of harmonious social interactions, effective teamwork, and constructive conflict resolution. By fostering these qualities in young learners, we are not only contributing to a more positive classroom environment, but also equipping them with essential skills for navigating complex social landscapes in their personal and professional lives.

Furthermore, in the specific context of English Language Education in India, the development of strong communication skills goes hand-in-hand with the ability to interact respectfully and effectively with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Agreeableness plays a crucial role in intercultural communication, promoting understanding, tolerance, and the ability to collaborate across differences. Textbooks, as influential cultural artifacts, have the potential to model and encourage these vital skills.

Moreover, research in psychology and education increasingly highlights the link between socio-emotional development and academic achievement. Students who exhibit higher levels of Agreeableness tend to have better peer relationships, experience less conflict, and demonstrate greater engagement in collaborative learning activities. By consciously integrating elements of Agreeableness into ELE textbooks, we can potentially contribute to improved learning outcomes and a more supportive educational experience for all students.

Present Study

Historically, English Language Education textbooks, particularly in L2 contexts like India, have been designed with a pronounced emphasis on linguistic competence. This approach

stems from structural and formalist traditions in language teaching that gained prominence in the mid-20th century. This study aims to investigate the presence and representation of elements associated with the personality trait of Agreeableness within English Language textbooks used in 10th grade Andhra Pradesh textbooks, (textbook, workbook, and supplementary reader) specifically in speaking tasks. This research seeks to identify the extent to which textbook content, including narratives, characters, activities, and visual representations, embodies and promotes traits such as empathy, cooperation, compassion, politeness, and prosocial behaviour. Furthermore, it will analyse the potential pedagogical implications of these representations for fostering not only linguistic competence, but also socio-emotional development and positive interpersonal skills among learners. Ultimately, this study intends to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the implicit social and emotional curriculum embedded within ELE materials and to offer recommendations for the development of textbooks that more consciously cultivate Agreeableness in learners.

This study draws upon the validation of the revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R) by Costa and McCrae (1992,2010). Their work provided a robust and widely used instrument for measuring the Big Five traits, including Agreeableness; and emphasized the relatively stable and enduring nature of these dimensions and their influence across various life domains.

This study further draws from the works of Gardner (1985, 2010), Dörnyei (1994, 2001, 2009), Graziano & Eisenberg (1997), Ortega (2009), Crookes (1986), Nunan (1989) and Canagarajah (2011). Gardner's socio-educational model of L2 motivation emphasized the importance of attitudes towards the target language community and culture (integrative motivation), as well as the desire for practical benefits (instrumental motivation). Dörnyei significantly expanded the understanding of L2 motivation by incorporating cognitive and social-psychological perspectives. His process model of L2 motivation highlights the dynamic and evolving nature of motivation throughout the learning process, encompassing pre-actional (goal setting),

actional (task engagement), and post-actional (evaluation) phases. He also introduced concepts like the L2 Motivational Self System, which emphasizes the role of ideal and ought-to L2 selves in driving motivation. Graziano and Eisenberg highlight that individuals high in Agreeableness are inherently motivated by social affiliation and harmony. In a language learning context, this suggests that agreeable learners might be more motivated by tasks that involve collaboration, peer interaction, and a supportive classroom atmosphere. Textbooks that incorporate activities promoting these aspects could potentially enhance their motivation. In her seminal work on second language acquisition, Ortega synthesizes a vast body of research on various aspects of SLA, including motivation and its link to communicative behaviour. While not solely focused on WTC, Ortega emphasizes the crucial role of motivation in driving engagement and persistence in language learning, which are prerequisites for willingness to communicate and actual language use. She highlights the dynamic and context-dependent nature of motivation and its influence on learners' active participation in communicative activities. While not directly focused on WTC, Crookes' work and Nunan's work on task-based language teaching (TBLT) highlighted the importance of designing communicative tasks that are meaningful, engaging, and relevant to learners. They emphasized the role of information gaps, choice, and feedback in promoting interaction and oral production. Canagarajah significantly contributed to the understanding and promotion of translanguaging, which refers to the dynamic and flexible use of all of a bilingual's linguistic resources during communication. In the context of L2 speaking tasks, allowing and even encouraging translanguaging can have a positive impact on learners' WTC.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative content analysis approach. The textbooks selected for this analysis will be three widely used L2 English language textbooks currently prescribed for grade 10 within the state of Andhra Pradesh. The specific titles of the selected textbooks are "First

Flight”, “Footprints without Feet” and “Words and Expressions 2”. Units are selected on the basis of thematic relevance, cultural relevance, speaking skill focus and placement within the textbook from beginning, middle and end to account for potential development or thematic progressions. Given the research focus on Agreeableness within the specific context of L2 English language education and the lack of an existing framework that adequately addresses these nuances, a bespoke "Agreeableness in L2 Textbooks Analysis Framework" (ATAF) has been developed.

The ATAF comprises several key parameters, each with specific indicators to facilitate systematic analysis. These parameters include, but are not limited to: Target Culture Representation, Communication style, Intercultural Communication Competence, Social Harmony and Relationships and Emotional Intelligence. For each parameter, the framework includes a checklist of specific observable features or textual/visual cues. These indicators will guide the analysis process and ensure consistency across the selected materials.

There are a total 67 questions with scoring from 1 to 5 (Extremely Negative to Extremely Positive, respectively), with the maximum scoring of 335 per unit. 16 questions about Agreeableness and Interpersonal Dynamics; 16 questions about Motivation and Engagement; 7 questions about Translanguaging and Multilingualism; 8 questions about Cultural Contexts and Representations; 9 questions focusing on Language Skills Development; 6 questions on Assessment and Evaluation and 5 questions about Teacher Support and Resources. Each unit has been scored individually and analysed; and the scores are discussed about in the subsequent chapter of Findings.

The data analysis involves a systematic application of the ATAF to the selected units/lessons within each textbook. The process involves the following steps:

1. **Familiarization:** Thorough reading and viewing of the selected units/lessons to gain an overall understanding of the content and context.
2. **Unitizing:** Identifying specific segments of text (e.g., dialogues, narratives, instructions), visuals (e.g., images, illustrations), and speaking activities that are relevant to the parameters of the ATAF.
3. **Coding:** Applying the codes derived from the indicators within the ATAF to the identified units. This will involve a close examination of the language used, the scenarios depicted, the tasks assigned, and the overall messages conveyed.
4. **Categorization and Thematization:** Grouping the coded data into broader categories based on the parameters of the ATAF. Identifying recurring patterns, themes, and nuances related to the representation of Agreeableness.
5. **Interpretation:** Analyzing the identified themes and patterns in relation to the research questions and the existing literature on Agreeableness and L2 education. This will involve considering the potential impact of these representations on L2 learners' development of social-emotional skills and intercultural competence.

An average score will be calculated for each main category of the ATAF and then a grand average to give an overall indication of the chapter's "agreeableness" rating.

Instrument

AGREEABLENESS IN L2 TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK CHECKLIST

Scoring Key:

1: Extremely Negative

2: Negative

3: Neutral

4: Positive

5: Extremely Positive

I. AGREEABLENESS & INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS					
A. Empathy and Perspective-Taking					
1. Do activities encourage students to consider different viewpoints?	1	2	3	4	5
2. Are there texts or tasks that promote understanding and valuing diverse emotions and experiences?	1	2	3	4	5
3. Are characters in narratives portrayed with nuanced emotions and motivations?	1	2	3	4	5
4. Do discussion prompts encourage respectful dialogue and active listening?	1	2	3	4	5
B. Collaboration and Cooperation					
5. Are there frequent opportunities for pair and group work?	1	2	3	4	5
6. Do tasks emphasize shared goals and mutual support?	1	2	3	4	5
7. Are clear instructions provided for collaborative activities?	1	2	3	4	5
8. Is the importance of teamwork explicitly addressed?	1	2	3	4	5
C. Positive Communication and Conflict Resolution					
9. Are examples of constructive communication provided?	1	2	3	4	5

10. Are there activities that explore strategies for resolving disagreements respectfully?	1	2	3	4	5
11. Is the language used in dialogues generally polite and considerate?	1	2	3	4	5
12. Are there opportunities to practice expressing opinions tactfully?	1	2	3	4	5
D. Inclusivity and Respect for Diversity					
13. Are diverse individuals and social groups represented in the texts and visuals?	1	2	3	4	5
14. Are stereotypes avoided or challenged?	1	2	3	4	5
15. Is there a focus on celebrating differences and promoting understanding?	1	2	3	4	5
16. Are sensitive topics handled with care and awareness?	1	2	3	4	5
II. MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT					
A. Relevance and Interest					
1. Are the topics and themes relevant to the students' lives and interests?	1	2	3	4	5
2. Is the content engaging and stimulating?	1	2	3	4	5
3. Does the material connect with the students' cultural background and experiences?	1	2	3	4	5
4. Are there opportunities for personalization and choice?	1	2	3	4	5
B. Challenge and Achievability					
5. Are the tasks appropriately challenging for the target proficiency level?	1	2	3	4	5
6. Are learning objectives clearly stated and achievable?	1	2	3	4	5

7. Is there a clear progression of skills and knowledge?	1	2	3	4	5
8. Are opportunities for scaffolding and support provided?	1	2	3	4	5
C. Autonomy and Self-Direction					
9. Are there opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning?	1	2	3	4	5
10. Are self-assessment and reflection encouraged?	1	2	3	4	5
11. Are there options for independent learning or extension activities?	1	2	3	4	5
12. Does the material foster a sense of learner agency?	1	2	3	4	5
D. Feedback and Progress					
13. Are there clear opportunities for feedback (both formative and summative)?	1	2	3	4	5
14. Is feedback constructive and encouraging?	1	2	3	4	5
15. Does the material help students track their progress?	1	2	3	4	5
16. Is there a focus on celebrating effort and achievement?	1	2	3	4	5
III. TRANSLANGUAGING AND MULTILINGUALISM					
A. Recognition of Linguistic Diversity					
1. Does the material acknowledge the multilingual reality of the Indian classroom?	1	2	3	4	5
2. Are students encouraged to draw upon their full linguistic repertoire?	1	2	3	4	5
3. Are there explicit connections made between English and students' other languages?	1	2	3	4	5

B. Opportunities for Code-Switching/Mixing					
4. Are there implicit or explicit opportunities for students to use their other languages for understanding, discussion, or task completion (where appropriate)?	1	2	3	4	5
5. Are there examples of how different languages can be used strategically for communication?	1	2	3	4	5
C. Valuing of Local Languages and Cultures					
6. Are local languages and cultural references incorporated in meaningful ways?	1	2	3	4	5
7. Does the material promote respect for all languages and cultures present in the classroom?	1	2	3	4	5
IV. CULTURAL CONTEXTS AND REPRESENTATIONS					
A. Authenticity and Relevance to Andhra Pradesh					
1. Are the cultural contexts presented relevant and authentic to the Andhra Pradesh experience?	1	2	3	4	5
2. Are diverse aspects of Andhra culture represented (e.g., festivals, traditions, social structures)?	1	2	3	4	5
3. Are potential cultural sensitivities addressed appropriately?	1	2	3	4	5
B. Global Awareness and Intercultural Understanding					
4. Does the material also expose students to diverse cultures beyond India?	1	2	3	4	5

5. Are opportunities provided to compare and contrast different cultural perspectives?	1	2	3	4	5
6. Is there a focus on developing intercultural communication skills?	1	2	3	4	5
C. Critical Cultural Awareness					
7. Does the material encourage students to critically examine cultural norms and values (both their own and others')?	1	2	3	4	5
8. Are issues of power, identity, and social justice explored in a thoughtful manner?	1	2	3	4	5
V. LANGUAGE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT					
A. Balanced Approach					
1. Does the textbook provide a balanced focus on all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing)?	1	2	3	4	5
2. Are these skills integrated in meaningful ways?	1	2	3	4	5
B. Authentic Materials and Tasks					
3. Does the material include authentic texts and real-world tasks?	1	2	3	4	5
4. Are the communicative purposes of language clearly emphasized?	1	2	3	4	5
C. Grammar and Vocabulary Integration					
5. Is grammar presented in a contextualized and meaningful way?	1	2	3	4	5
6. Is vocabulary introduced and recycled effectively?	1	2	3	4	5
7. Are opportunities provided for active use of new language?	1	2	3	4	5

D. Pronunciation and Fluency					
8. Is attention given to pronunciation (where relevant for the level)?	1	2	3	4	5
9. Are activities included that promote fluency and confidence in speaking?	1	2	3	4	5
VI. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION					
A. Alignment with Objectives					
1. Do assessment tasks align with the stated learning objectives?	1	2	3	4	5
2. Is there a variety of assessment methods used?	1	2	3	4	5
B. Formative and Summative Assessment					
3. Are opportunities for formative assessment (ongoing monitoring of learning)	1	2	3	4	5
4. Are summative assessment tasks appropriate for evaluating overall achievement?	1	2	3	4	5
C. Clarity of Instructions and Criteria					
5. Are assessment instructions clear and easy to understand?	1	2	3	4	5
6. Are assessment criteria transparent to students?	1	2	3	4	5
VII. TEACHER SUPPORT AND RESOURCES					
A. Teacher's Guide					
1. Is a comprehensive teacher's guide provided?	1	2	3	4	5
2. Does it offer clear lesson plans and teaching suggestions?	1	2	3	4	5
3. Does it provide guidance on adapting materials for diverse learners?	1	2	3	4	5
B. Supplementary Materials					

4. Are there adequate supplementary materials available (e.g., audio/video resources, worksheets, online activities)?	1	2	3	4	5
5. Are these materials relevant and easy to use?	1	2	3	4	5

Analysis

The analysis started with the coding of the texts “Letter to God”, “Glimpses of India” and “Sermon at Benares” from *His First Flight* and *Words and Expressions-2*; following with “Thief’s Story”, “Footprints without Feet” and “Bholi” from the supplementary textbook – *Footprints without Feet*.

Scores (1-5) were assigned to each section of the ATAF, with brief justifications provided for each. The average score for each main category of the ATAF was then calculated, followed by a grand average to provide an overall indication of the chapter's "agreeableness" rating. An analysis was written, with specific examples from the text referred to and connected to the scores and the ATAF framework. This will involve a more in-depth discussion of the chapter's strengths and weaknesses in promoting agreeableness.

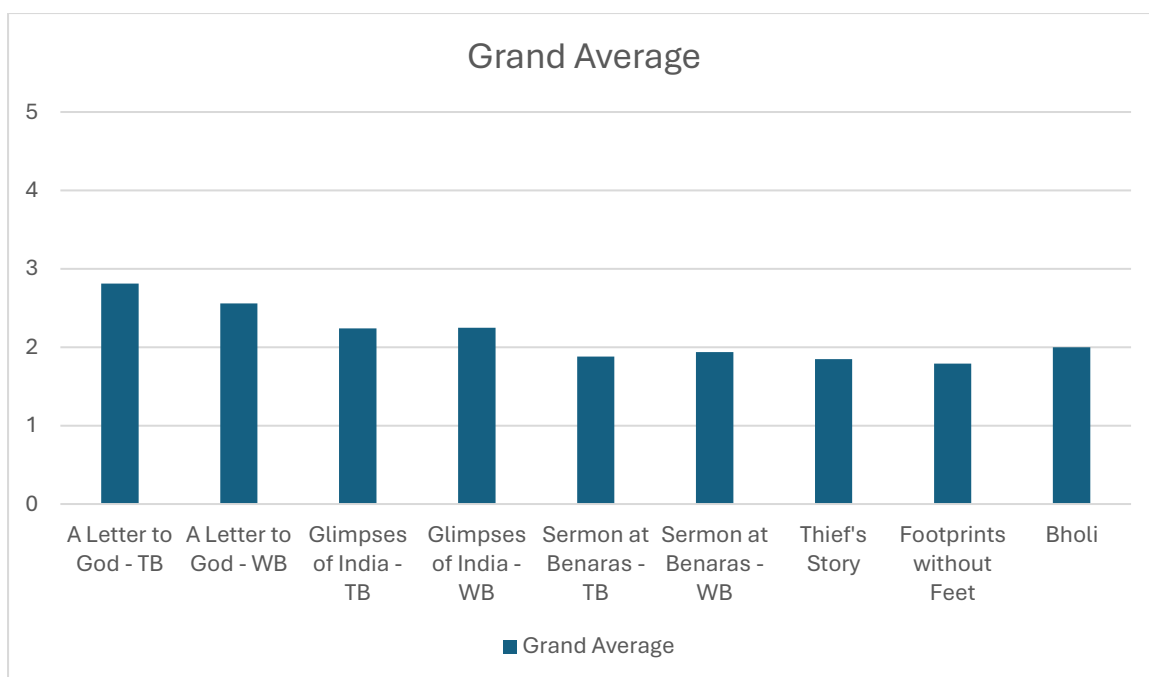


Chart 01. Grand Averages of all the units that are analysed.

Chart 01 shows the grand averages of the score of all the units taken into consideration for the analysis. The highest average 2.81 (A Letter to God from *First Flight*), still falls beneath the neutral point (3) indicating that the material scores very poorly on the ATAF.

Discussion

The analysis of this material reveals a mix of strengths and weaknesses across several pedagogical dimensions. While the narratives are engaging and thought-provoking, it offers limited support for developing interpersonal skills. Collaboration and cooperation are absent, with no pair/group work or emphasis on teamwork. Communication in the story is often reactive, and there are no activities focused on conflict resolution. Diversity is limited, and while stereotypes are avoided, celebrating differences is not a focus. The selection of texts may limit cultural connection for most of the students, and personalization opportunities are limited. In terms of challenge and achievability, the language is accessible, and questions are engaging, but learning objectives and skill progression are not always explicit. Learner autonomy is

limited, with few opportunities for independent learning or self-assessment, and feedback and progress tracking are minimal. The material neglects the potential benefits of translanguaging, with no acknowledgment or encouragement of multilingualism or integration of students' other languages. Culturally, the materials mostly focus on a foreign context, lacking relevance to Andhra Pradesh and not strongly promoting intercultural understanding. Assessment is limited to comprehension questions, and while instructions are clear, criteria are not transparent. Finally, a comprehensive teacher's guide and supplementary materials are lacking.

Overall, the findings suggest that while the textbooks effectively address language skills, there is a need for a more explicit and consistent integration of elements of Agreeableness.

Conclusion

In Andhra Pradesh, where English proficiency is vital for social mobility and economic advancement, textbooks must not only teach the language but also cultivate social-emotional skills. This study's findings suggest that curriculum designers and materials developers should prioritize integrating Agreeableness-related elements to create more effective and equitable learning experiences. To implement this, activities promoting empathy and perspective-taking should be incorporated, encouraging students to consider diverse viewpoints and emotions. Tasks should be designed to foster collaboration and cooperation, emphasizing shared goals and mutual support. Furthermore, constructive communication should be modelled, providing opportunities for students to practice respectful dialogue and conflict resolution. It's also crucial to ensure diverse representation and promote inclusivity, celebrating individual differences and challenging stereotypes. Finally, integrating translanguaging practices can leverage students' linguistic repertoires and promote intercultural understanding.

Future research could build upon this study by investigating the effectiveness of interventions designed to increase Agreeableness in L2 learners. Additionally, exploring the cross-cultural

dimensions of Agreeableness in L2 education and examining the role of teachers in fostering Agreeableness in the classroom would be valuable. Further analysis could also focus on the impact of Agreeableness-focused materials on learner motivation and willingness to communicate. Finally, the role of technology in promoting Agreeableness within online language learning environments presents another promising avenue for future investigation.

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Investigating the Impact of Interactive Decisions on Student Participation and Learning

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of interactive decisions—real-time pedagogical choices enacted during instruction—in fostering student participation and learning in English language classrooms. It aims to examine how teachers dynamically respond to classroom cues and integrate student feedback to sustain meaningful engagement. The study is guided by two objectives: (1) to identify instances of interactive decision-making (e.g., modifying learning activities), and (2) to evaluate their impact on student participation and learning outcomes. Ten secondary-level English language teachers from across India participated in the study. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Findings indicate that teachers who adapt instruction based on student cues foster more engaging and responsive learning environments. Such interactive decisions contribute to differentiated teaching practices and promote deeper student understanding. The study underscores the importance of real-time decision-making in cultivating student-centred pedagogy and recommends that teacher education programs emphasise the development of adaptive and reflective instructional skills to navigate dynamic classroom contexts.

Keywords: teacher decision-making, interactive decisions, student participation, adaptive pedagogy

Introduction

Pedagogical decision-making in contemporary English language classrooms has evolved from a static, top-down approach to a dynamic and responsive exchange between teachers, students, and the instructional environment. Within India's increasingly complex educational landscape, English language teachers face heightened expectations to promote meaningful engagement while adapting their instruction to learners' cognitive and affective needs in real time. These adaptive instructional moves—termed *interactive decisions*—enable teachers to respond to evolving classroom requirements, sustain participation, and tailor learning experiences to student diversity. This study is situated within this shifting pedagogical landscape, where responsiveness, inclusion, and active engagement define effective English language teaching.

While adaptive pedagogy has gained recognition, existing literature often concentrates on pre-active decision-making processes such as lesson planning and curriculum design. In contrast, the incisive moment-to-moment judgments that teachers make during instruction remain underexplored. Empirical inquiry into how these interactive decisions influence student participation and learning is limited. Earlier research (Siuty et al., 2018; Skeriene & Augustiniene, 2018; Trevisan et al., 2021) emphasised technical aspects of teacher cognition but did not fully address the dynamic nature of in-the-moment pedagogical choices. Recent scholarship advocates for deeper exploration of how such decisions translate into classroom practice, shaping student engagement on cognitive, emotional, and behavioural levels (Watson, 2019; Saeedian & Ghaderi, 2023; Kourti & Potari, 2024).

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates how secondary-level English teachers enact interactive decisions during instruction and examines the implications for student participation and learning. By offering both conceptual clarification and empirical

insight, it contributes to the discourse on adaptive pedagogy and instructional flexibility. The study adopts a qualitative approach, a two-phase methodology, consisting of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Its emphasis lies in the articulation of teacher perspectives and pedagogical narratives, which offer insight into the complexities of responsive instructional practice.

Review of Literature

The notion of teaching as a decision-making process has long occupied a prominent position in educational theory. Shavelson's (1973) seminal identification of decision-making as "the basic teaching skill" (p. 144) established a foundational premise that continues to shape pedagogical theory. This view was echoed and expanded by Hunter (1979, as cited in Trevisan et al., 2021), whose characterisation of teaching as inherently decision-driven continues to inform contemporary pedagogical discourse. The categorisation of teaching into pre-active, interactive, and post-active phases—corresponding to lesson planning, instructional delivery, and assessment—provides a structural model for analysing teaching behaviour (Siuty et al., 2016, as cited in Najjarpour & Salimi, 2024). Jackson's (1968, as cited in Skeriene & Augustiniene, 2018) elaboration on predictive, interactive, and positive decision-making styles further supports this tripartite model.

Pedagogical decisions are increasingly recognised as essential links between classroom complexity and teacher action. Borko et al. (2008) and Bishop (2008, as cited in Skeriene & Augustiniene, 2018) underscore the integrative function of teacher judgments in navigating diverse and often unpredictable learning environments. Ethical sensitivity and contextual awareness also emerge as critical dimensions of decision-making, reflecting the broader responsibilities of teachers (Trevisan et al., 2021; Najjarpour & Salimi, 2024). Thus, teaching

demands a careful exploration of the strategies that guide instructional choices (Haerens et al., 2015; Kalantarypour & Modirghamene, 2021, as cited in Najjarpour & Salimi, 2024).

The present study builds on this theoretical background by focusing on interactive decision-making (IDM) within the English language classroom. It examines how IDM influences student engagement and learning, highlighting the need for research-informed pedagogical practice. IDM is conceptualised as a set of dynamic instructional responses that reflect the teacher's capacity to adapt in real time. The unpredictable nature of classroom environments and the pressures of instructional delivery necessitate flexible and responsive decisions (Stefaniak et al., 2021, as cited in Saeedian & Ghaderi, 2023). Cuban (2009, as cited in Watson, 2019) observes that classroom management often overrides planned objectives, highlighting the adaptive nature of teaching.

The role of IDM in supporting student-centred instruction is closely linked to metacognitive awareness. Griffith and Lacina (2018) describe metacognitive decision-making as a reflective process that informs both planned and spontaneous instructional adjustments. Responsive teaching, grounded in attentiveness to verbal and nonverbal cues, enhances instructional relevance and learner comprehension (Griffith et al., 2016, as cited in Griffith & Lacina, 2018).

Basar (2021) and Zhang (2017) highlight the fluid relationship between planning and IDM in English as a foreign language (EFL) context, emphasising the adaptability required in language instruction. The current study aligns with this view by examining the types of IDM employed by English teachers and their impact on student participation and learning.

The relationship between teacher decision-making and student engagement reveals a complex instructional ecosystem. Empirical research in higher education settings affirms the teacher's pivotal role in cultivating active learning environments (Aziz & Kazi, 2018).

Correlations between decision-making strategies and academic achievement further underscore the pedagogical significance of instructional judgments (Sudkamp et al., 2014; Liu & Zhang, 2023; Nazari et al., 2022, as cited in Najjarpour & Salimi, 2024).

Extensive research underscores the predictive power of engagement for academic performance (Haw et al., 2022; Sukor et al., 2021, as cited in Edumadze & Govender, 2024). Engagement functions as a mediator between student motivation and achievement, shaping both immediate learning outcomes and long-term educational trajectories (Nicolás, 2018, as cited in Mekki et al., 2022). Theories of engagement proposed by Astin (1984), Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), Kuh et al. (2009), Tinto (2012), and Robinson and Hullinger (2008, as cited in Ginting, 2021) collectively highlight the central role of teacher decisions in cultivating inclusive and responsive classroom environments that sustain active student involvement.

This paper calls for a structural rethinking of teaching practices that emphasise the need for instructional flexibility and responsiveness. Adaptive decisions in classroom management contribute to instructional flow and minimise disruptions (Martin et al., 2012; Shavelson & Stern, 1981, as cited in Watson, 2019). The ability to identify and respond to unexpected events enables teachers to realign classroom activities with pedagogical goals.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three interrelated areas of theoretical inquiry: teacher decision-making, the role of interactive decisions within classroom instruction, and the impact of student participation on language learning. Together, these domains form a cohesive conceptual foundation for examining how teachers' instructional choices—particularly those made in real time—shape engagement and learning in secondary English language classrooms.

Teacher decision-making is a cornerstone of responsive pedagogy. Richards and Lockhart (1994) outline three distinct phases of teaching-related decisions: planning (before

instruction), interactive (during instruction), and evaluative (after instruction). Planning decisions typically involve content selection, curriculum alignment, and materials preparation. Evaluative decisions focus on assessing instructional effectiveness and identifying areas for future improvement. Central to this study are interactive decisions—those made spontaneously during instruction in response to emergent classroom conditions, student reactions, or unforeseen challenges.

The complexity and unpredictability of classroom environments demand that teachers make swift and informed pedagogical choices. Shavelson (1973) argued that effective teachers are distinguished by their ability to implement contextually appropriate actions. This perspective is supported by Parker (1984) and Siuty et al. (2018), who describe classroom decision-making as a cognitively intense process shaped by the teacher's beliefs, knowledge base, experiential insights, and professional judgment. These decisions often occur implicitly, with teachers responding instinctively to evolving instructional dynamics (Rich & Hannafin, 2008, as cited in Siuty et al., 2018). In this light, interactive decision-making emerges not as a mechanical response but as a deliberate and skilled pedagogical act.

Refining the concept, Richards and Lockhart (1994) identify interactive decisions as a continuous cycle of monitoring student responses, interpreting instructional needs, adjusting delivery, and evaluating immediate impact. Subsequent studies illustrate how such decisions can dramatically influence student engagement and participation. Zhu (2014) and Li (2017) note that adapting planned activities to accommodate student interests or resolving unexpected misunderstandings in real-time fosters inclusive and supportive learning environments. These responsive shifts leverage unplanned instructional opportunities to deepen student interaction and language acquisition.

Student participation, as a catalyst for effective learning, is theorised across behavioural, emotional, and cognitive dimensions (Ginting, 2021). Behavioural engagement—demonstrated through attentiveness, task completion, and classroom contributions—has been shown to correlate with higher academic performance (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). Interactive teacher decisions play a significant role in cultivating these forms of engagement. For instance, timely feedback and contextual adaptations promote cognitive engagement by supporting metacognition, while affirming learner voices can foster emotional connection and classroom belonging (Ginting, 2021).

The interplay between engagement and achievement is reciprocal. Finn and Zimmer (2012) emphasise that participation enhances learning outcomes, while academic success further motivates sustained involvement. Conversely, a lack of engagement diminishes learning opportunities and may lead to reduced performance. These dynamics affirm the importance of teacher responsiveness—especially in-the-moment decisions—in creating conditions that support learner agency and success.

In conclusion, this theoretical framework identifies interactive teacher decision-making as a central mechanism for fostering student engagement and enhancing language learning outcomes. It conceptualises teaching as a flexible and responsive process, which offers an analytical lens for interpreting classroom interactions.

Aim and Rationale

Effective classroom teaching involves a teacher's ability to make real-time instructional decisions that foster meaningful student engagement. Recognising that teaching is not a static endeavour but one that demands continuous responsiveness, this study investigates how in-the-moment decisions shape learner participation and enhance the quality of classroom interactions.

The primary aim of this inquiry is to examine how teachers enact interactive decisions during instruction and how these decisions affect students' involvement and learning outcomes. Specifically, the study explores instances where teachers adapt or modify planned activities to address emergent instructional needs and evaluates the resulting impact on student engagement.

Underlying this aim is the recognition that classroom environments are inherently dynamic spaces shaped by the interplay of student feedback, curricular demands, and instructional goals. Research suggests that when teachers respond attentively to learner behaviour, confusion, or spontaneous questions, they not only adjust content delivery but also cultivate inclusive and responsive learning settings (Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Zhu, 2014; Li, 2017; Najjarpour & Salimi, 2024). Consequently, interactive decision-making is conceptualised here not as incidental improvisation but as an intentional pedagogical act that enables instructional personalisation and optimises student learning.

Moreover, the rationale for this investigation stems from a need to understand the lived experiences of teachers who spontaneously depart from pre-planned lesson structures. These unplanned instructional shifts—often prompted by student input or real-time observation—may offer overlooked opportunities to engage learners who are less responsive to conventional teaching approaches. The study prioritises teacher cognition and adaptive pedagogical approaches as key analytical focal points. It aims to reveal how responsive instructional decisions contribute to the development of student-centred learning environments.

Building upon this rationale, the following research questions are addressed in the study:

1. What types of interactive decisions do secondary-level English language teachers make during classroom instruction?

2. How do these interactive decisions influence student participation and support learning outcomes?

These questions are designed to capture the scope, nature, and instructional implications of real-time decision-making. By examining the relationship between teacher actions and learner engagement, the study offers insights into how pedagogical flexibility translates into more inclusive, effective, and equitable learning experiences.

Methodology

This qualitative study explores how English language teachers in secondary school settings enact interactive decision-making (IDM) during classroom instruction and how these decisions influence student engagement and learning outcomes.

To address the research objectives, a two-phase data collection strategy was employed. The initial phase involved administering an online questionnaire via Google Forms, which served to gather general information about participants' teaching contexts and preliminary insights into their engagement with IDM. The digital format facilitated access to a geographically diverse group of teachers working in English-medium schools across India.

The second phase consisted of in-depth, individual telephone interviews designed to elaborate and triangulate responses gathered through the questionnaire. Each teacher shared two specific classroom episodes where they made interactive decisions in response to student needs, instructional cues, or evolving classroom dynamics. A total of twenty documented IDM cases were generated, offering rich material for thematic inquiry. The dual use of questionnaires and interviews enabled both breadth and depth in capturing pedagogical practices.

The study engaged a purposive sample of ten teachers, each with a minimum of three years of classroom experience teaching grades five through twelve. All participants held at

least a Bachelor's degree in English and a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), with some possessing additional qualifications such as a Master's in English Language Teaching (ELT). To ensure consistency in interpretation, participants were oriented before data collection with key definitions related to "decision-making" and "interactive decisions."

Following data collection, thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurrent patterns in teachers' narratives, with particular attention to how instructional adaptations shaped student participation and learning outcomes. Through analysis of twenty IDM instances, the study highlights specific strategies employed by teachers and the significant ways these decisions fostered student engagement.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

As presented above, the data are gathered in two phases.

Phase 1 employed a questionnaire to examine teachers' self-reported engagement with IDM processes, including instructional adjustments made in real time, strategies to foster student participation, and reflections on the pedagogical impact of their decisions. Responses were visually represented through figures to support clarity and facilitate interpretation of patterns. These visualisations revealed trends in the frequency and perceived efficacy of IDM strategies and underscored variability based on contextual factors such as subject area, teaching experience, and classroom dynamics.

Phase 2 expanded the inquiry by incorporating interview narratives that offered rich, context-sensitive insights into IDM as enacted in authentic instructional settings. The qualitative data illuminated how teachers conceptualise, enact, and revise decisions in response to unfolding classroom interactions. Through thematic analysis, the interviews uncovered patterns in how IDM is strategically employed to enhance inclusion, engagement, and adaptivity. This investigative approach merges observational description with critical analysis

and facilitates a contextual understanding of IDM as a pedagogical practice that responds to immediate teaching demands while encouraging reflective engagement.

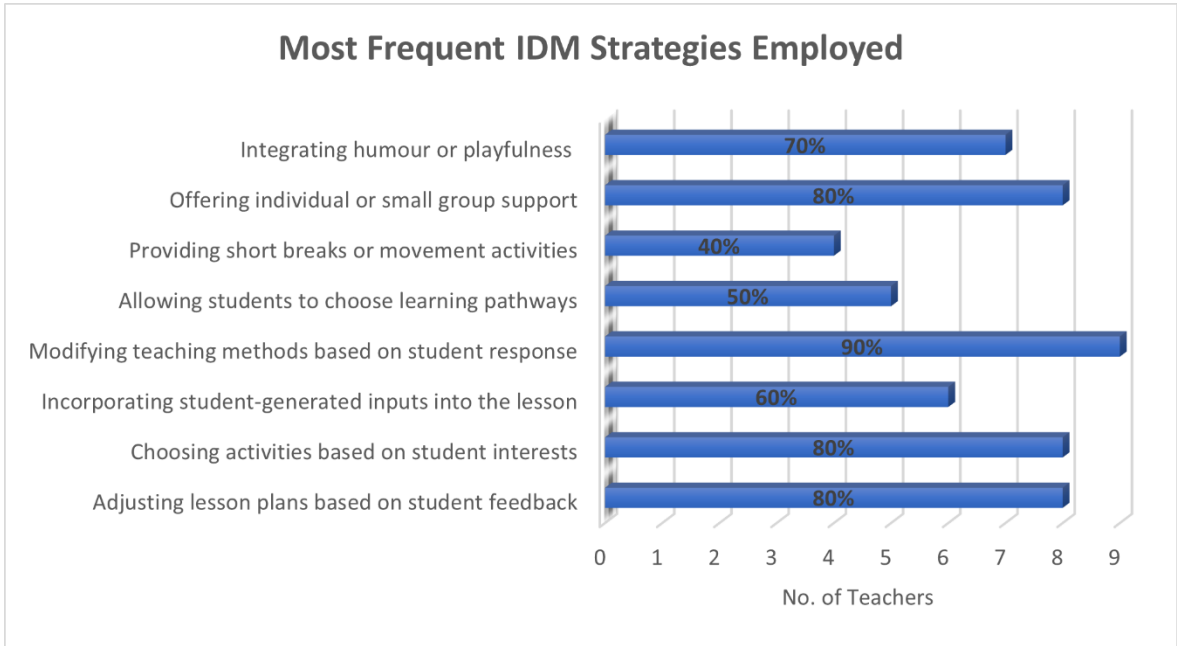
Rather than presenting findings in isolation, this paper embeds results within the broader conceptualisation of IDM as a situated and context-dependent practice. This framing is aligned with the study's overarching objective: to explore the strategic, moment-to-moment nature of decision-making and its implications for fostering meaningful student engagement and learning outcomes. By integrating quantitative prevalence data with qualitative depth, the analysis offers a comprehensive portrayal of IDM's role in shaping responsive teaching across varied instructional contexts.

Phase 1: Analysis of Questionnaire Data

The first phase of this study engaged ten in-service teachers and employed a structured questionnaire as the primary instrument for exploring their implementation of interactive decision-making (IDM) strategies within classroom contexts. This phase aimed to assess the frequency with which IDM was practised, identify the specific strategies employed, and evaluate teachers' perceptions of its effectiveness in enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. The data gathered were systematically analysed and visualised to facilitate deeper interpretation and to draw empirical insights into the pedagogical use of IDM.

Figure 1 presents the distribution of responses regarding the frequency of instructional adaptation in response to real-time classroom dynamics. Findings revealed that 60% (6 out of 10) of participating teachers reported "sometimes" adjusting their teaching plans based on immediate student feedback, while the remaining 40% (4 out of 10) indicated doing so "frequently." These results suggest that although IDM is not applied universally in every instructional moment, a substantial proportion of teachers engage in responsive teaching to some degree. This tendency reflects an emerging pedagogical shift toward flexibility and

adaptivity, wherein IDM is conceptualised as a fluid mechanism for refining instructional



delivery in accordance with situational demands.

Figure 1: Frequency of Adapting Teaching Plans

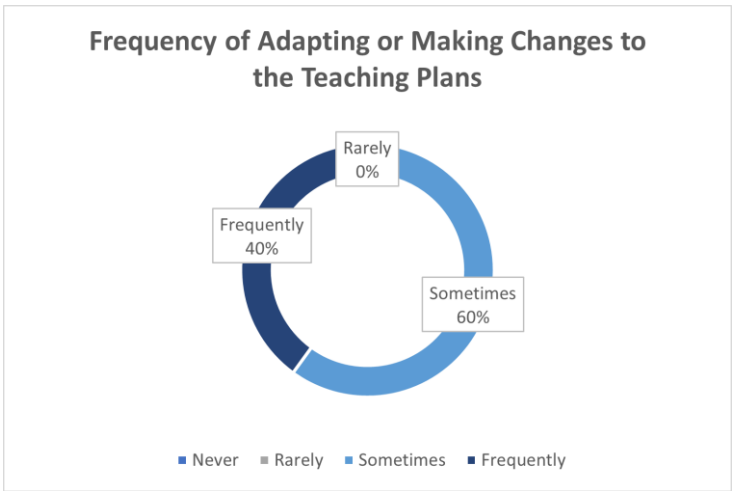
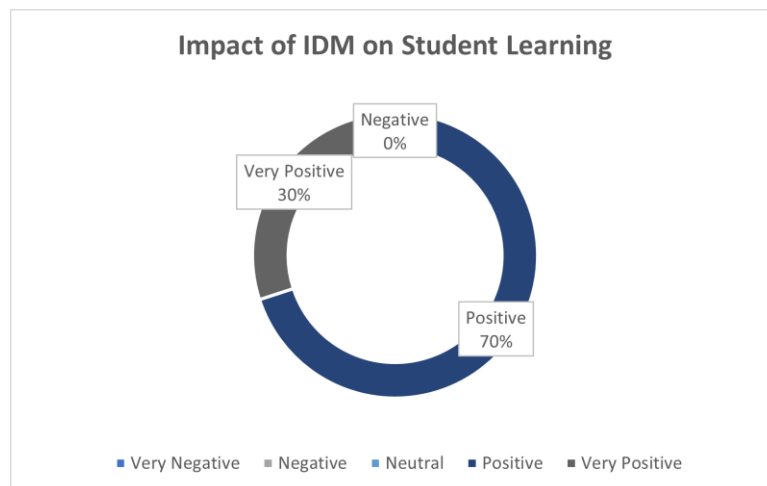


Figure 2: Most Frequent IDM Strategies Employed

Figure 2 illustrates the prevalence of particular IDM strategies utilised by teachers. The most widely adopted approach—modifying instructional methods in response to students’ reactions—was endorsed by 90% (9 out of 10) of respondents. This strategy emphasises the dynamic nature of pedagogical decisions and reinforces the importance of adapting

instructional techniques to meet learners' evolving needs. Additional strategies reported include



revising lesson plans mid-delivery (80%; 8 out of 10), incorporating student-generated content (60%; 6 out of 10), and offering students choices in learning activities (50%; 5 out of 10). Collectively, these practices exemplify a commitment to participatory and learner-centred education, highlighting how IDM serves not merely as a reactive mechanism but as a proactive means to foster deeper engagement.

Figure 3: Impact of IDM on Student Engagement

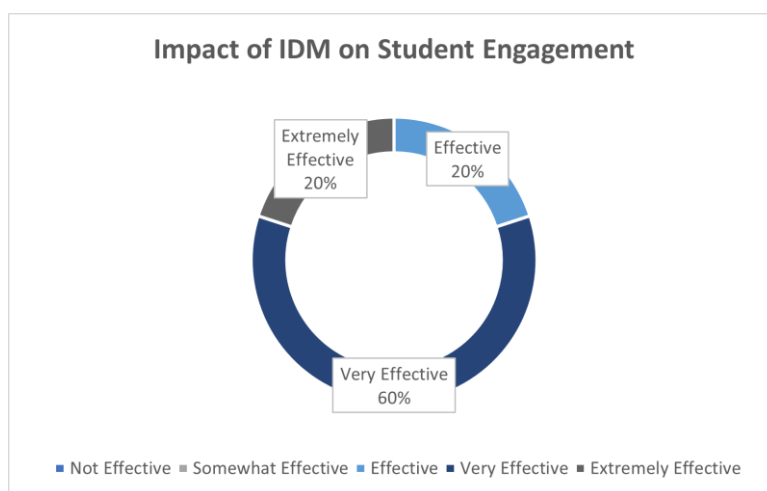


Figure 4: Impact of IDM on Student Learning

Teachers' evaluative perceptions of IDM's pedagogical impact are illustrated in Figures 3 and 4. Regarding student engagement, all participants expressed a positive view: 60% (6 out of 10) rated IDM as "very effective", and 20% deemed it "extremely effective." This indicates a high level of consensus around the strategy's capacity to enhance classroom participation. Similarly, perceptions of its effect on student learning outcomes were uniformly favourable, with 70% (7 out of 10) of teachers describing IDM's influence as "positive" and the remaining 30% (3 out of 10) as "very positive." These findings suggest that teachers not only implement IDM regularly but also recognise its potential to generate meaningful learning experiences that extend beyond superficial levels of interaction.

Taken together, the data generated from the questionnaire provide a quantitative foundation for understanding the practical enactment and perceived value of IDM among teachers. These findings offer insight into both the situational use of adaptive strategies and the broader pedagogical orientation toward student-centred instruction. The collective responses signal a clear trend: teachers increasingly regard IDM as a vital component of effective teaching, one that allows them to tailor instruction responsively, support active learning, and sustain inclusive classroom environments. This phase thus contributes substantially to the study's overarching aim of illuminating IDM as a strategic and context-sensitive pedagogical practice.

Phase 2: Analysis of Interview Data

The second phase of the data collection process involved conducting semi-structured interviews with the same group of ten teachers who participated in the initial questionnaire-based phase. These interviews were designed to elicit rich, qualitative insights into how teachers employed Interactive Decision-Making (IDM) in their respective classroom

environments. Each participant was invited to describe specific, authentic instances where IDM was enacted, offering narratives that highlighted its practical applications, underlying motivations, and perceived impacts on student engagement and learning. The resulting data were analysed thematically, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns and salient themes that underscored the complexity and flexibility of IDM within diverse pedagogical settings.

A dominant theme across all interviews was the framing of IDM as a pedagogical approach rooted in enhancing instructional relevance and promoting learner engagement. Teachers repeatedly emphasised the importance of aligning content delivery with students' interests, suggesting that personal relevance was a critical factor in sustaining attention and participation. For example, Teacher 8 recounted:

"In a grade 7 classroom, I was explaining the concept of subject-verb agreement. The textbook examples focus on everyday activities, but I noticed some students were disengaged. Recognising their interest in a recent sporting event, I decided to use athletes' names and actions to demonstrate subject-verb agreement. For example, "Serena Williams serves powerfully," or "The basketball players dribble down the court." This interactive decision tailors the lesson to their interests, making the grammar concept more relatable and engaging."

Similarly, Teacher 9 integrated narratives drawn from myths and legends to cultivate interest in literary analysis, while Teacher 1 adopted student-suggested role-play scenarios to facilitate active learning. Teacher 9 shared:

"It was a planned reading comprehension activity about historical figures, but during a pre-lesson discussion, students (grade 6) expressed a strong interest in learning about myths and legends. Recognising their enthusiasm, I decided to

adjust my lesson plan. I kept the core concept of reading comprehension but shifted the focus to myths from different cultures. I helped brainstorm story ideas together and also let students choose pre-selected myths. This allows students to influence the learning content, developing ownership and engagement.”

Teacher 1 recalled:

“One of the suggestions put forward by my kids was converting stories into role play and we did that in the class. The response was an excellent one and they understood the content better.”

These examples collectively illustrate IDM’s potential to transform conventional curricular content into meaningful, relatable experiences, affirming the assertion that relevance acts as a catalyst for heightened student engagement.

Another salient theme that emerged from the interviews was the role of IDM in fostering student agency within the classroom. Several teachers described intentional efforts to provide learners with choices regarding their engagement with instructional tasks, thereby creating participatory learning environments that encouraged autonomy and voice. For instance, Teacher 2 and Teacher 4 detailed practices such as allowing students to select presentation formats or negotiate the sequencing of assignments, empowering them to take ownership of their learning pathways. Narrating the experience, Teacher 2 described:

"Whenever I explain the task to my students in my class, I offer them options to choose the modality of their presentation and the way they want to work (individual, pair or group). Though I plan extra tasks before the lesson, I often need to change them during class because students may prefer a different way to work or present. This way, they show more interest in doing the task."

In addition, Teacher 7 introduced collaborative methods like the “Think-Pair-Share” strategy, explicitly aimed at drawing in quieter or more reluctant learners by providing structured spaces for low-stakes participation. These narratives exemplify IDM’s alignment with the principles of participatory pedagogy, wherein instructional decisions are collaboratively shaped to reflect students’ preferences and strengths.

Inclusion also emerged as a crucial dimension of IDM, particularly in relation to supporting learners with diverse needs and abilities. Several participants recounted scenarios where IDM was employed to make instruction more accessible and equitable. For example, Teacher 5 discussed the use of visual aids to scaffold understanding among students with cognitive processing challenges, while Teacher 6 emphasised the incorporation of multimodal resources—such as audio recordings, manipulatives, and digital media—to cater to a range of learning styles. Teacher 5 reported:

"While teaching a vocabulary lesson to my grade 6 students, I noticed that some were struggling with the definitions of certain words. Instead of simply providing definitions, I decided to incorporate visuals by showing images related to each word on the screen. The visual aids helped students grasp the meanings more easily, leading to improved retention of the vocabulary."

Teacher 2 described developing alternative assessment formats for students with documented learning difficulties, thereby exemplifying IDM’s ethical responsiveness to differentiated needs. Teacher 2 recorded:

I have two students in my class who have learning disabilities. I had planned a pen and paper formative assessment for one of the Grammar concepts in an integrated manner for the entire class. However, these two students just wouldn’t write on the paper. Luckily, my school allows students to bring their laptops/ iPads every day.

So, I assigned both of them an online quiz on the same concept and they could demonstrate their learning through that.

These accounts collectively position IDM not only as a flexible instructional tool but as an approach to inclusive teaching that acknowledges and accommodates learner diversity.

Engagement-enhancing practices also featured prominently within the interview data. Teachers described incorporating a variety of interactive elements—including games, movement-based activities, collaborative storytelling, and peer-led initiatives—to increase enjoyment and deepen pedagogical interaction. One notable example came from Teacher 10, who implemented a storytelling chain activity that allowed students to collectively construct narratives, fostering a sense of classroom community while reinforcing content objectives. Regarding the experience, Teacher 10 narrated:

"I was teaching in grade 7. It was the early days of promotion for students to the new grade. I had planned a communicative activity involving students to interview each other's hobbies. While the activity was a great way to practice communication, I noticed the class lacked a sense of community. To address this and maintain progress on the syllabus, I decided to add a layer of fun and teamwork. Instead of interviews, I introduced a storytelling game. Two students (in pairs) started to create a short story together. Then, they shared their story with another pair, who added their own twist and continued the tale. This chain reaction continued until we had one giant class story! This activity helped everyone practice communication skills, teamwork, and imagination. Plus, it was a fun way to get to know each other better."

Similarly, Teacher 4 designed a vocabulary-based game to support retention and recall, while Teacher 5 employed visual reinforcement techniques to consolidate key concepts. Teacher 4 recited:

Yes. When I was teaching my class 6th a poem " The Wonderful Words", I had planned to teach in one go as the syllabus has to be completed and were running behind it due to some extracurricular activities were being conducted in our school. So I entered the class and started teaching the poem. I noticed that my student are not getting the essence of the poem and not interested. So I stopped the poem there and open the presentation screen and connected it to the phone. I told my students to form a group of 5 each and they have to "form words out of letter", it was a game called "word shake" from the BBC, if I remember. I didn't expect that my student would enjoy that so much. Within 3 minutes they had to form new word. Two groups exceeded 30 points. It was a nice decision to make students learn better on the spot.

Teacher 5 quoted:

While teaching a vocabulary lesson to my grade 6 students, I noticed that some students were struggling with the definitions of certain words. Instead of simply providing definitions (which was the original plan), I decided to incorporate visuals by showing images related to each word on the screen. The visual aids helped students grasp the meanings more easily, leading to improved retention of the vocabulary.

These accounts indicate that IDM, when strategically employed, can infuse the classroom with creativity, energy, and social cohesion—factors that are conducive to positive learning outcomes.

A final and particularly compelling theme that surfaced through the interviews was the role of IDM in responding to unpredictability and leveraging spontaneous opportunities for learning. Teachers detailed instances where IDM enabled agile pedagogical responses to emergent classroom events or student input. Teacher 10, for example, described a moment when students expressed excitement over an upcoming school event during a lesson on giving directions. Teacher 10 reported:

"It was grade 6, and I was about to start a role-playing activity to practice asking for directions, but an unexpected announcement about a school cultural activity happening later that week disrupted my planned activity. Students were buzzing with excitement. Instead of pushing through the planned activity, I decided to adapt. I connected the cultural activity to the lesson by asking students to ask for directions to reach the event. This decision embraced the unexpected disruption. Students' excitement was used to enhance their practice while still achieving the communicative learning objective."

Rather than redirecting or dismissing this enthusiasm, the teacher integrated the event into the instructional activity, thus reinforcing the learning objective in an organically engaging manner. Such narratives underscore IDM's utility not only for planned differentiation but also for fostering responsive innovation in real time.

Taken together, the thematic analysis of these interviews presents IDM as a multi-faceted and context-sensitive pedagogical strategy. It is enacted across cognitive, affective, and social domains of learning, revealing its potential to serve as a conduit for relevance, agency, inclusion, and engagement. While the specific manifestations of IDM varied from teacher to teacher, a unifying thread throughout these narratives was its learner-responsive ethos—

teachers consistently framed IDM as a means of attuning instruction to the evolving needs and preferences of their students.

When juxtaposed with the findings from Phase 1, a more comprehensive understanding of IDM begins to emerge. Whereas the questionnaire data primarily offered a snapshot of the frequency and perceived efficacy of IDM practices, the qualitative interview data provided a nuanced exploration of the reflective processes and pedagogical intentions that informed those practices. This layered analysis lends depth to the study's findings and affirms IDM's status as a robust instructional approach characterised by adaptability, ethical commitment, and learner-centredness.

A recurring theme evident across both phases is the centrality of responsiveness in the IDM framework. Whether evidenced through frequency ratings or detailed narrative accounts, teachers consistently portrayed IDM as a deliberate mechanism for aligning instructional delivery with student needs. This responsiveness is not merely reactive; it reflects a proactive pedagogical orientation aimed at co-constructing the learning experience in meaningful and relevant ways. The dual emphasis on inclusivity and agency further reinforces IDM's compatibility with contemporary educational imperatives, which advocate for democratic, differentiated, and student-centred learning environments.

Importantly, IDM was not described solely as a strategy for mitigating challenges or navigating classroom disruptions. Rather, teachers articulated its potential to proactively enrich instruction by amplifying joy, creativity, and collaborative meaning-making. The inventive strategies highlighted in the interviews point to IDM's capacity to transform academic content into interactive, socially grounded learning experiences that promote deeper understanding and sustained motivation.

In conclusion, the integrated insights derived from both phases of the study position IDM as a multidimensional pedagogical strategy that effectively bridges theoretical constructs with practical implementation. It affirms IDM's ability to foster relevance, responsiveness, and rigour within instructional settings, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on adaptive teaching and student-centred learning. Through its emphasis on contextually grounded decision-making, IDM emerges not merely as a methodological tool but as a philosophical orientation toward teaching that prioritises reflective practice, learner engagement, and inclusive educational outcomes.

Findings and Discussion

This study presents Interactive Decision-Making (IDM) as a multifaceted pedagogical practice operating across cognitive, affective, and social domains of classroom engagement. Drawing from triangulated data—questionnaire responses and teacher narratives—the findings illuminate IDM as a deliberate, context-sensitive teaching behaviour grounded in responsiveness, instructional agility, and learner empowerment. Five core themes emerged, each revealing strategic enactments of IDM and their influence on student participation and meaningful learning.

Instructional Relevance

A salient theme was the tailoring of instruction to students' interests and lived experiences. Teachers described modifying grammar lessons by embedding sporting references, mythological contexts, or student-generated role-play scenarios, thereby enhancing emotional and cognitive engagement. These adaptations exemplify how IDM bridges prescribed curricula with culturally resonant learning, affirming Aziz and Kazi's (2018) assertion that emotional engagement sustains attention and boosts achievement. IDM, in this

context, becomes a mechanism for relevance-based motivation—a means of transforming curriculum into personally meaningful content.

Student Agency

Closely linked to relevance was the theme of student agency, where IDM empowered learners to make choices in how tasks were approached. Teachers offered flexible presentation modalities, negotiable assignment sequencing, and opportunities for peer review. Such practices resonate with Ginting's (2021) tripartite model of engagement—behavioural, emotional, and cognitive—placing student voice at the centre of classroom dynamics. Teachers' reflections suggest that when learners are granted autonomy, they exhibit heightened motivation, self-confidence, and sustained engagement.

Inclusion

IDM also emerged as a cornerstone of inclusive pedagogy. Participants described using multimodal resources, differentiated assessments, visual aids, and collaborative grouping to address varied cognitive styles and linguistic needs. These approaches reflect the view of teacher decision-making as ethically responsive and intellectually flexible (Trevisan et al., 2021; Najjarpour & Salimi, 2024). IDM was conceptualised as the core principle that informs differentiated instruction, rather than an additional strategy. It served as a guiding framework for teachers to design an inclusive and responsive learning environment.

Engagement-Enhancing Strategies

Teachers consistently described implementing energising instructional choices—including movement-based activities, peer-led tasks, storytelling chains, and game-informed vocabulary work. These strategies, far from being entertainment tactics, functioned as intentional scaffolds for deeper cognitive involvement. Richards and Lockhart's (1994) IDM model—observe, select, modify, evaluate—was evident in how teachers monitored

participation, adjusted pacing, and calibrated emotional tone in real time. Teacher 10's transformation of a grammar activity into communal storytelling exemplifies IDM as a tool for fostering both cohesion and mastery.

Responsiveness to Spontaneity

Another significant finding was teachers' use of unplanned classroom moments—such as students' excitement over a local event or confusion during instruction—as triggers for instructional adaptation. These instructional episodes illustrate the improvisational nature of IDM, reinforcing Mekki et al.'s (2022) claim that decisions related to student motivation and engagement are integral to dynamic pedagogical practice. Rather than interrupting the learning process, unplanned occurrences were strategically employed to enhance instructional focus, which highlights IDM's adaptability and responsiveness to emerging opportunities.

The analysis of the findings through the study's theoretical framework affirms IDM as a deliberate and skilled pedagogical practice. Teacher narratives revealed spontaneous applications of Richards and Lockhart's (1994) micro-level IDM cycle—observe, select, modify, evaluate—during classroom interactions. At the same time, Griffith and Lacina's (2018) emphasis on effective teaching was reflected in the balance teachers maintained between structured planning and adaptive responsiveness. IDM, thus, emerges as a practice situated at the intersection of anticipatory planning and in-the-moment decision-making, shaped by pedagogical beliefs and professional experience (Griffith & Lacina, 2018; Siuty et al., 2018).

Implications

The findings highlight IDM as more than a technique—it is a pedagogical philosophy emphasising adaptability, inclusivity, and student-centeredness. Embedding IDM in teacher education programs can transform ELT instruction from transmissive to participatory.

Reflective simulation tasks, peer dialogic review of decision-making episodes, and documentation of instructional choices should be central to professional development. Cultivating teachers' IDM competence enhances pedagogical agility, equipping them to respond ethically and creatively within diverse classroom landscapes.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite its insights, the study is constrained by reliance on self-reported data, which may be shaped by participant bias or selective memory. Classroom observations could triangulate findings and capture IDM enactment in a real-time context. The study's emphasis on Indian English language teachers introduces limitations in terms of generalisability. Future studies conducted across various disciplines and cultural environments may yield more expansive insights or reveal unique context-specific adaptations. Investigating how institutional structures—curricular mandates, assessment regimes, and administrative expectations—influence IDM would explain its systemic constraints. Lastly, incorporating student perspectives could validate IDM's classroom efficacy and enrich its developmental trajectory.

Conclusion

This study identifies interactive decision-making (IDM) as both an instructional method and a broader pedagogical orientation, grounded in reflective practice and learner-centred teaching. IDM aligns with current educational priorities that emphasise contextual relevance, inclusivity, and adaptability. As a core principle in classroom decision-making, IDM contributes to a pedagogical vision that recognises teachers as active contributors to inclusive and dynamic language learning environments.

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Technological Solutions for Multilingual Education in India: Opportunities and Obstacles

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Abstract

This article critically examines the integration of technology in multilingual education within India, addressing the opportunities it presents and its challenges. Given India's vast linguistic diversity, the need for effective multilingual education is both a pedagogical requirement and a social imperative. The paper explores how digital technologies can facilitate educational delivery across India's numerous languages, enhancing accessibility and educational equity. Technologies such as AI-driven language learning tools, digital classrooms, and online platforms are scrutinized for their ability to provide personalized and linguistically inclusive educational experiences. However, the deployment of these technologies is not without obstacles. The paper identifies key challenges including inadequate digital infrastructure, extensive teacher training, and adapting educational content to local linguistic and cultural contexts. The paper presents real-world impacts of technological interventions in multilingual education through a series of case studies, highlighting success and failure. The overarching thesis posits that while technology holds significant potential to improve educational outcomes in multilingual contexts, it also introduces complexities that may impede equitable access to education.

Keywords: multilingual education, technology integration, digital classrooms, AI language tools, educational equity, language learning, AI in education, India

1. Introduction

In India, where linguistic diversity mirrors the complex socio-cultural tapestry of the nation, the education system faces the formidable challenge of catering to the multilingual needs of its student population. Multilingual education is not only crucial for effective communication but also plays a pivotal role in maintaining cultural identity and cognitive development across diverse linguistic groups (Baker, 2011; Bialystok, 2001). The integration of mother tongue instruction in the early years of schooling is supported by evidence suggesting that such approaches significantly enhance learning outcomes (Cummins, 2000).

With the advent of digital technologies, there are new opportunities to tailor educational content across India's numerous languages, thus addressing the historical and systemic challenges of educational delivery in linguistically diverse settings (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). The purpose of this article is to critically evaluate how technological interventions can support multilingual education in India, assessing their impact on accessibility, educational equity, and cognitive development.

The central thesis of this article is that while technology has the potential to significantly enhance learning in multilingual contexts by providing scalable and adaptable solutions, it also introduces new complexities that can hinder equitable educational outcomes. This exploration is guided by a dual perspective that acknowledges the transformative potential of technological tools and the need for critical assessment of their implementation challenges (Hornberger, 2003).

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Linguistic Diversity in India

India's linguistic tapestry is one of the most complex in the world, characterized by a staggering array of languages and dialects. The Constitution of India recognizes 22 official languages, and according to the Census of India, there are several hundred dialects spoken across the country.

The linguistic diversity is not just vast but also deeply integrated into the socio-cultural fabric of the nation, making education in one's mother tongue not only a pedagogical tool but also a means of preserving cultural identity (Mohanty, 2006).

The educational implications of this diversity are profound. Research consistently shows that children learn best in their first language, as it enhances comprehension and facilitates the learning of additional languages (Cummins, 2000). Unfortunately, the multilingual reality of India poses significant challenges for the education system, which has to cater to the linguistic needs of a highly diverse student population. According to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the aim is to promote multilingualism in children from the foundational stage onwards, making teaching available in home languages or regional dialects wherever possible (NEP, 2020).

The necessity for multilingual education in India is therefore not only pedagogical but also an issue of equity and access. Schools in different regions of India often use the state language or Hindi and English as mediums of instruction. However, this approach can alienate and disadvantage students who do not speak these languages at home, impacting their academic performance and ultimately their socio-economic opportunities (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

1.1.2 Historical Context

The historical development of multilingual education in India reflects a series of evolving strategies aimed at addressing the educational needs of a linguistically diverse population. Initially, post-independence educational policies focused on consolidating Hindi as the national language, with English retaining a prominent place due to colonial legacies. This approach, however, faced resistance from non-Hindi-speaking regions, prompting a more inclusive turn towards recognizing and incorporating regional languages in education (Khubchandani, 2008). The turning point in multilingual education came with the implementation of the Three-Language Formula in the 1960s, which recommended the study of three languages in schools—

typically the mother tongue, Hindi, and English. Despite this policy, its uneven implementation across states has led to varied educational outcomes, highlighting the complexity of applying a uniform policy in a diverse national landscape (Annamalai, 2004).

The evolution towards the integration of technology in multilingual education began in earnest with the liberalization of the Indian economy in the 1990s, which facilitated greater access to digital technologies. The last two decades have seen a significant push towards digitalizing education, with initiatives like the National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT) launched in 2009 aimed at enhancing learning through technology (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2009).

Technological solutions have increasingly been viewed as a means to transcend geographical and linguistic barriers. Digital platforms and tools such as educational apps in various Indian languages, AI-based language tutorials, and online resources have become more prevalent, offering students personalized learning experiences. These technologies are not just facilitating access to multilingual content but are also helping in the preservation of lesser-spoken languages by providing them a new medium of instruction and exposure (Bhattacharya & Chauhan, 2020).

Despite these advancements, the integration of technology in multilingual education faces its own set of challenges. Issues such as digital divide, infrastructure deficits, and the varying quality of digital content can undermine the effectiveness of technological interventions. Furthermore, there remains a critical need for training educators to effectively use technology in linguistically diverse classrooms (King & Schielmann, 2004).

1.2 Technological Advancements in Multilingual Education

1.2.1 Current Technologies Used

The integration of technology into India's multilingual education system has seen a rapid evolution over the past decade. Digital tools are increasingly used to support language learning

and bridge communication gaps in diverse linguistic settings. Among the technologies implemented are educational apps, specialized software, online platforms, and digital classrooms, each offering unique contributions to multilingual education.

Educational Apps: Mobile apps are particularly effective in reaching a wide audience, offering scalability and accessibility. Apps like BhashaKids and Multibhashi provide language learning in multiple Indian languages, catering specifically to young learners by using interactive content like games, stories, and quizzes that make learning engaging (Agarwal & Sengupta, 2019). These apps often focus on foundational literacy skills and are designed to support the language requirements prescribed by the NEP 2020.

Specialized Software: Software solutions such as ReadToMe® have been deployed in schools across various states. This software uses AI to help students improve their English language skills, supporting reading comprehension across different subjects by translating English text into students' home languages (Kumar, 2019). The software's ability to adapt to the learner's pace and proficiency level makes it an invaluable tool in multilingual classrooms.

Online Platforms: Platforms like EkStep are revolutionizing the way educational content is delivered. They provide customizable learning materials and real-time assessments in multiple languages, facilitating personalized learning journeys for students (Bhattacharya & Chauhan, 2020). EkStep's framework allows for the integration of various content formats, making it a versatile tool for educators to deliver curriculum-aligned lessons in students' mother tongues.

Digital Classrooms: Smart classrooms equipped with digital blackboards and projectors are being set up across the country as part of the Digital India campaign. These classrooms use satellite communication (SATCOM) networks, which help in broadcasting educational programs in various languages to remote and underserved regions, thus democratizing access to quality education (Singh, 2021).

1.3 Opportunities Presented by Technology in Multilingual Education

1.3.1 Enhanced Access and Reach

The integration of technology into education has significantly widened the accessibility of learning resources, especially in remote and underserved regions of India. Despite the persistent digital divide, various government and private initiatives have aimed to bridge this gap by introducing technologies that extend educational opportunities beyond urban centers.

The widespread adoption of mobile internet and smartphones has been transformative, bringing educational content to students in remote areas. Initiatives like the Digital India Corporation's eBhasha Setu app, which offers courses in multiple Indian languages, not only enhance accessibility but also ensure linguistic inclusivity (Singh & Gupta, 2021).

The SWAYAM platform, a key initiative by the Ministry of Education, provides free online courses across ten different languages. It aims to democratize access to education by ensuring that high-quality, curriculum-based content is available to everyone, irrespective of their location. By offering courses in local languages, SWAYAM plays a crucial role in mitigating language barriers and making higher education resources accessible to a broader audience (Kapoor & Mehrotra, 2019).

Another significant initiative is the DIKSHA platform, launched by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). DIKSHA stands for Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing and functions as a national digital platform for school education, providing interactive materials that are accessible via QR code-enabled textbooks. This platform supports the educational framework outlined by the NEP 2020, offering resources in multiple regional languages and thus fostering linguistic inclusivity (NCERT, 2020).

Satellite technology has also played a crucial role in this expansion. The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has collaborated with educational bodies to broadcast educational content via satellite to digital classrooms across the most isolated regions, ensuring nationwide access to quality materials, irrespective of physical barriers (Patel & Dey, 2020).

1.3.2 Improved Engagement and Learning Outcomes

Interactive and multimedia tools have revolutionized educational engagement and understanding among students, particularly in multilingual settings. Digital resources such as interactive whiteboards, educational software, and virtual reality experiences provide dynamic and visually stimulating learning environments that are more effective than traditional methods.

Empirical studies have shown that these multimedia tools can greatly enhance comprehension and retention, particularly useful in teaching complex subjects across various languages (Jain & Agarwal, 2021). For example, platforms like Byju's utilize interactive video lessons and simulations in multiple languages to cater to diverse student demographics, thereby maintaining high engagement levels and accommodating different learning paces.

Game-based learning platforms, such as the Kutuki kids learning app, leverage interactive story-based content in several Indian languages, proving especially effective in early education by using stories and songs to introduce concepts, which aids in better retention and engagement among young learners (Sharma & Singh, 2022).

1.3.3 Support for Teachers

Technology offers substantial support to teachers, especially in managing linguistically diverse classrooms and personalizing learning. Tools such as learning management systems (LMS), AI-driven analytics, and customizable content platforms empower teachers to deliver personalized and effective instruction.

AI-based tools analyze student performance and learning patterns, enabling teachers to tailor their instruction to meet individual needs. Platforms like Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams integrate these tools to help teachers manage coursework, assessments, and feedback in multiple languages, supporting diverse classrooms effectively (Malhotra & Kapoor, 2019). Additionally, content management systems like the EkStep platform provide essential

resources for teachers to curate and customize educational content in various languages, allowing them to meet the specific linguistic needs of their students (Bhattacharya & Chauhan, 2020).

Technological advancements have brought numerous opportunities to enhance multilingual education in India. By expanding access and reach, improving student engagement and learning outcomes, and supporting teachers in delivering personalized education, technology has the potential to address many of the challenges faced by the educational sector in a linguistically diverse country like India.

1.4 Obstacles to Technological Implementation in Multilingual Education

1.4.1 Infrastructure Limitations

One of the most significant obstacles to the effective implementation of technology in education is the inadequate digital infrastructure, particularly in rural and low-income areas of India. Despite rapid advancements in technology, a substantial digital divide remains, with many regions lacking reliable internet access and electricity, crucial for digital education. According to UNESCO (2021), about 29% of schools in India do not have electricity, with rural areas being disproportionately affected. This lack of infrastructure severely hampers the integration of technology in education, restricting access to digital resources and hindering consistent participation in online learning platforms.

1.4.2 Training and Adaptation

Another significant barrier is the challenge related to the training of teachers and the adaptation of both students and educators to new technologies. Integrating technology into the classroom requires teachers to be skilled not only in pedagogical practices but also in the technical aspects of using these new tools effectively. However, many teachers, especially in less urbanized areas, lack this dual competence, which can lead to underutilization of potentially beneficial technologies. Furthermore, the rapid pace of technological change necessitates continuous

professional development to keep educators updated, placing a strain on educational budgets and logistical planning.

The adaptation process also involves students who may vary widely in their familiarity with digital tools, influenced by factors such as socio-economic background, prior exposure to technology, and personal learning preferences. This variance can lead to unequal learning opportunities, where some students benefit more than others, potentially widening existing educational disparities.

1.4.3 Language and Cultural Barriers

Technology's ability to cater to all linguistic nuances and cultural contexts presents another formidable challenge. While digital education tools are increasingly available in multiple languages, they often fail to cover the entire spectrum of dialects and regional languages spoken across the country. This limitation can lead to a lack of engagement from students who do not speak the major languages and may feel alienated by content that does not reflect their linguistic realities.

Moreover, cultural relevance in educational content is crucial for meaningful learning but is often overlooked in the design of digital learning materials. Educational technology tends to be designed with a one-size-fits-all approach, which may not align well with the varied cultural contexts of India's diverse population. The nuances of local traditions, values, and cultural references might not be adequately represented, which can affect the relatability of the content and, by extension, the engagement levels of students.

1.4.4 Policy Limitations and Economic Factors

Policy frameworks often lag behind technological advancements, creating barriers to effective implementation. Economic factors also play a crucial role, as the initial and ongoing costs of technology can be prohibitive, especially for low-income regions. Policy gaps and economic

constraints thus require careful management to ensure equitable access to educational technology.

1.4.5 Resistance to Change

Resistance to change among educators and institutions can further complicate the adoption of technology. Effective change management strategies, including robust training programs and ongoing support, are essential to encourage educators to embrace digital tools and overcome their apprehensions about the efficacy of technology in education.

Addressing these multifaceted obstacles requires a multi-pronged approach involving updated educational policies, equitable resource distribution, economic considerations, and change management strategies in schools. By tackling these challenges comprehensively, India can better harness the potential of technology to enhance multilingual education and promote inclusivity and equity in the educational landscape.

1.5 Case Studies on Technological Implementation in Multilingual Education

1.5.1 Successful Implementations

Case Study 1: The Karnataka Mobile Learning Project

Context and Implementation: The Karnataka Mobile Learning Project was initiated to target primary schools across several districts, especially those in rural and semi-urban areas with significant linguistic diversity. The project was spearheaded by the state government in collaboration with international NGOs that specialize in educational technology.

Technology and Tools: The core of this project was the distribution of tablets pre-loaded with educational apps and content in multiple languages, including Kannada, English, and several local dialects. These tablets were equipped with interactive learning programs designed to enhance reading, writing, and mathematical skills. The content was developed with input from local educators to ensure it was culturally and linguistically appropriate.

Training and Support: A critical component of the project's success was the extensive teacher training conducted before the tablets were introduced in classrooms. Teachers were trained not only in the technical use of the tablets but also in pedagogical strategies to integrate digital tools into their existing curriculum effectively. Ongoing support was provided through a dedicated helpline and regular on-site visits by technical support teams.

Outcomes: According to Rao and Zhou (2021), the project led to measurable improvements in student engagement and academic performance. Students showed increased motivation and improved scores in standardized tests. Additionally, teachers reported greater ease in addressing diverse learning needs through personalized and differentiated instruction provided by the apps.

Factors Contributing to Success:

Community Involvement: The project actively involved parents and local communities by holding regular meetings to discuss progress and gather feedback, which helped in sustaining engagement and support.

Adaptability of Content: The ability to adapt and update the educational content based on real-time feedback was crucial in keeping the curriculum relevant and effective.

Case Study 2: Digital Classrooms in Telangana

Context and Implementation: This initiative was part of a broader government effort to modernize public education in Telangana. The focus was on equipping schools with digital classrooms featuring smart boards and internet connectivity to provide a more interactive and engaging learning environment.

Technology and Tools: The digital classrooms were set up with state-of-the-art smart boards, projectors, and computers connected to high-speed internet. Educational content was provided in multiple languages, including Telugu, Urdu, and English, and spanned a wide range of subjects.

Training and Support: Significant investment was made in teacher training, focusing on how to effectively use digital tools in teaching and classroom management. Teachers received continuous professional development and were encouraged to collaborate and share best practices through online forums and workshops.

Outcomes: As reported by Kumar and Singh (2020), the digital classrooms led to an increase in student attendance and participation. There was also a notable improvement in learning outcomes, particularly in subjects like science and mathematics, where visual and interactive content helped clarify complex concepts.

Factors Contributing to Success:

Infrastructure Readiness: Ensuring that all participating schools had the necessary infrastructure to support digital classrooms was key to the project's success.

Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation: Regular assessments were conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the technology in improving educational outcomes, allowing for timely adjustments and enhancements.

These case studies exemplify how carefully planned and well-supported technological interventions can significantly enhance multilingual education. The success of these initiatives highlights the importance of thoughtful implementation, robust training, and ongoing support in achieving positive educational outcomes.

1.5.2 Challenging Scenarios

Case Study 1: The Bihar Tablet Education Project

Context and Implementation: The Bihar Tablet Education Project was an ambitious initiative intended to leverage digital technology to enhance learning across underserved rural schools in Bihar. The government distributed tablets pre-loaded with educational content across hundreds of schools, aiming to bridge the educational divide and introduce innovative learning methods.

Technology and Tools: Tablets were supplied to schools, featuring content in Hindi and English. These devices were intended to provide interactive learning experiences outside the traditional classroom setting.

Training and Support: A major shortfall of the project was inadequate teacher training on how to integrate these tablets into the curriculum effectively. Many teachers were either not trained sufficiently or lacked ongoing support to troubleshoot problems and integrate technology usefully into their teaching practices.

Outcomes: As Gupta and Das (2019) highlighted, the project faced significant challenges from the outset. The tablets were underutilized, with reports of devices remaining in storage due to technical issues or teachers' reluctance to use them. Furthermore, the lack of content in local dialects and languages other than Hindi and English led to low student engagement.

Factors Contributing to Failure:

Inadequate Infrastructure: The lack of reliable electricity and internet access in rural areas meant that devices often couldn't be charged or updated.

Cultural and Linguistic Barriers: The content did not cater to the linguistic diversity of the student population, missing an opportunity to genuinely enhance learning inclusivity.

Resistance to Change: There was significant resistance from teachers, many of whom were not convinced of the technology's educational value or were intimidated by the new tools.

Case Study 2: Online Learning Platforms in Uttar Pradesh

Context and Implementation: In Uttar Pradesh, an initiative was launched to implement online learning platforms across both urban and rural schools. The goal was to provide accessible and flexible learning options through digital means.

Technology and Tools: The platforms offered courses in various subjects, available in Hindi and English. They were designed to supplement traditional classroom teaching with additional resources and tutoring options.

Training and Support: The project struggled with effective implementation, particularly in rural areas where teachers and students faced significant challenges in accessing and using the platforms. The training provided was often rushed and not comprehensive, leaving many educators ill-prepared to utilize the platforms effectively.

Outcomes: Mehta and Chaudhary (2022) report that while some urban schools managed to integrate the platforms into their teaching, rural schools saw very limited success. Problems such as poor internet connectivity and a lack of digital literacy were major impediments. Additionally, the absence of content in local dialects made the platforms less appealing and harder to use for many students.

Factors Contributing to Failure:

Digital Divide: The stark difference in technological readiness between urban and rural schools resulted in unequal opportunities to benefit from the platforms.

Economic and Technical Limitations: Limited budgets prevented adequate training and the purchase of necessary equipment, such as additional computers or better internet service.

Cultural and Linguistic Exclusion: The failure to localize content culturally and linguistically alienated students and reduced the effectiveness of the educational offerings.

The case studies of Karnataka and Telangana demonstrate the transformative potential of technology in multilingual education when implemented with careful planning and support. Conversely, the experiences in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh highlight the challenges and pitfalls that can hinder the success of such initiatives. For technology to be effective in enhancing multilingual education, it must be accompanied by comprehensive support systems, including infrastructure development, professional training for teachers, and culturally and linguistically tailored content.

1.6 Future Directions for Technology in Multilingual Education

The future of technology in multilingual education offers significant opportunities to bridge linguistic divides and foster inclusivity. AI-powered tools, such as translation systems and speech recognition, enable students to learn multiple languages effectively (Goodwin et al., 2022). Digital platforms providing multilingual content play a crucial role in ensuring equitable access to education (UNESCO, 2022). Immersive technologies like virtual reality can help learners engage with diverse linguistic and cultural contexts (Kramsch & Thorne, 2020). Additionally, mobile applications and open educational resources promote accessibility for remote learners (García & Li, 2020). Integrating technology with pedagogy supports cultural preservation and prepares students for global communication (UNESCO, 2022).

Emerging Technologies

The landscape of educational technology is rapidly evolving, offering new opportunities to enhance multilingual education through innovative approaches. Emerging technologies, particularly those driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI), have the potential to significantly influence how multilingual education is delivered and experienced.

AI-Driven Language Learning Tools: AI technologies such as natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning (ML) are revolutionizing language learning. Tools like Duolingo and Babbel have pioneered the use of AI to offer personalized language learning experiences at scale. These tools adapt to the user's learning pace and style, providing customized feedback and content (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). In multilingual settings, such AI-driven platforms can be designed to support multiple Indian languages, offering students the opportunity to learn in their mother tongue or acquire new languages with adaptive learning paths.

Speech Recognition Technology: This technology can greatly aid language learning by helping students with pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. Speech recognition can provide immediate feedback to learners, which is especially useful in large or remote classes where individual attention from teachers is limited. Furthermore, this technology can be integrated

into interactive language games and activities that enhance engagement and learning effectiveness.

Virtual and Augmented Reality (VR/AR): VR and AR can create immersive learning environments that simulate real-life interactions in different languages. For instance, students could virtually visit a market in another part of India and interact with virtual shopkeepers in different dialects, enhancing their language skills and cultural understanding simultaneously (Hamilton et al., 2021).

Blockchain for Credentialing: Blockchain technology could play a crucial role in language education by providing secure, immutable records of students' achievements. This is particularly useful in multilingual settings where certification of language proficiency needs to be standardized across diverse educational systems.

The future of technology in multilingual education offers innovative solutions for inclusivity and accessibility. AI-powered platforms provide personalized language learning experiences, adapting to individual needs. Speech recognition enhances pronunciation and fluency with immediate feedback, while virtual and augmented reality create immersive environments for cultural and linguistic exploration. Blockchain technology ensures secure and standardized credentialing of language proficiency across diverse systems. These advancements, combined with evolving pedagogical approaches, promise to transform multilingual education by making it more interactive, adaptive, and culturally relevant, empowering learners to communicate effectively in an interconnected world.

1.7 Policy Recommendations

To effectively integrate these emerging technologies in multilingual settings, policymakers must consider several strategic recommendations:

Enhance Infrastructure: Ensure that all educational institutions, especially in rural and underserved areas, have the necessary digital infrastructure, including high-speed internet and modern computing devices. Policies should aim to reduce the digital divide so that every student has the opportunity to benefit from advanced technological tools.

Teacher Training and Support: Develop comprehensive training programs for teachers that not only focus on the pedagogical aspects of using technology but also provide hands-on training with new tools. Continuous professional development should be mandated to keep teachers up-to-date with the latest technological advancements (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010).

Curriculum Integration: Policies should guide the integration of technology into the curriculum in a way that respects and promotes linguistic diversity. This includes developing content that is culturally relevant and available in multiple local languages. It's essential that educational content creators are supported in producing high-quality resources that align with local educational standards and cultural nuances.

Public-Private Partnerships: Encourage collaborations between government bodies, educational institutions, and technology companies. These partnerships can leverage the strengths and resources of each sector to develop and implement effective technological solutions in education.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Implement a robust framework for monitoring and evaluating the impact of technology in education. This should include gathering data on student outcomes, teacher satisfaction, and technology usage patterns to inform policy adjustments and ensure the efficacy of technological interventions (Zhao et al., 2020).

As technologies continue to evolve, so too must the strategies for their integration into education. By adopting these recommendations, policymakers can ensure that the benefits of

emerging technologies are fully realized in multilingual settings, helping to build an inclusive and effective educational landscape.

1.8 Conclusion

This article has examined the dynamic interplay between technological advancements and multilingual education in India, highlighting both the transformative potential and the significant challenges involved. Key findings underscore the effectiveness of technological tools like AI-driven language apps, digital classrooms, and online platforms in enhancing educational access and engagement across India's diverse linguistic landscape. These technologies facilitate personalized learning experiences that are crucial in a multilingual context, helping to bridge gaps in accessibility and educational equity.

The broader implications of this study are significant for educational policy and school practices. It suggests a critical need for policies that support the integration of technology in education, ensuring that these tools are accessible, relevant, and effectively utilized across different linguistic and cultural groups. For language preservation, technology offers a valuable platform to revitalize lesser-spoken languages by incorporating them into educational materials and digital platforms, thus supporting cultural diversity and inclusion.

Reflecting on the importance of responsive and inclusive educational policies, it is clear that India's linguistic diversity is not just a challenge but also a tremendous asset. The future of educational success in such a diverse setting hinges on the ability to implement technologies that not only support multilingual education but also respect and promote the cultural and linguistic rights of all learners. Embracing this approach will be essential for fostering an educational environment that is equitable, inclusive, and capable of preparing all students for a globalized world.

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BOOK REVIEW

Gopinath Mohanty's Realm: A Microcosm of the Odia Essence

Mahanand, A., & Das, P. K. (Eds.). (2024). *The Unreachable World of Gopinath Mohanty: Essays in Perspectives*. Pencraft International.

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Gopinath Mohanty's is a name that almost every Odia is familiar with, somehow or the other. Majority have had first hand encounter with his work while his name has travelled through grandparents or other kith and kin; in the case of the rest. His oeuvre has been one of the most celebrated possessions of Odia literature. Hailed as a major exponent of Odia novel, he also occupies a unique space in the realm of Indian fiction. His works capture the intricacies of human relationships, the struggles of marginalized communities, and the interplay between tradition and modernity. Many critics have examined his works and provided valuable insights on the same. The book titled *The Unreachable World of Gopinath Mohanty: Essays in Perspectives* (2024) published by Pencraft International is one such attempt to decipher Mohanty's writings. Edited by Anand Mahanand and Pramod Kumar Das, this book brings together a series of critical essays on Mohanty's fiction, to explore the depth and breadth of his thoughts. The book delves into his novels, short stories, and the cultural and historical contexts that influenced his writing, making it a valuable resource for both enthusiasts and scholars of Odia literature.

The book offers a profound insight on the narrative of the tribal life as has been intensively explored by Mohanty. The essays in the book reflect on diverse themes associated with the Odia way of living by weaving the raw realities of rustic life with the greater aspirations of external world. The critical approach taken up by the contributors scrutinizes Mohanty's work by taking into account literary theories ranging from subaltern studies to

mythology. The essays also throw light on the inter-sectionality of caste, class and gender; subtly commenting on the power dynamics in Odia tribal life.

The book opens with essays that examine the dominant themes in Gopinath Mohanty's fiction. His deep empathy for the tribal communities of Odisha, most notably portrayed in his seminal novel *Paraja*, features prominently in these discussions. The essays highlight how Mohanty's nuanced storytelling brings to life the hardships, resilience, and dignity of these marginalized groups. His detailed portrayal of tribal life serves as both an ethnographic account and a critique of social inequities, reflecting his commitment to social realism. Other essays in the collection delve into the universal themes of love, alienation, and human endurance in the face of adversity. These themes, as the contributors suggest, transcend geographical and cultural boundaries, making Mohanty's works relevant even in contemporary times.

The book is structured in such a way that the readers find it easier to access the essays as per their particular interest. It is divided into four sections dedicated respectively to Mohanty's major concerns, *Paraja*, his other novels and his short fiction. While Mohanty is best known for his novels, his short stories are equally significant in showcasing his literary prowess. This piece on literary criticism dedicates a section to these shorter works, exploring their structural precision and emotional depth. Essays in this section discuss stories like "Ants" and "Sopangada" emphasizing their ability to encapsulate profound truths within a limited framework. The contributors highlight Mohanty's skill in crafting memorable characters and vivid settings, demonstrating that his short stories are as compelling and impactful as his longer works. No critical anthology is complete without addressing differing perspectives, and this collection does not shy away from critiquing certain aspects of Mohanty's works. Some essays examine the representation of his female characters focusing on their struggles and determination to strive amidst the face of adversity. It also sheds light on the theme of

education, ethnic oppression as well as the interplay of law and lawlessness. The entire book is a reflection on Mohanty's enduring legacy. The contributors show how his works paved the way for subsequent generations of Odia writers, inspiring them to engage with regional themes and languages without compromising on universal appeal.

One of the strengths of this book is its accessibility. While it is undoubtedly a scholarly work, the essays are written in a style that is engaging and informative, making it appealing to general readers as well. The contributors bring a range of perspectives—from literary criticism to sociology and mythology—enriching the reader's understanding of Mohanty's works. The editors, Prof Anand Mahanand and Asst. Prof Pramod Kumar Das deserve special appreciation for their meticulous curation of essays. The foreword of the book penned by retired Prof Jatindra Kumar Nayak, offers a significant introduction that gives a holistic insight of what is to be expected from Gopinath Mohanty in general and this edition on him in particular. The essays flow seamlessly from one section to the next, providing a comprehensive overview of Mohanty's literary landscape. The inclusion of both established scholars and emerging voices ensures a diversity of opinions and analyses, making the piece a well-rounded tribute to Gopinath Mohanty.

In capturing the essence of Mohanty's contributions to literature, this book not only deepens our appreciation for his works but also inspires us to revisit and re-evaluate the timeless themes he so eloquently explored. The book is a fitting homage to Gopinath Mohanty, a literary giant whose works continue to resonate with readers and critics alike. By examining his novels and short stories through various lenses, the contributors highlight the richness and relevance of his storytelling. Whether one is a seasoned scholar of Odia literature or a curious reader seeking to explore the world of Gopinath Mohanty for the first time, this collection offers valuable insights and thought-provoking analyses. Thus it will not be an exaggeration

to say that it is a must-read for anyone interested in understanding the intersection of regional literature and universal human experiences.