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BACK MATTER

Six pieces, one question

Six contributions make up this issue: a town in Jorhat district, a debate in moral philosophy, a novel, the SAARC economies, a colonial archive, a history of the Assam frontier. The subjects have little in common at first sight. Each asks how a human world is put together, read, and changed.

Chinmoyee Borpujari works on Mariani, built by the tea gardens and the railway and now growing faster than anything planned for it. She takes the river, the water supply, the flooding and erosion, the land changing use, the waste nobody collects. The vulnerability is not natural. It follows the town's economy. Uddipona Borah and Jahnabi Deka move from the material environment to the moral one. They follow Carol Gilligan from the different voice to the human voice, and argue that moral development is badly described when care is set against justice, feeling against reason, the self against the people it is bound to. Listening holds the account together.

Madhurima Baruah reads *Lord of the Flies* with Jung and Northrop Frye. The island is her archetype, Eden first and then dystopia; Ralph carries the claim of order, Jack the shadow, and Simon, who sees what the beast is, dies for saying so. Her interest is the pattern, not the novel alone. Kasturi Goswami and K. Ramesh Kumar widen the scale, comparing Sustainable Development Goal indicators across the SAARC countries. Reading sectoral shares beside employment figures, they find economies at three stages of structural transformation, and inequalities that hold inside countries, not only between them.

Mregosree Hazarika treats three European women writing in Assam between 1916 and 1953 as an archive of colonial knowledge, and separates its documentary from its relational register. In the second the interpreters, porters and household staff who did the moving and the translating are named and paid, as the official record does not. The issue closes with Bikram Bora's review of Manjeet Baruah's *Hunter, Peasant, Rebel*, which reads colonial Assam as one arrangement of capital, land and labour, where the peasant economy was held in place rather than left alone, and the frontier made rather than found.

This is the interdisciplinary work the journal exists to publish: grounded in one place, one text, one archive, and unwilling to stop where a discipline does. Everything here was read double-blind by at least two reviewers. Two contributions are by board members, under the procedure at the back. We thank the reviewers, the Principal and Vice-Principal, the Internal Quality Assurance Cell, the Advisory Board and the authors. The call for papers closes on 5 November 2026.

The Editorial Board

ZEITGEIST: An Interdisciplinary Journal in Humanities and Social Sciences

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Geo-Environmental problems associated with Mariani town, Jorhat, Assam

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ABSTRACT

A geo-environmental study of an area analyses the physical, chemical, and biological components of the environment to understand and manage them sustainably. It involves mapping resources, assessing natural hazards like floods, erosion and planning for sustainable land use. Geo-environment refers to the geographical and environmental factors effecting the natural landscape of an area. This paper aims to examine the principal geo-environmental problems affecting the town of Mariani with emphasis on river pollution, water quality and supply issues, flood and erosion hazards, land-use change and solid-waste management, and anthropogenic impacts. The study uses government data, local institutional reports, regional news and peer-reviewed literature to for identification of existing problems, categorisation of the factors or underlying drivers, and suggest few mitigation, monitoring and planning actions appropriate for a rapidly changing peri-urban area of Mariani town which is dominated by tea gardens and transport infrastructure.

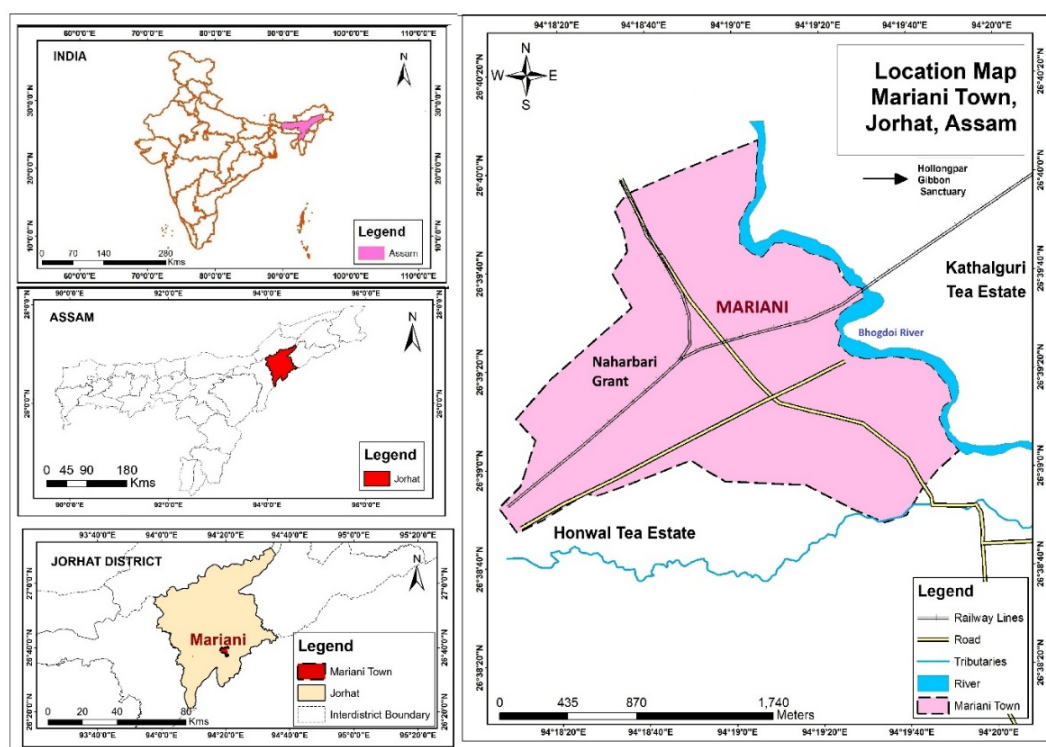
KEYWORDS Geo-Environment, Hazard, Pollution, Flood

INTRODUCTION

Mariani is a key town located in the Jorhat district of Assam, strategically important for its tea industry. Geographically, it is located between 26°38' N – 26°40' N latitude and 94°18' E – 94°18' E longitude, with an elevation of about 104–125 meters above mean sea level and total area of 3.61 sq. kms (Fig 1). Mariani is positioned on the southeastern periphery of Jorhat district, approximately 17.5 km from Jorhat city, and serves as a major transit point between Assam and Nagaland due to its proximity to the inter-state boundary. Located in the foothills of the Naga Hills it has a topography of gentle sloping from southwest to north-west. The town's location in the fertile alluvial plains of the Brahmaputra Valley makes it a significant centre for tea production and allied agro-based activities. Mariani is famous for the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary which is located in the east of Mariani town. The Mariani

Junction on the Lumding–Dibrugarh rail line makes the town an important transport node. The local economy is closely tied to tea gardens and related labour settlements; population estimates from census aggregates place the town's population at roughly 20,801 as per the 2011 census data, with 10,781 males and 10,020 females (Census, 2011). These geographic and socio-economic features (tea estates, transport infrastructure and riparian systems) shape the primary environmental vulnerabilities covered in this study.

Figure 1: Location of study area



Source: Generated by Author using GIS from boundary map Mariani Municipal Board

METHODOLOGY

The following paper is a synthetic study using various published and unpublished sources of data, personal study, field observation, primary data, reports and government bulletins. Published data like Government and municipal documents and datasets (census, district profiles), local institutional reports such as Mariani College's green/environmental audit, regional investigative reporting and peer-reviewed or technical literature on rivers, tea-garden hydrology and railway/industrial impacts in northeast India, and news sources documenting recent hazards and administrative responses (flood events, drowning bans, pollution complaints) were used to complete the research and draw the conclusive measures.

DISCUSSION

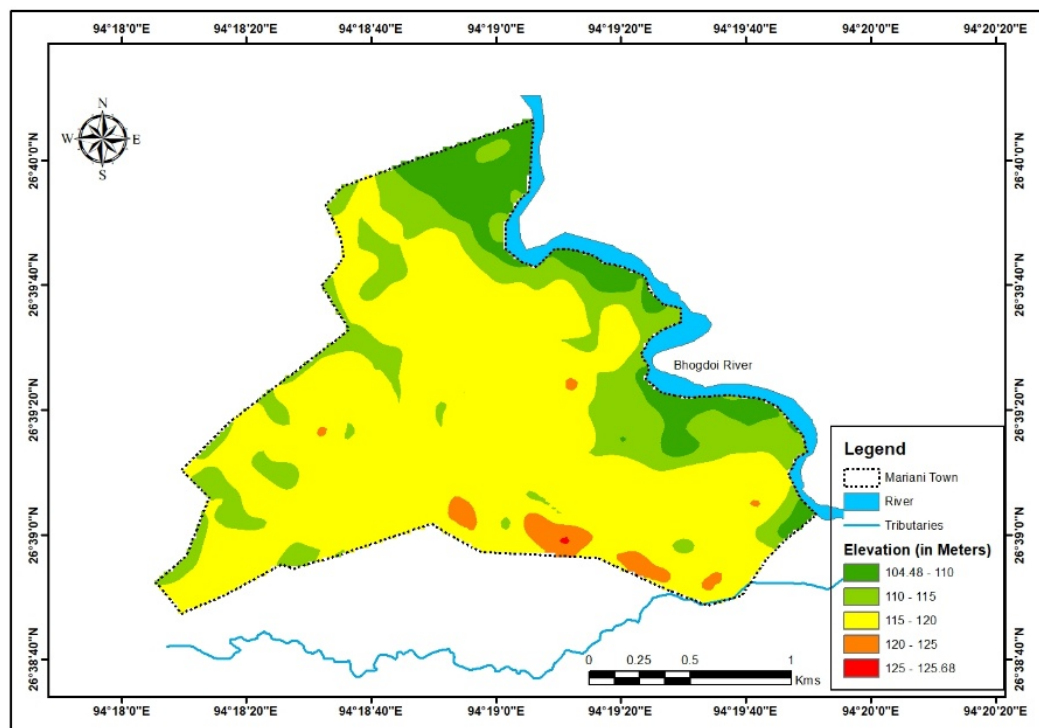
A. Physiographic Description of Mariani Town

The town of Mariani is situated within the Upper Brahmaputra Valley, one of the most prominent physiographic divisions of Assam. Physiographically, it is located in gently sloping uplands (dissected). With close proximity to the Naga hills, the town lies surrounded by the foothill range in the south.

B. Relief and Topography

The topography of Mariani is generally undulating to gently sloping, forming a transition zone between the plains of the Brahmaputra Valley and the foothills of the Naga Hills. The elevation of Mariani town lies between 102 to 145 meters above mean sea level, with gradual rises toward the southeast, where the hilly terrain of Nagaland begins. The Digital Elevation Model and contour map of Mariani town (Figure 2 & Figure 3) describe the elevation and relief of the study area. The relief of the study area can be classified as low-lying alluvial plains, interspersed with small hillocks and forested tracts.

Figure 2: Relief of Study Area

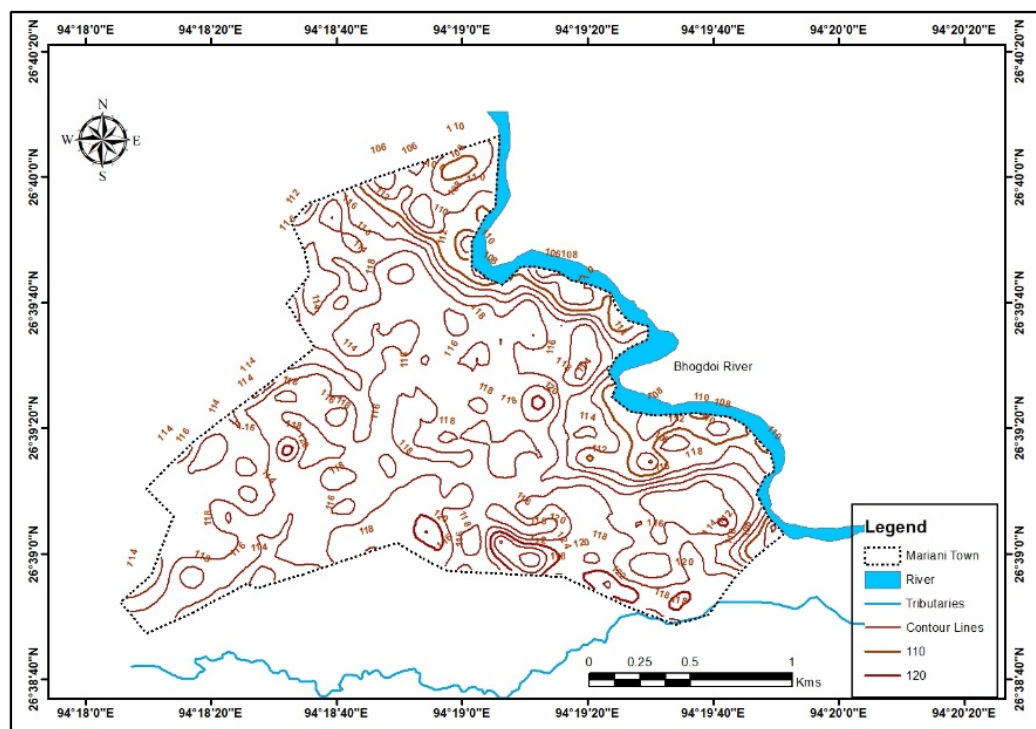


Source: Generated by Author using GIS

Slope

The overall landform has a gentle slope from south-east to north-west, following the general gradient of the Brahmaputra River basin. Many areas have very gentle slopes (1–3%), especially the northern alluvial plains. A significant portion of the town has

Figure 3: Contour Map of Study Area



Source: Generated by Author using GIS

nearly level to very gently sloping terrain. Moderate slopes are found in the foothills and along the southern parts where it merges with the Naga Hills (Figure 3).

Geology and Soil

The region is underlain predominantly by recent alluvial deposits of the Quaternary period, composed of sand, silt, clay, and gravel brought down by the tributaries of the Brahmaputra River. The soils are fertile alluvial and lateritic, supporting extensive tea plantations, which are a defining feature of Mariani's landscape. The slightly acidic nature of the soil, along with the humid climate, makes it ideal for tea cultivation. Landform or relief have played significant role in the formation of soils in the area. Soil Taxonomy is Typic Dystrochrepts-Typic Udorthents in the Mariani Town. Soils of the town and the surrounding parts are characterised by very deep, moderately well drained, brownish yellow, fine silty soils having silt loam surface soils with slight to moderate erosion hazards

Drainage and Hydrology

Mariani is drained by several small streams and rivulets, the most prominent being the Bhogdoi River, which flows nearby before joining the Brahmaputra. During the monsoon, heavy rainfall often leads to waterlogging and seasonal flooding in the low-lying areas in the northern part of the town.

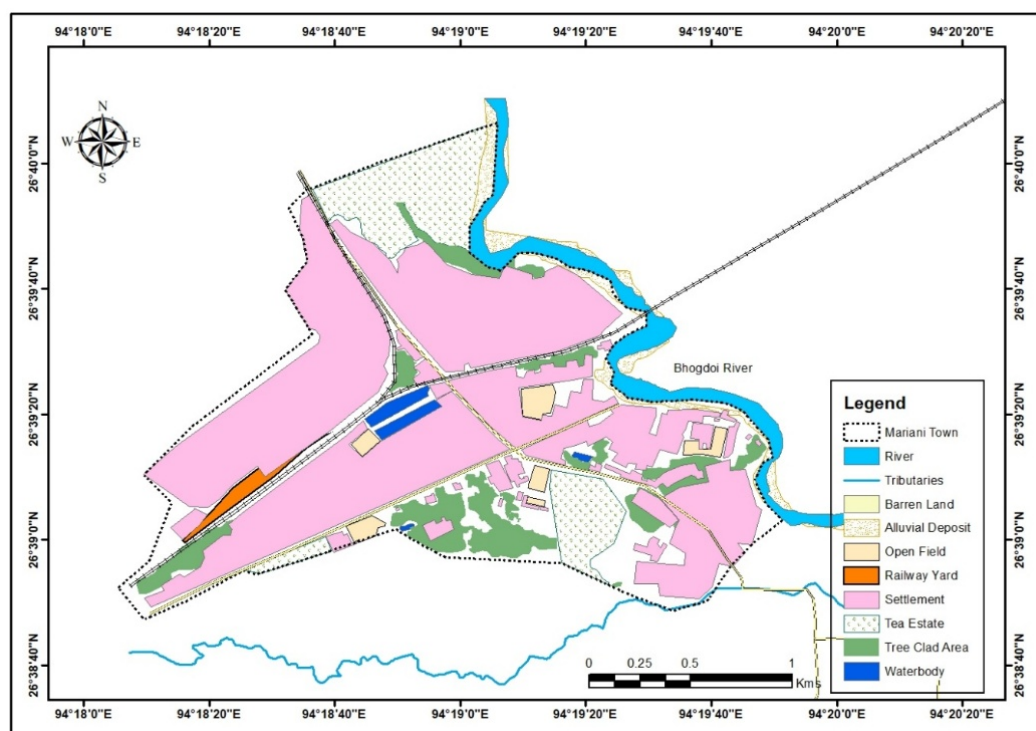
Climate

The town experiences a humid subtropical climate, characterised by hot, wet summers and cool, dry winters. The average annual rainfall exceeds 2,000 mm, most of which occurs between May and September due to the southwest monsoon. The high humidity and ample rainfall contribute to the lush greenery and dense vegetation in and around Mariani.

Vegetation and Land Use

Natural vegetation in the surrounding area consists mainly of moist deciduous forests, though much of it has been cleared for tea gardens and settlements. The landscape is dominated by tea estates, interspersed with patches of bamboo, sal, and mixed evergreen species. Agricultural lands primarily support paddy, vegetables, and areca nut plantations are located outside of the town area. Over all the land use is dominated by Built up area covering 2.01 sq. kms, followed by tree covered areas of 0.44 sq. kms and tea estates of 0.4 sq. kms, waterbodies and railway yards.

Figure 4: Land-use of Study Area



Source: Generated by Author using GIS

C. Geo-environmental problems

River Pollution and Declining River Health

Over the years, there has been an increase in contamination and ecological decline in local rivers serving Mariani and the surrounding tea gardens, particularly the Bhogdoi which serves as one of the major tributaries of mighty river Brahmaputa. Bhogdoi flows in a south-east to North-west direction throughout the eastern

boundary of Mariani town area and enters Jorhat town finally joining the river Brahmaputra. Major pollutants like waste discharge, and possibly effluents from upstream coal/mining or industrial activities have degraded water quality, affected drinking water reliability for communities, and even caused perceptible changes such as bitter taste or stickiness reported by residents. The loss of river health undermines local livelihoods (tea workers, fisheries), increases public-health risk and reduces resilience to droughts and floods (Singh, 2021). Unregulated or inadequately treated effluent discharges, encroachment and illegal dumping, agricultural runoff from tea gardens, and sedimentation. Institutional monitoring and enforcement gaps are commonly reported (Singh, 2021).

Problems of water contamination in tea-garden households

The Tea Garden communities are dependent on local surface waters or shallow groundwater for their day-to-day use. According to ground water assessment reports around Mariani town, there exists a scarce water supply which is safe. Several communities residing in these tea estates have complained of polluted potable sources of water from time to time. This creates a chronic shortage of safe drinking water security. Strengthening community water treatment and extending reliable water sources are priority interventions for the town (Bharadwaj, 2021).

Flooding

Although Mariani sits inland away for close proximity to flood affected areas near tributaries of Brahmaputra, however, artificial floods or flash floods effect small parts of few of the tea gardens, agricultural land and local infrastructure seasonally for very short duration. However, floods within the town area are not much devastating or larger frequency or intensity.

Land-use change and habitat fragmentation

Mariani's land use comprises built-up areas, tea estates, pockets of natural vegetation and transport infrastructure. Expansion of built-up areas such as – settlements, railway yards, development of commercial infrastructure and intensification of tea cultivation has gradually led to fragmentation of habitats, change of soil exposure due to land use change, changing pattern of runoff and storm water leading to reduced rate of groundwater recharge. Lack of a proper planned management of the land use and stormwater management has increased surface runoff, causing localised floods seasonally and erosion in the slopes of Mariani Town. Mariani town have been exposed to pressure of land use change due to the rising population and growth of settlement, causing mushroom growth of buildings to fulfill the growing need. Thus, proper perspective of study and management of the geo-environment of Mariani needs to be prioritised urgently.

Solid waste management

Challenges in municipal solid-waste collection, segregation and sanitary disposal are most commonly faced problems in Mariani. Poorly managed waste blocks drainage, becomes a source of pathogen transmission, and aggravates vector-borne disease risk during monsoon. Several observations highlight the need for improved local and municipal solid-waste practices; town-wide systems require capacity strengthening.

Pollution from transport & industrial facilities

Mariani Junction's transport activity and the development of a diesel locomotive shed introduce potential air particulate and pollutants from diesel engines, noise and soil contamination risks (hydrocarbons, lubricants). Historical industrial activity in and around Mariani (e.g., reference to large plywood factories historically in the area) suggests legacy pollution hotspots may exist in abandoned industrial sites or associated waste pits which require targeted assessment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below are organised by short, medium and long term and aims to provide a systematic approach for management of the existing geo-environmental problems of the town.

Short-term measures

Rapid environmental assessment: Water and sediment quality testing for Bhogdoi and other local water bodies is suggested to identify pollutant loads and hotspots (parameters: DO, BOD, coliforms, heavy metals, hydrocarbons). This will inform enforcement and health advisories (Singh, 2021).

Safe-water interventions: For vulnerable tea-garden villages that need infrastructure improvements, provide community water treatment (chlorination points, portable filters) (Bharadwaj, 2021).

Drain and solid-waste clean-up drives: During the monsoon season, solid waste need to be collected and clogged drains should be cleaned up by the municipality for safe disposal and temporary segregation. As a result, less urban garbage will be generated in open fields and disposed of in rivulets and waterbodies.

Pollution source control and enforcement: Identification of the main industrial and municipal point sources of pollution, and enforcement of effluent regulations, and mandate treatment for any industrial discharges into the Bhogdoi basin (Singh, 2021)

Green buffer and riparian restoration: To lessen bank erosion, enhance habitat, and filter runoff, reforest riparian buffers with native plants. Promote the use of contour planting and soil conservation techniques in tea gardens (Choudhury, 2025).

Improve water supply infrastructure: Increase municipal water supply to town wards and tea garden settlements while also improving groundwater recharge through managed infiltration techniques (percolation ponds, recharge wells) and rainwater harvesting methods (Bharadwaj, 2021).

Long-term strategies

Integrated watershed management: Using GIS for hazard maps and land-use change detection, create a Jorhat-Mariani catchment plan that coordinates district, municipal, and tea estate stakeholders for flood mitigation, land-use planning, and pollution control (Choudhury, 2025).

Environmental and transportation sustainability measures: It include mitigating air pollution at diesel sheds, containing hydrocarbon runoff, and making tracks and embankments climate-proof.

Community engagement and livelihoods: To guarantee community engagement in sustainable measures for the town's long-term planning, combine environmental restoration with livelihood support, such as eco-restoration employment, tea-garden worker water committees, etc.

Research and monitoring priorities:

To enable adaptive management and eliminate evidence gaps:

Extensive spatial and temporal monitoring of Bhogdoi's water quality, as well as that of nearby streams and groundwater wells that supply tea gardens (Singh, 2021).

Using remote sensing and local surveys, geohydrological mapping (floodplain, slope stability, erosion hotspots) needs to be done with the aim of prioritising structural and nature-based solutions (Choudhury, 2025).

Industrial/railway environmental audits to identify contamination at legacy industrial sites and pollution controls required at the locomotive shed.

Sociological studies on water access, sanitation practices and community coping strategies in tea-garden labour settlements to design appropriate interventions (Bharadwaj, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Mariani's geo-environmental challenges are directly related to the complex geodynamics of the natural landscape and its anthropogenic activities. Thus, to mitigate the existing geoenvironmental problems, we need to prioritise focusing on identifying the critical hotspots, strengthen municipal waste and drainage systems, and prepare integrated watershed and land-use plans that protect riparian systems while supporting local livelihoods. Coordination among municipal authorities, district disaster management, tea estate management, government bodies and civil society will be essential. Watershed-level planning, stronger pollution control, and community-centered adaptation are the town's urgent need of the hour resolutions (Singh, 2021). With targeted monitoring and mixed nature-based and infrastructure measures, Mariani can reduce environmental risks and improve resilience for its communities.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Listening to the Human Voice: Carol Gilligan

Uddipona Borah and Jahnabi Deka

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ABSTRACT

The present paper highlights Carol Gilligan's theoretical contributions to moral psychology and feminist ethics, tracing the transition from the framework of a different voice to the articulation of a human voice. The analysis highlights dominant models of moral development have traditionally prioritised a masculine, justice-oriented paradigm marginalising care, relationality, and embodiment. Building on Gilligan's broader theoretical framework, the discussion reconstructs moral development around the integration of care and justice, thought and feeling, self and relationship. The paper situates this reframing within the history of moral development and care ethics, reframes the critique of the patriarchal psychic split, and emphasises significance of the role of voice and listening in sustaining relational integrity. The main argument is that moral development attains its fullest expression when both men and women move beyond the false dichotomies imposed by patriarchal systems—separating justice from care, reason from emotion, self from relationship—and instead develop a human voice that integrates all these dimensions, enhanced and upheld through voice and listening in relational integrity.

KEYWORDS Carol Gilligan, In a Human Voice, Ethics of Care, Moral Development, Psychic Split, Voice, Relationality

INTRODUCTION

Carol Gilligan's work *In a Different Voice* marked a turning point in moral development research by challenging the traditional moral developmental framework that had privileged only abstract, universalizable principles as the highest stage of moral reasoning. Gilligan's intervention demonstrated that moral problem-solving often point up care, responsibility, and relationship—dimensions long marginalised as less mature within the traditionally accepted justice-oriented paradigm. Building on this foundation, contemporary research has moved beyond these earlier perspectives emphasising from the notion of a *different voice*¹ toward the formulation of a *human voice*. This reframing does not renounce care but instead resists the binary that once made the language of *difference* strategically significant. The word *human* signifies an

integrated moral perspective: the capacity to know and feel, to reason and relate and to claim integrity while remaining responsive to others. According to Gilligan:

...hearing the “different voice” as a human voice meant clearing away a series of impediments that stood in the way of seeing that the gender binary—the construction of human capabilities as either “masculine” or “feminine”—is not only a distortion of reality, but a cornerstone of patriarchy (Gilligan, 2023: Preface).

Gilligan’s new way of thinking from a *different voice* to a *human voice* achieves several purposes. Among these purposes challenging the patriarchy, and redefining moral development are significant. Gilligan’s framework highlights that patriarchal culture has marginalised care as a universal human capacity, rather than considering differences to natural sex distinctions. The framework emphasises care as universal human capacity. As she writes:

...gender binaries and hierarchies of a patriarchal order compromise basic human relational capacity. By splitting reason (masculine) from emotion (feminine), the mind from the body, and the self from relationships, the binaries undercut our ability to think about what we are feeling, to know what is happening in our body, to stay in touch with other people, and thus to navigate the human social world (Gilligan, 2023:16).

Gilligan’s argument moves beyond essentialist readings that once reduced the ethics of care to a sex-based distinction, re-establishing care as a fundamental human capacity disrupted by patriarchal socialisation. It also redefines moral development within a broader cultural frame, where the most pressing problem is not simply individual reasoning about dilemmas but the systemic encoding of splits between mind and body, self and other, public and private, which together silence authentic human voice (Benhabib, 1992; Noddings, 2013). The shift from *different* to *human* therefore signals both a theoretical correction and a political project, inviting us to recognise voice not as stylistic variation but as an indicator of psychological health.

THE PSYCHIC SPLIT AND THE LOSS OF VOICE

In Gilligan’s account, the ethics of care as a mode of resistance cannot be fully understood without attending to the psychic split and loss of voice that reveal the costs of silencing relational knowledge. In her book *In a Human Voice* Gilligan turns her focus to what she terms *the psychic split*—a learned separation between domains that are deeply interwoven in human experience: thinking from feeling, autonomy from connection, and power from care (Gilligan, 2023). This split, she argues, is simultaneously developmental and cultural. Developmentally, children—especially boys in patriarchal societies—are socialised to equate maturity with emotional restriction and invulnerability. They receive repeated messages that to grow up is to suppress vulnerability and dependency, to disconnect from feelings and to present the self as detached and rational. The effect is silencing. As Gilligan explains, individuals begin to censor or dismiss perceptions and feelings that might disrupt this imposed split, in that way isolating themselves from their own lived experience (Gilligan, 2023). At a cultural level, this split reflects the broader dynamics of patriarchy. Western moral and philosophical traditions have long associated rationality, autonomy and

detachment with masculinity, while relegating emotionality, care and relationality to the feminine sphere. These dichotomies are not neutral but hierarchical: the masculine-coded traits are valorised as more advanced, objective and universal, while the feminine-coded traits are dismissed as particular, subjective, or immature (Gilligan, 1982; Walker, 1984). The psychic split thus becomes both a personal and political reality, determining individuals' sense of self and how societies define legitimacy and authority.

Gilligan underscores the psychological and social cost of this silencing. As she writes, “when we teach people not to use their voices openly and authentically, we sew a veil of doubt over everything they know, which stifles their willingness to speak and confront conflict” (*In a Human Voice*, 2023, Introduction). This veil of doubt undermines confidence in one's own perceptions, creating self-censorship and conformity. It restricts individuals' ability to engage authentically with others, to express dissent or to challenge injustice. The consequence is not only a diminishment of personal integrity but also a weakening of democratic life, where open dialogue and authentic expression are essential.

Voice, for Gilligan is:

...something like what people mean when they speak of the core of the self. Voice is natural and also cultural. It is composed of breath and sound, words, rhythm, and language. And voice is a powerful psychological instrument and channel, connecting inner and outer worlds. Speaking and listening are a form of psychic breathing. This ongoing relational exchange among people is mediated through language and culture, diversity and plurality. For this reason, voice is a new key for understanding the psychological, social, and cultural order—a litmus test of relationships and a measure of psychological health. (Gilligan, 1993: In a Different Voice, Letter to Reader).

Voice, therefore, is not simply the ability to speak words. Rather, it represents a form of integrity in expression—a consonance between what one perceives, feels and knows internally, and what one is able to articulate publicly (Gilligan, 1982, 2023). To have a voice means to register one's lived reality in language, to be heard by others and to hear others in return. It also involves resisting the forced choices generated by split-thinking: for instance, the demand to choose between autonomy or connection, reason or emotion, power or care. When these splits are internalised, individuals become disconnected from their true voices.

In this light, Gilligan's notion of *voice* emerges as both a psychological concept and a political one. Reclaiming voice means resisting the psychic split, affirming the interdependence of thought and feeling, autonomy and connection, power and care. It entails cultivating a moral framework that values relationality and integrity rather than detachment and abstraction. By exposing how patriarchal culture enforces silences and disconnections, Gilligan insists that the restoration of voice is crucial for human flourishing and for creating a more inclusive society (Blum, 2010; Gilligan, 1982, 2023).

RADICAL LISTENING AS A METHOD

13

Gilligan in her work *In a Human Voice* lays down a method called radical listening, an approach that redefines the way we attend to voices, both spoken and unspoken. The word *radical* derives from the Latin root *radix*, meaning *root*. Such listening attends to both what is explicitly articulated but also to what is withheld and silenced. In *In a Human Voice*, Gilligan shows that listening is not only a research method but also an ethical practice. By really listening, we can notice what is left unsaid, pick up on hidden tensions, and help bring together things that were split apart. Her idea of radical listening means going deeper than just listening words, it is paying attention to the deeper meaning and unspoken dimensions in a conversation:

...radical listening is a way of listening that gets to the root of what is being said and also what is not being said. It specifies a way of tuning in to the under-voice, the conversation beneath the conversation. Radical listening holds a potential for transformation because it starts from a place of not knowing and develops the muscle of curiosity (Gilligan, 2023: 32).

Radical listening starts from a position of not-knowing and requires openness, humility and curiosity. By approaching human voices in this way radical listening becomes transformative: it not only makes visible hidden tensions and silences but also creates the possibility of connection and integration. Gilligan argues that conventional modes of listening are often shaped by dominant cultural frameworks that privilege certain voices and mute others. These frameworks tend to foreground justice, abstraction and detachment, while discounting or silencing the language of care, relationship and embodiment. Radical listening is thus a counter-practice: it resists these patterns of erasure by attuning itself to the voices that get lost in translation. It seeks to hear what remains unspoken due to fear, shame or the learned split between self and relationship. This approach underscores Gilligan's conviction that listening is not a passive act but an active ethical engagement that allows us to hear human experience in its full complexity.

The transformative feature of radical listening lies in restoring the fullness of human voice, i.e., when someone listens radically, they make space for another person to speak in ways that might otherwise be censored by cultural norms or internalised prohibitions. The act of listening itself becomes relational—it signals to the speaker that their voice matters, that the complexity of their experience can be acknowledged without being simplified or dismissed. By validating the “conversation beneath the conversation”, radical listening interrupts the cycle of silencing and reopens the possibility of dialogue grounded in authenticity and recognition.

Radical listening² has methodological significance in Gilligan's work. Building on the insights of *In a Different Voice*,³ the Listening Guide⁴ emphasises the multiplicity of voices that exist within individuals, including those at the margins or silenced through lack of resonance. It involves listening not only to what is spoken but also to what remains unspoken, to contradictions and to the ways voices can interrupt or silence one another. This perspective accepts that individuals often speak

indirectly or avoid expressing their true meaning. As a psychological method, the Listening Guide is sensitive to both inner psychological processes and the comprehensive sociocultural frameworks that form what can be articulated or heard. While it shares features with thematic and narrative analysis and grounded theory, it introduces distinctive *listening*.⁵ These include Listening for the *I*, which focuses on the speaker's first-person voice, and Listening for Contrapuntal Voices which attend to the interplay of multiple voices in connection with the research question. This method embodies the roles of radical listening by emphasising the polyphony within individuals rather than defining them merely as single, consistent perspective.

To listen radically to marginalised voices is to resist the hierarchies that determine whose experiences count as knowledge and whose do not. It is a practice that aligns with her broader ethics of care, situating voice, relationship and responsiveness at the centre of human interaction. By insisting on hearing the voices that dominant paradigms obscure, radical listening becomes an instrument of resistance. Radical listening offers a way of moving past the psychic splits that Gilligan identifies—splits between thinking and feeling, self and relationship, and care and power. By listening at the root, we begin to recover what has been marginalised to cultural silencing and reclaim the possibility of speaking and hearing in a human voice.

WHY ETHICS OF CARE?

Gilligan noticed that thinkers like Socrates and Freud to Kohlberg and Piaget, and more generally, in moral development theory, virtue is one, i.e., *justice*. On the other hand, *care* is considered secondary, a *supererogatory* duty. It means that if one practices *care*, it is good but not morally required, except in the case of women, where it was often expected. Therefore, Gilligan's insight was that the ethical framework itself reflects the gender binary and hierarchy: *justice* is treated as the central moral standard, while *care* is devalued or confined to women.

Gilligan resists the claim that moral orientations are biologically determined by sex. While traditional models often treat *justice* and *care* as separate modes of moral reasoning, Gilligan try to highlight that they are internally connected. Radical listening allows us to observe how perspectives of care can develop our understanding of justice, and vice versa, revealing the intertwined nature of ethical reflection and relational responsibility.

For Gilligan:

...the distinction between a justice orientation and a care orientation pertains to the ways in which moral problems are conceived and reflects different dimensions of human relationships that give rise to moral concern. A justice perspective draws attention to problems of inequality and oppression and holds up an ideal of reciprocal rights and equal respect for individuals. A care perspective draws attention to problems of detachment or abandonment and holds up an ideal of attention and response to need (Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988: 224–225).

She relates these two perspectives to different ideas of self: while care perspectives involve a relational self, justice perspectives involve a separate, autonomous self. Rather than seeing these selves as separate and distinct, Gilligan believes that they are intertwined aspects of human existence. Hekman cited, “One can only experience self in the context of relationship with others and, conversely, one can only experience relationship by differentiating other from self” (Hekman, 1995: 146). According to Gilligan, without care perspective justice perspective is incomplete. She suggests that adding care perspective helps us better understand the *truth* of human moral development. Gilligan’s aims are to provide a complete view of both men’s and women’s experiences by incorporating care perspective, which she believes reveals a fundamental truth⁶ about human development. By incorporating both perspectives Gilligan tries to provide a broader and more inclusive view of human moral development.

Gilligan argues that care orientation gives valuable understandings into the human experience, not only for women, but as a universal aspect of human moral life:

...to admit the truth of the women’s perspective to the conception of moral development is to recognise for both sexes the importance throughout life of the connection between self and other, the universality of the need for compassion and care. The concept of the separate self and of moral principles uncompromised by the constraints of reality is an adolescent ideal, the elaborately wrought philosophy of a Stephen Daedalus whose flight we know to be in jeopardy (Gilligan, 1982: 98).

Instead of treating care as an inherent trait of women, she frames it as a relational human ability that has been culturally coded as feminine under patriarchy. For Gilligan:

...patriarchy is an order of living based on a gender binary and hierarchy. To be a man, one must be masculine, not feminine, and also superior – both to man who are not perceived as real men and to women. In patriarchy, the order is: him over her, straight over gay (Gilligan, 2023:15).

Gilligan argues that care is not a secondary but a central practice of resistance to systemic injustice. For Gilligan, care is not merely about kindness or nurturance; it is a approach of resistance because it disrupts the psychic and cultural split that separates reason from emotion, self from other, autonomy from relationship, and power from care. Resisting these splits: it entails listening to silenced voices recognising that human beings are fundamentally interdependent. The ethics of care affirms this interdependence, undermining the hierarchies that rely on the denial of vulnerability and relationship.

Gilligan further said that *care* must not be confined to a stereotypically feminine trait. Instead, care should be recognised as political, collective and transformative. Injustice often depends on silencing invisible perspectives of women and marginalised groups. Care becomes a practice of resistance precisely because it entails hearing and responding to those voices. (Gilligan, 2011). Resistance in this framework is not limited to confrontation but also involves truth-telling, radical listening, and the courage to acknowledge what dominant narratives attempt to suppress. By

centering care, individuals can create relational spaces where voice, recognition and connection become possible.

Gilligan's feminist contribution to this discourse lies in uncovering how justice has been partial and exclusionary, built on the denial of relational realities. A feminist ethics of care reframes morality to include what has been dismissed as subjective or secondary—emotion, embodiment, and responsibility to others. Importantly, Gilligan (2011) does not claim that women are naturally more caring, thereby avoiding essentialism. Instead, she highlights how patriarchal culture has historically assigned care to women while devaluing it, thus obscuring its significance for all human beings.

In *The Birth of Pleasure* (2002), Gilligan and Snider explain that stories about love, intimacy, and power are influenced by divisions in culture. These divisions like separating mind from body, self from others, change how relationships are seen. Important parts of human experience, such as feelings, vulnerability, and connection, are often overlooked which makes love and power look like opposites instead of things that can go together. They argue that patriarchal traditions equate maturity with the repression of vulnerability and the acceptance of tragic love stories which perpetuate cycles of domination and loss. Resistance, as Gilligan and Snider (2002) explain, involves reimagining relationships not through sacrifice or silence but through pleasure, mutual recognition and care. Gilligan's reclamation of care and pleasure can reconfigure intimate and cultural life, challenging the inevitability of hierarchical and tragic structures. Gilligan and Snider said, "humans are relational beings, born with a voice and with the desire to live not alone but in relationships" (Gilligan, 2023:18).

In practical terms, Gilligan (2011) suggests that resisting injustice through care requires creating conditions in which people can speak and be heard, where relationships are prioritised, and where policies are evaluated not merely on the basis of fairness but also in terms of their ability to sustain connection. In education, this means valuing students' voices and cultivating relational learning. In psychology, it involves addressing the wounds caused by silencing and fostering healing through recognition. In politics, it sounds for ever-changing away from control and hierarchy toward structures that support mutual responsibility. In everyday life, it requires refusing complicity with silencing and practicing radical listening.

Gilligan argues ethics of care as radical because it goes to the root of human life—our interdependence, our need for recognition and the value of *voice*. Resisting injustice, therefore, is not simply about fighting external systems of domination but also about rejecting the internalised psychic splits that inhibit care and connection. Care becomes a source of strength and a path toward transformation, offering an alternative to the silencing and domination that sustain injustice. The ethics of care emerges as both a political practice and a reorientation of cultural imagination—resistance is reimagined as an affirmation of life, relationship, and pleasure, thereby opening pathways toward a more humane and just world.

Though Gilligan recognises *justice* and *care* as two distinct ways of thinking about ethics. She is clear that neither is better than the other. When asked if the care perspective is superior, she pointed out that it is important to pay attention to care and responsibility rather than ignoring these aspects. She also thinks that it is more meaningful to see detachment as a moral concern rather than overlooking it. In other words, Gilligan claims that both perspectives are essential for a complete understanding of ethics.

GILLIGAN'S RESPONSES TO THE ESSENTIALIST CRITICS IN A HUMAN VOICE

From the 1990s onward, a significant strand of feminist scholarship raised concerns that Gilligan's framing of an *ethics of care*, even if meant as a corrective to androcentric models of moral development, risked inadvertently reinforcing essentialist views of gender. Critics argued that celebrating women's orientation to care could be read not as a challenge to patriarchal hierarchies, but as a reinforcement of traditional divisions of labour that locate women within the private, emotional and relational sphere, while leaving men to dominate the public, rational and political domains. Nancy Fraser, for example, warned that an uncritical valorisation of women's caring practices "...runs the danger of naturalizing women's subordination by revaluing precisely those traits and activities that have historically been used to justify their confinement to the domestic sphere" (Fraser, 1997: 23). From this perspective, Gilligan's ideas could be taken over by a culture that already expects women to do most of the emotional work, which might end up reinforcing, rather than reducing, gender inequality.

Other feminists while echoing this concern point out that the emphasis on care could entrench the expectation that women's primary moral and social contributions lay in caregiving, relational maintenance, and empathy, while absolving men of responsibility in these domains (Tronto, 1993; Ruddick, 1989). Joan Tronto in particular argued that *ethics of care* had to be reframed in political and structural terms rather than to be celebrated as *women's voice*, to avoid reinscribing the gender binaries that feminist theory sought to dismantle. Similarly, Evelyn Fox Keller warned that appeals to women's difference could too easily slide into a form of soft essentialism, which, although well-meaning, risked portraying women as naturally more relational, nurturing, or moral, and therefore locking them into predetermined roles.

In *a Human Voice*, Gilligan while refereeing to theses critiques responds to them by saying that *ethics of care* should not be understood as a sex-based moral orientation, but as a human ability that has been systematically suppressed or devalued by patriarchal arrangements. These arrangements, she argues, operate through a series of binary splits—between reason and emotion, mind and body, self and other, public and private—that silence or marginalise relational modes of knowing. By reframing care as a human competency, rather than a "women's way of moral knowing", Gilligan seeks to undo the essentialist interpretations of her earlier work. *Care*, for her is not the property of women, but the practice of human connection, indispensable to the health of both persons and democracy. In this sense, *ethics of care* is repositioned not

as a gendered attribute but as a developmental and political resource whose suppression under patriarchal norms diminishes the moral capacities of all genders.

One of the most persistent criticisms of Gilligan's work is that despite her insistence on moving from a *different* to a *human* voice her view remains shadowed by the empirical origins of *In a Different Voice* and its association with women's moral development. Researchers have claimed that even when Gilligan explicitly rejects biological essentialism, the framing of her early work encouraged readings that seemed to reinforce the very dichotomy she sought to overcome. As Joan Tronto notes: "Gilligan's emphasis on women's ways of knowing risked reinforcing gender stereotypes, even as she was attempting to destabilize them" (Tronto, 1993:7). This concern persists into the reception of her newer work, raising the question: if Gilligan is now calling for a *human* voice, is this simply a reframing of what was once a gendered thesis?

Gilligan addresses this tension too. She holds that although her research initially focused on interviews with women, but she emphasised that the patterns she found are not about women's natural essence. Instead, they show the effects of patriarchy: boys are taught to turn away from care to become men, while girls are taught to silence themselves to be good women. The issue, then, is less about difference itself and more about the cultural rules that shape how boys and girls learn to act:

...the internalisation of the gender binary and hierarchy marks the psyche's induction into patriarchy. As a rule of thumb, when you hear a gender binary (human capabilities spoken of as either "masculine" or "feminine") and a hierarchy where the masculine is elevated over the feminine, (e.g., reason over emotion, self over relationship), you know you're in patriarchy, however it may be called (Gilligan, 2023: 82).

As she puts it, the division between thought and feeling, self and relationship is not a mark of maturity but an injury of patriarchy. She writes:

...the induction of the psyche into the gendered splits and divisions that undergird a patriarchal order of living forces a betrayal of what's right. The initiation into patriarchy shatters truth by making it impossible to live with integrity in relationship with others. Moral development then depends on resistance. As a healthy body resists infection, a healthy psyche resists moral injury (Gilligan, 2023:82–83).

Some critics like Benhabib have said that Gilligan's approach might turn important social and structural issues about gender into just psychological accounts. Yet Gilligan's response in *In a Human Voice* makes clear that her analysis is not about celebrating femininity against masculinity, but about exposing how patriarchal norms do violence to all genders—albeit in different, gender-specific ways.

The move from *different* to *human* corrects a problem in how the earlier research was framed. It de-essentialises the idea that care is something only women naturally have and shows that caring is a human capacity that every person can develop. However, society's gender norms often shape and limit how this ability is expressed in both men and women. Gilligan's critiques of essentialism are met with a reorientation. Gilligan does not deny the gendered patterns identified in her early research; rather,

she upholds that these patterns are historically contingent outcomes of patriarchal culture rather than biological facts. As she argues, the split between care and justice is not natural; it is enforced.

Another set of critiques interrogates whether Gilligan's notion of *human voice*, while presented as a universal corrective, carries with it the normative assumptions of Western moral psychology. Critics have asked whether Gilligan's emphasis on voice, framed through the first-person assertion of "I," risks reinstalling the very individualism it seeks to overcome. The question, then, is whether Gilligan's *human voice* can truly be heard across diverse normative worlds, or whether it inadvertently reasserts the liberal subject under the guise of relationality.

Gilligan attempts to guard against this critique by stating that *voice* is not an isolated assertion of autonomy but rather a mode of relational presence. Gilligan emphasises that her claim is not for a universal form of expression, but for a universal capacity that takes different forms. As she notes, Voice names a human capacity, not a prescription for speech. It is the ability to register experience honestly in a relational context, which may be enacted in many cultural idioms (Gilligan, 2023).

Thus, while Gilligan's reframing from *different* to *human* seeks to overcome essentialism that care is naturally linked to women and justice is naturally linked to men. However, it doesn't fully address how ideas about care and human voice might be understood, expressed, or functional across different cultures with varying social norms and expectations. Do ideas about reclaiming one's voice work the same way in cultures that value interdependence over individual self-assertion, or where individuals are not treated as fully independent moral agents? As Benhabib notes, "...the problem of universality cannot be evaded; it must be negotiated through a dialogue across difference" (Benhabib, 2002: 23).

CONCLUSION

The movement from a *different voice* to a *human voice* signifies more than a theoretical adjustment; it represents a profound shift in how we understand moral development, social relations, and democratic life. By rejecting the binaries that once confined psychological and philosophical discourse—justice versus care, reason versus emotion, self-versus relationship—Gilligan articulates a framework that insists on integration rather than division. The idea of a human voice both looks back, recognising the important critiques of justice-centered moral development, and looks forward, imagining a future where the ability to speak, listen, and remain whole becomes the basis of human flourishing.

Rejoining what was split is therefore not a matter of resolving an academic debate but of engaging in a collective project of cultural and political repair. It requires unlearning the habits of patriarchal socialisation that treat vulnerability as weakness, relationality as dependence, or care as secondary to justice. It challenges institutions to recognise that silencing is not neutral but corrosive, undermining both personal

well-being and social trust. And it reminds us that democracy itself rests on the delicate but powerful practice of voice—of people who can tell the truth about their lived experiences and listen carefully to the truths of others.

Gilligan's *non-essentialist* spirit is prominent through her emphasis on listening to *human voice*:

...I was not an essentialist. Rather, the gendering of care and caring as “feminine,” together with the fact that I heard the voice of care ethics as a feminine voice, alerted me to the construction of gender as a binary (either masculine or feminine) and a hierarchy (privileging the masculine) (Gilligan, 2023:8–9).

Human voice is thus less a destination than an orientation, an ongoing commitment to integrity, mutual recognition and interdependence. It does not ask us to choose sides in a long-standing opposition between care and justice, or between reason and emotion, but to grow into a more capacious way of being human—one that affirms our capacity to know and feel, to claim our own integrity while remaining open to the needs of others. “... The human voice is a voice of resistance, and care ethics is an ethics of liberation” (Gilligan, 2023:110). In this sense, moral development is redefined as the practice of living *truthfully* within relationships, and democratic renewal becomes inseparable from the recovery of human voice. The invitation, then, is not only to revisit past debates but to take up the urgent work of speaking, listening and acting in ways that affirm our shared humanity.

NOTES

- ¹ The different voice as articulated by Gilligan, emerges as powerful force of resistance, and an insistence on staying connected and, most importantly, staying connected with women but she was careful to recognize that this voice which could also belong to men: This voice was one of care and responsibility, of concern and connection with other people, and Gilligan claims that it stems from a self which is intrinsically related to other people. It is a voice that, according to Gilligan, Kohlberg consistently underrated because his theory of moral reasoning accentuates, and therefore limits its investigations to, a voice of justice and, by implication, considers a mature self to be autonomous and capable of abstract reasoning. (Larrabee, 1993: 4)
- ² Radical listening, as Gilligan develops it, is a way of attending not merely to what is spoken but also to what is withheld, silenced, or expressed indirectly. It seeks to uncover the “conversation beneath the conversation,” enabling researchers to perceive tensions and contradictions in voice (Gilligan, 2023).
- ³ In *A Different Voice* (Gilligan, 1982) challenged Lawrence Kohlberg’s justice-based model of moral development by introducing an ethics of care, foregrounding relationships, responsibility, and context as vital to moral reasoning. These insights provided the foundation for later methodological innovations like the Listening Guide.
- ⁴ The Listening Guide is a voice-oriented psychological approach that seeks to understand a person’s inner world through the ways in which that world is expressed in speech and relationships. Rather than treating voice simply as a means of transmitting information, the method considers it an important medium through which subjective experiences, emotions, relationships, and aspects of the self become perceptible. Its application is therefore not restricted to a particular group or context, since individuals communicate their inner

experiences through diverse forms of expression. At the same time, a person's voice is shaped by multiple influences, including bodily experience, personal history, language, culture, and relationships with others. These influences contribute to the particular character of an individual's voice and reveal the complex ways in which personal and social experiences become embedded in the self. Accordingly, the Listening Guide approaches voice as multidimensional and relational, attending to the different and sometimes contrasting voices that may emerge within an individual's account. The method employs a series of analytical steps through which the researcher listens closely to these voices and their interrelations, thereby developing a deeper understanding of the speaker's subjective and relational world (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2006)

⁵ The methodological innovation of the Listening Guide lies in its systematic series of listening, each designed to illuminate different dimensions of a participant's voice and experience (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2006)

⁶ Gilligan's claim that truth refers that the care perspective uncovers a basic insight into human development—namely, that relationships, emotions, and responsibility to others are central to human growth, not secondary or marginal concerns.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Falling of Angels into Beasts: The Archetypal Study of Lord of the Flies by William Golding

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ABSTRACT

The impenetrable sound of the breaking conch spread everywhere, where the wind whisper forgotten prophecies and the waves carry the echoes of the first fear of civilisation, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* emerges as an evocative modern myth. Amidst the fragile cocoon of an emerald isolated island the innocence blooms only to wither beneath the constant struggle of instinct, which depicts the omnipresent wilderness of human heart. This discussion examines the novel *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding through the archetypal perspectives of Carl Jung and Northrop Frye, presenting the timeless patterns, symbols and characters that surpass the unseen footprints of historical, geographical and cultural radix.

The unnamed island becomes an archetypal embodiment of the eternal battle between civilisation and savagery. Ralph symbolises the reluctant hero struggling to restore peace and hope amidst interminable darkness, while Jack personifies shadow; captured by the restless desire for power and primal instinct. All the characters embody the archetypal reflections and, human mind and depicts evil as the eternal inhabitant of the human heart.

Through the archetypal and psychological perspective, the paper presents the island both as paradise and dystopia. Moreover, from the Biblical lenses, the novel echoes the Judeo-Christian narratives of the fall, sin and redemption through the sacrifice of Simon that completely transformed the island from an Edenic realm into a site of devastation and the decay of human civilisation. Thus, the paper purports to emphasise the significance and space of islands in literature, the archetypal criticism of human civilisation and depicts the destruction of nature in the battle of human limitations and desire.

KEYWORDS Archetype, Civilisation, Island, Collective Unconscious, Modern myth

INTRODUCTION

“Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,”

— Yeats, *The Second Coming*

Since time immemorial nature and literature have been bound in an inevitable companionship where nature has lent its voice to literature and literature has given nature its memory. This close relationship is evidenced from the works of the writers of all ages in almost all the cultures of the world. Nature has been portrayed both as a preserver and destroyer by many writers. Island is considered as a pivotal part of literary studies; it is depicted in an image of meditative separation from the human world. In literary imagination island occupies a more specific space of serene tranquility as well as evokes a sense of fear through its labyrinth like wild atmosphere. Thus, intertwined between isolation and possibility, the island becomes a testing ground for the whole civilisation, resembling a place where the thirst for inner peace and threat of existence lives together. The archetypal reading of the novel *Lord of the Flies* transforms a narrative of survival into a modern myth of the gradual decline of civilisation into savagery.

The aftermath of the two world wars had concurred with the period of transition when intellectual and artistic world had undergone through huge change. By the early 1950s the United States and Soviet Union had tested the hydrogen bombs which was the next phase of the nuclear weapons. When the atom bombs were dropped in the Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it signaled the end of the World War II, it also heralded the beginning of the cold war. Written with the ink of diverse intellectual insights, the literary and artistic explorations of this period had been shifted to new ends. Their writings depicted the inner hollowness and the uncertainty for future. As in, *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding transforms the Edenic island into a land full of sublimity. Unlike the other writers of that period can lead the society towards a more equitable, harmonious and sustainable future.

ARCHETYPAL CRITICISM AND THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS

“The archetype is a tendency to form such representations of a motif – representations that can vary a great deal in detail without losing their basic pattern.”

— Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*

Archetypal Criticism, influenced by Carl Jung’s theory of Collective Unconscious depicts that beneath every individual’s personal unconscious lies the collective unconscious which is a hive of inherited psychic patterns common to all human beings. Moreover, Northrop Frye, in *Anatomy of Criticism* reveals that literature is organised around recurring myths and archetypes that transcend individual works. Thus, the novel *Lord of the Flies* illustrates the fact that the conflict between

civilisation and savagery is not merely political or historical but it also shares psychological insights.

THE ISLAND: EDEN AND DYSTOPIA

“This is an island...the shore was fledged with palm trees. These stood or leaned or reclined against the light and their green feathers were a hundred feet up in the air. The ground beneath them was a bank covered with coarse grass, torn everywhere by the upheavals of fallen trees, scattered with decaying coconuts and palm saplings. Behind this was the darkness of the forest proper ...” (Golding, 04).

The island itself emerges as a significant archetype. The description of the island resembles the Biblical Garden of Eden which was an untouched utopia. But gradually this paradise transforms into a terrifying site of fear and violence. In mythological traditions these forests, isolated islands always represent the symbols of mystery and deep transformation. It is noteworthy that William Golding reverses the Edenic narrative in his novel. In the Book of Genesis evil enters into the Paradise through the shape of a serpent but in the novel, *Lord of the Flies*, evil is portrayed as an omnipresent thought, which already exists within the boys. Thus, Simon asserts this truth “May be there is a beast ...maybe it’s only us.” “This realization reflects Jung’s idea of the shadow which depicts the dominated unconscious aspects of personality. Therefore, the island becomes a symbolical dimension where social limitations and restraints gradually disappear and the hidden suppressed desires of human mind emerges. According to Sigmund Freud, repression of desires and thoughts lead people to a state where they remain unaware of their various actions. Thus, Freud says that “Regression is the cornerstone on which the whole structure of psychoanalysis rests.” (Freud, 1914). From the archetypal perspective of Frye, the island descends from a place of peace and harmony into a site of violence and uncertainty. The novel depicts that the hidden enemy of human mind is internal rather than external. As Christopher Marlowe has shown through the character of Dr. Faustus in his drama *Dr. Faustus* that the inner desires and evil intentions can transform a renowned scholar into an ordinary sufferer.

THE CHARACTERS AS ARCHETYPES

Throughout the novel, Ralph represents the Hero archetype, who struggles to defeat the inner evil lies within the boys. He tried to maintain order and harmony amidst the overwhelming forces of chaos. Ralph continuously reminds the boys about the signal fire “The fire is the most important thing on the island. How can you expect to be rescued if you don’t put first things first and act proper?” (Golding, 47). Here Ralph seems as the conscious ego attempting to maintain control over unconscious impulses. Moreover, fire symbolises the spirit of civilisation, hope and reason and Ralph’s consciousness to maintain the signal fire depicts the voice of hope in the novel. But through the perspective of Frye Ralph can be considered as an ordinary individual, precisely because of his failure to maintain control which leads to

the gradual collapse of civilisation. Here heroism is not sufficient to overcome the destructive impulses and to restraint human desires.

Piggy serves as an archetype of wisdom, reason and intellectual guidance. His spectacles through which fire was produced, it symbolises civilisation. After the murder of Piggy Golding writes – “The conch exploded into thousand white fragments and ceased to exist”. (Golding, 220) This signals the complete annihilation of democracy, wisdom and rationality and the gradual collapse of civilisation. From the perspective of Frye, it is the complete destruction of the social order and leads to the wild form of survival. Simon is considered as the Christ figure in the novel and Jung’s theory identifies Simon with the Self archetype. It is noteworthy that Simon alone understood that the beast is not an external aspect but an internal instinct of human nature. Thus, he says “Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill ...I’m part of you” (Golding, 161). In Indian mythology human body is considered as the part of the five elements Fire, Water, Wind, Earth and the Sky and in the novel William Golding describes the reaction of nature in the death of Simon, he writes “The water dressed Simon’s coarse hair with brightness”. This creates the sense of purification and transformation.

“You cut a pig’s throat to let the blood out ...otherwise you can’t eat the meat.” (Golding, 29)

Jack Merridew embodies the Shadow archetype with a deep psychological depth. His painted face abandons all the social restraints and it becomes the visual portrayal of transformation. Frye’s theory also represents Jack as the leader of the world of devil. During one incident Maurice pretended to be the pig, and the hunters circled around him and started to beat him with singing- “Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Bash her in.” This shows that the children started to enjoy hunting. The hunger and their thirst for survival lead them to savagery and to the world of darkness. As in the poem *Hunger*, the poet Jayanta Mahapatra reveals the harsh realities of hunger and the destructive forces of human need – “It was hard to believe the flesh was heavy on my back... ...I felt the hunger there,”

The Beast and the pig’s head which is called as the lord of the flies together represent the novel’s central archetypal symbol of evil and the world of darkness. Jung argues that individuals sometime externalise their unconscious fears without realising them their own personality. Simon’s realisation that “maybe it’s only us” shows this reflection of unconscious fears.

THE FALL AND THE RETURN OF CIVILISATION

“The island was scorched up like dead wood ...The tears began to flow and sobs shook him ...Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man’s heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy.” (230).

The arrival of the naval officer arouses these emotions and fear for the light of civilisation amidst the boys. The naval officer also belonged to a world of devastating

warfare. Thus, in his novel William Golding creates a microcosm of the horrible devastation of the world engaged in a terrifying war. Golding's *Lord of the Flies* presents a dystopian perspective in which civilisation is shown to be fragile and temporary. Golding portrays the island not as a paradise but as a space where fear and savagery gradually destroy social order. At the beginning of the novel, the boys attempt to maintain democratic values through assemblies and rules, symbolised by the conch shell. However, as fear spreads among them, rationality disappears and violence takes control. This realisation exposes Golding's pessimistic view of humanity. The boys, despite their civilised upbringing, quickly descend into barbarism when social restraints are removed. The murders of Simon and Piggy symbolise the destruction of innocence, morality, and reason. Through these events, Golding demonstrates that civilisation is only a thin layer covering humanity's primitive instincts for violence and domination.

CONCLUSION

The novel *Lord of the Flies* reflects various archetypes throughout the whole narration and the characters represent different symbols of sin, fall and survival. The isolated island itself depicts the mystery of wilderness and the transformation that occurred after the arrival of human beings. The loss of innocence, descending into savagery and the collapse of basic sense of civilisation happened in that isolated island. It signifies that evil lies within human mind and it evolves in the absence of order and conscience. The hunters group becomes an archetype of this universal omnipresence of evil. The beast never appears because it did not have any physical form but it was the imagination that created the form of the beast. As John Milton says –

“The mind is its own place and in itself
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.”

(Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 254–255)

Therefore, the archetypes in the novel foreshadows the consequences of the actions, the inner desires and also throws light on the gradual decay of civilisation from the consciousness of human mind. Through Frye's theory the novel reworks the archetypal patterns of paradise, fall and sacrifice. William Golding profoundly leaves this novel for the coming generations to understand, interpret and convey the universal truths through the help of myth, archetypes and symbols to the world.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Bridging the Economic Divide: A Comparative Assessment of SDG Inequalities across the SAARC Nations

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ABSTRACT

This paper tries to understand the socio-economic and political significance of SAARC countries in regional development. To this end, it assesses the performance and achievements of SDGs across member states, focusing on key economic and social indicators. To achieve the objectives, the study relies on secondary data collected from various sources, viz. the World Development Outlook (World Bank, 2024), Regional Economic Outlook Reports, IMF, 2024 and the Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2024. The analysis focuses on selected SDG indicators that capture key aspects of economic and social development. The analysis is divided into three analytical sections. To assess the economic dimensions of SDGs, the study specifically analyses the economic performance of SAARC nations through sectoral and labour market indicators thereby identifying the structural transformation and economic composition of member economies. The analysis of the industrial sector provides a mixed picture across SAARC nations. It reflects the differences in resource endowments, industrial policy, and economic diversification.

A synthesis of the combined sectoral and employment data across SAARC nations reveals a classic pattern of structural transformation. It positions the countries into three broad developmental stages viz. agrarian economies, transitional economies and service-led economies. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and India represent agrarian economies, characterised by high agricultural employment, elevated levels of informality, and relatively low unemployment, the classical hallmarks of early-stage development. Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, on the other hand, represent the transitional economies that are gradually diversifying into industrial and service sectors. SDGs 1 and 10 cover poverty reduction and inequality; here again, Afghanistan remains the most economically vulnerable, while Maldives and Bhutan have the lowest poverty rates.

The study concludes that the SAARC nations have potential and have made significant progress on many SDG indicators. However, only a significant improvement in SDG

indicators for all member countries can ensure a win-win situation for all and make the region a superpower of Asia.

KEYWORDS Sectoral Share, Employment Prospects, Decent Work, Innovation and Infrastructure, Inequalities Reduction

INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals also known as SDGs has been adopted in 2015. But a series of global disruptions such as economic slowdowns, COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical political tensions etc. hindered the full realisation of the SDGs. These predicaments have posed significant challenges in the access to the public services, affecting all the SDGs, particularly the individuals' life, socio-economic conditions including the income and employment, well-being of elderly, children and women at all levels. The challenges disproportionately impacted the vulnerable groups and thereby intensifying socio-economic inequalities across and within nations. As a result, the global development trajectory has witnessed widening disparities in terms of wealth, income, accessibility and availability of resources giving rise to what is commonly referred to as the "economic divide," (United Nations, 2024; Leal Filho et al., 2022). The economic divide not only reflects disparities in income and wealth but also encompasses inequalities in access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and environmental resources. These inequalities directly influence the achievement of SDGs and across regions. Nowhere is this more evident than in South Asia, where rapid economic growth has coexisted with persistent structural inequalities (World Bank, 2024; Moinuddin & Olsen, 2024).

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established with the signing of the SAARC Charter in Dhaka on 8th December, 1985. The SAARC comprises of eight Member States: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The establishment of its Secretariat in Kathmandu in 1987 marked a significant step towards institutionalising regional cooperation. The primary objective of the SAARC is to promote and develop the well-being of the people in South Asia. Further it aims to enhance the quality of life, promote the socio-economic progress and integration of cultural development amongst the member states while safeguarding their individual interests. The Organisation also facilitates collaboration and provides assistance in scientific, technical and developmental domains of its member countries. It also coordinates with other international and regional Organisation for socio-economic and cultural aspects of its member countries. Further, the decision is made by the countries on the basis of unanimity and bilateral agreements.

Literature on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlights persistent global disparities, implementation challenges, and the need for context-specific strategies. Studies indicate that countries with advanced socio-economic and institutional frameworks tend to perform better in achieving SDGs, underscoring the importance of understanding the country-specific strengths and gaps (Caglar & Gurler, 2022).

Similarly, the uneven specialisation of SDG indicators in many nations, suggests the need for improved diagnostic tools to evaluate disparities and guide tailored interventions (Ma et al., 2025). Analyses of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) from 188 countries, identified poverty, climate change, governance inefficiencies, and education disparities as common challenges across nations reinforcing the need of localised SDG Strategies (Göçoğlu et al., 2025; Mwangi, 2025).

The divide between the Global North and South also remains a critical concern in terms of SDG outcomes with developing nations facing significant constraints in achieving SDGs. Medina-Hernández et al. 2023 noted that the countries in the global North have benefitted better infrastructure which is essential for economic growth and sustainable development. But the countries in Global South continues to struggle with basic service delivery, health, and equality. Besides, governance play a critical role, as to how countries pursue the SDGs, as seen in the contrasting cases of Japan and Indonesia (Morita et al. 2020). Furthermore, while economic and technological progress contributes positively to SDG performance, the absence of emphasis on green innovation hampers sustainability, necessitating new strategic directions (Islam, 2025).

Economic considerations also play a pivotal role in SDG implementation particularly in developing regions such as SAARC. Although economic growth is generally associated with improved SDG performance, it often generates environmental and social externalities that may undermine sustainability (Moinuddin & Olsen, 2024). Financial constraints and persistent funding gaps that hinder SDG achievement by 2030, necessitating greater awareness of the of the financial benefits of sustainability and the mobilisation of adequate resources (Leal Filho et al., 2022). In this context, regular, systematic and continuous monitoring and evaluation of SDG progress are essential to ensure that national policies remain aligned with evolving development challenges and scientific evidence (Allen et al., 2018).

According to the SAARC framework, the SDGs have been regionally contextualised grouped into four major heads, viz. livelihood, health, education and environment, reflecting the region's development priorities (SAARC, 2008). Since the adoption of the global SDG framework in 2015, SAARC nations have made varying degrees of progress in achieving these goals. While notable advancements have been observed in poverty reduction, economic growth, and certain social indicators, significant disparities persist in employment generation, environmental sustainability, and equitable resource distribution (United Nations, 2024).

The region's economic performance however reveals a dual reality. On one hand, are countries such as India and Bangladesh that demonstrated strong economic growth and improvements in poverty reduction. On the other hand, there are several member states continue to face structural challenges, including high levels of informality in employment, gender disparities in labour participation, and limited access to essential services (World Bank, 2024). These issues highlight the existence

of both inter-country and intra-country inequalities, which hinder the inclusive realisation of SDGs.

This paper assesses the progress in the performance and development of SDGs and their targets in SAARC nations. It aims to analyse the extent to which economic growth, employment patterns, and resource distribution influence SDG outcomes in the region in 2025.

OBJECTIVES

The study has a threefold objective.

First, it aims to understand the socio-economic and political significance of SAARC countries in regional development.

Second, it assesses the performance and achievements of SDGs across member states, focusing on key economic and social indicators.

Third, it examines inter-country disparities and identifies policy measures required to bridge the economic divide and promote sustainable development

METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the progress, performance, and disparities in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across SAARC nations in 2025. The analysis focuses on the economic dimensions of sustainable development viz. economic growth, employment, industrial development, poverty reduction, and inequality.

B. Data Sources:

To achieve the objectives, the study relies on secondary data collected from various sources, viz. the World Development Outlook (World Bank, 2024), Regional Economic Outlook Reports, IMF, 2024 and the Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2024. The analysis is constrained by data availability. It focuses on selected SDG indicators that capture key aspects of economic and social development.

C. Data Analysis

The analysis of the study, is divided into three analytical sections. To assess the economic dimensions of SDGs, the study specifically analyses the economic performance of SAARC nations through sectoral and labour market indicators thereby identifying the structural transformation and economic composition of member economies.

Further, the labour market conditions are evaluated using employment-related indicators to assess employment generation, workforce distribution, and labour market opportunities across countries. Additionally, “General Labour Force Participation Rate (GLFPR)” is used to examine labour force participation trends and economic inclusion. The study also examines the progress of SAARC nations in achieving SDG

8 (by analysing indicators related to economic growth rates, employment generation, productivity, and decent working conditions. Similarly, the progress under SDG 9 is evaluated through indicators associated with industrialisation, infrastructure development, technological advancement, and innovation capacity. Finally, the study investigates the progress of SAARC countries in achieving SDG 1 and SDG 10, through indicators related to poverty levels, income distribution, labour participation, and socio-economic inequalities.

The collected data are analysed using descriptive statistical techniques such as percentage analysis, comparative ranking, trend analysis, and tabular interpretation. Graphical representations and comparative tables are also used to present the findings systematically and to facilitate cross-country comparisons.

However, the study is limited by the availability and consistency of SDG-related data across SAARC countries. As such only selected indicators relevant to the objectives of the study are included in the analysis. While SDGs represent a comprehensive framework for achieving inclusive and sustainable development, their realisation in the SAARC region is shaped by complex economic, institutional, and structural factors. Addressing the economic divide, thus requires a balanced approach that integrates growth with equity, strengthens institutional capacity, and promotes region-specific policy interventions.

CLASSIFICATION AND OVERALL GLOBAL STATUS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The SDGs, also known as the Global Goals are regarded as the constitutional (both social and economic) rights of individuals and communities worldwide. The SDGs comprising of 17 goals and 169 targets integrated and interrelated targets, were adopted by the United Nations on September 25, 2015. They have been focusing on ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The SDGs were first discussed in UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. They replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which was started in 2000 with a set of the targets to be achieved by 2030.

The SDGs were divided into two broad categories, with five pillars viz., people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships and the dimension of sustainability sub-grouped into economic, social and environmental. All the 17 SDGs were clubbed into these major and sub major heads. The SDGs has been divided into three higher-level factors that reflect the three pillars of sustainability (social, economic, environmental). These three pillars are considered to be of varying importance in different countries. Further the individual goals are not stand-alone goals but are influenced closely by each other (Matthias Winfried Kleespies and Paul Wilhelm Dierkes, 2022). Table 1 represents the groups and subgroups of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Table 1: Sustainable Development Goals: Groups and Sub-Groups

Group	Sub-Group	Core – Area	Number of SDGs covered
Five Pillars	People	Poverty, Hunger, Health, Education, Gender equality, and Reducing inequalities	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10
Five Pillars	Planet	Clean water, Sanitation, Climate action, and Protecting ecosystems	6, 13, 14, 15
Five Pillars	Prosperity	Economic growth, Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	7, 8, 9, 12
Five Pillars	Peace	Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	16
Five Pillars	Partnerships	Collaboration and Partnerships	17
Dimensions of Sustainability	Economic	Economic growth, Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	7, 8, 9, 12
Dimensions of Sustainability	Social	Poverty, Hunger, Health, Education, Gender equality, and Reducing inequalities	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10
Dimensions of Sustainability	Environmental	Clean water, Sanitation, Climate action, and Protecting ecosystems	6, 13, 14, 15
Dimensions of Sustainability	Institutional	Peace, Justice, and Strong institutions	16

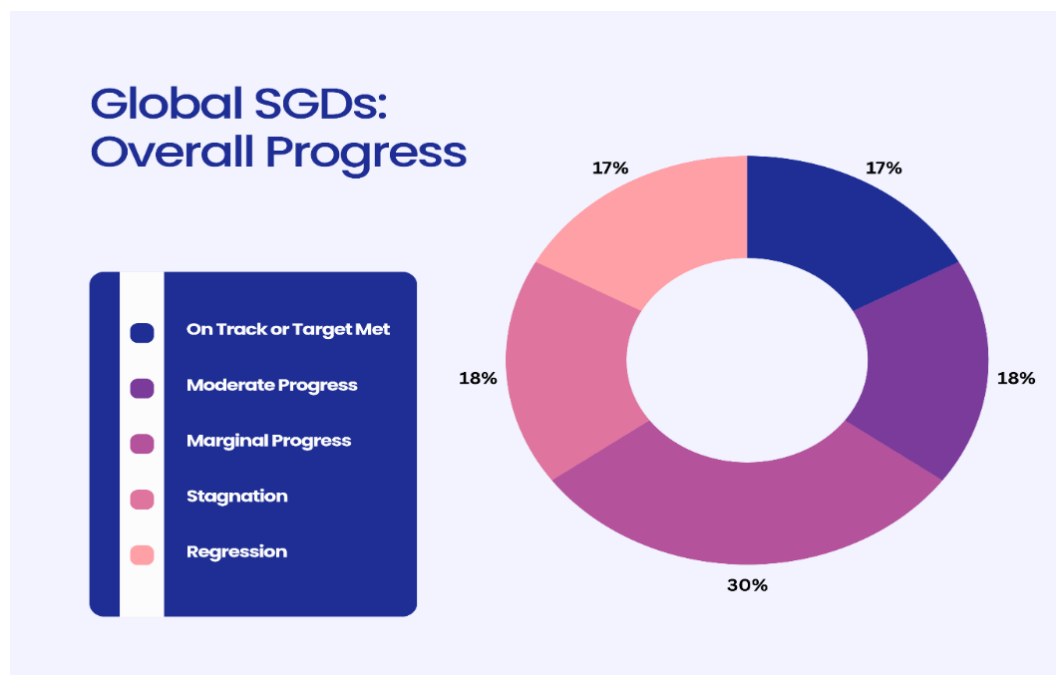
Source: *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024*.

The recent report of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2024 Report emphasises the importance and urgency of achieving the goals by 2030. It states that, as of the 2024 assessment period, the world has evaluated progress on 135 out of the 165 targets, based on data provided by individual countries. Figure 1 demonstrates the global development of the SDGs over the past decade from 2014 to 2024.

Figure 1 exhibits that the countries must make a comprehensive assessment to enhance the performance of SDGs. The pie chart illustrates the distribution of progress of SDGs towards achieving specific targets, across five distinct categories: “On Track or Target Met,” “Moderate Progress,” “Marginal Progress,” “Stagnation,” and “Regression.” The data reveals that only 17% of the targets are currently on track or have already been met indicating a limited overall success in achieving the intended goals. Further, an equally small proportion of 17% reflects regression, indicating a reversal in progress. This may be attributed to global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, economic instability, or escalating environmental crises.

Further, there has been a moderate progress on 18% of the targets, suggesting that while some advancements are made but are insufficient to meet the desired outcomes. Similarly, stagnation is observed in 18% of goals. This indicates that there have been no meaningful changes which can be attributed to presence of systemic bottlenecks or lack of policy traction. However, the most notable classification is 30%

Figure 1: Global SDGs: Overall Progress



Source: The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024.

under “Marginal Progress,” indicating some movement is but not sufficient to make a substantial impact.

As observed nearly half of the indicators are either stagnating or regressing. Only a small portion is demonstrably on track. The distribution indicates that the global or national performance in meeting critical targets has been far from satisfactory. It highlights the urgent need for reinvigorated policy commitment, strategic interventions, and increased resource mobilisation.

OVERALL STATUS OF SAARC NATIONS INS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

To understand the performance of SAARC Nations in SDG 8-Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 9- Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure and SDG 1 &10-No Poverty and Reduced Inequalities, it is imperative to understand the overall performance of these nations. Table 2 represents the overall performance of the SAARC Nations in SDGs in country rank, SDG score, spillover effects, statistical performance, and data availability.

Table 2: Overall performance of SAARC Nations in SDGs

Countries	Country Rank (2024)	Country Score (%)	International Spillover Index	Statistical Performance Index	Missing Data in SDGs Index
Afghanistan	162	48.2	92.0	58.4	5
Bangladesh	107	64.3	97.0	70.1	2
Bhutan	61	72.5	81.7	59.9	14
India	109	64.0	95.7	75.4	2
Maldives	67	70.9	97.7	62.1	22

Nepal	97	67.1	95.3	62.0	1
Pakistan	137	57.0	95.0	71.1	2
Sri Lanka	93	67.4	95.3	79.0	2

Source: Sustainable Development Report 2024.

Table 2 reveals that while Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka have a relatively better SDG performance with higher scores and rankings, countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan are lagging behind due to weaker socio-economic and institutional conditions. The International Spillover Index indicates that most SAARC nations have high cross-border environmental and economic impacts. However, the Statistical Performance Index highlights variations in data collection and monitoring capacity. The Missing Data Index further reveals disparities in the availability and reliability of SDG-related data across member countries.

In this context, the present study seeks provides an overview of the progress of SDGs across SAARC nations, towards achieving the 2030 Agenda, highlighting the areas where the goals have been achieved, areas with on-going progress and where the goals that has remained unmet. It also aims to identify actions required in the forthcoming years to achieved the unmet areas.

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE OF SAARC NATIONS IN SDGS INDICATORS

This section demonstrates the economic performance of SDGs indicators in SAARC nations. based on the data available on Sustainable Development Report 2024, for the SAARC Countries to demonstrate the progress across the three Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) viz. SDG 8-Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 9- Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure and SDG 1 &10- No Poverty and Reduced Inequalities.

With the recent developments of liberalisation and globalisation, the number of workers living in the poverty has been declining. At the same time the unprecedented situations worldwide like, global and regional economic slowdown, 2008 financial crises, geopolitical frictions and the COVID – 19 pandemics has severely hit the economic growth, employment and income of the developing countries. This has made a negative impacted on middle, poor and informal workers households, and created a K-shaped economic growth and inequalities. However, the economic growth and gainful employment are playing a core instrument to reach the sustainable goals achievement in 2030. More than 25 percent of the population in the world is under 15 years and more than 10 per cent is 56 and above, which indicates that more than 35 percent of the population is depends on the age group of 15 to 64. Any countries' economic growth depends on these economically active groups.

However, the SAARC economies still continue to fight against these challenges and recovering slowly according to the Asia and the Pacific SDGs progress report 2017. The report stated that the effort to achieve the Goal 8 i.e. to promote decent work and goal 10 i.e. to reduce inequalities have been registered as less successful. As the

global economy continues to recover, these nations are experiencing slower growth, widening inequalities, and not enough jobs to keep up with a growing labour force. According to the International Labour Organization, more than 204 million people were unemployed in 2015. The SDGs promote sustained economic growth, higher levels of productivity and technological innovation. Encouraging entrepreneurship and job creation are key effective measures to eradicate forced labour, slavery and human trafficking. With these targets in mind, the goal is to achieve full and productive employment, and decent work, for all women and men by 2030. The recent ADB report 2025 states that India is a biggest player in the GDP and it is projected that to grow by 6.7 per cent by 2026. A simple performance analysis was executed to understand the performance of indicators in SAARC nations.

A. Sectoral Share of SAARC Nations

In economic history of the world, no economy has ever realised its full potential when half of its population is hindered from realising their own potential. South Asia has made remarkable progress in establishing and promoting equal access to social and economic opportunities for both women and men despite facing numerous challenges both internal and external. However, many South Asian women still continue to remain outside the labour force participation despite completing after middle education or graduation or following marriage.

With the emergence of new perspectives, the SAARC nations have shown a considerable development in the twenty-first century. These countries are becoming increasingly important to the development of Asian economy in particular and the global economy in general. In present times, these countries are contributing a significant share to the global GDP. In summary, the global development dynamics of this century are increasingly shaped by these countries. Table -3 presents the sectoral share the SAARC nations.

Table 3: Sectoral share of SAARC Nations

Countries	Agriculture	Industry	Service
Afghanistan	48.8	19.1	29.3
Bangladesh	41.3	17.0	36.3
Bhutan	43.4	15.1	40.5
India	43.5	25.0	31.5
Maldives	12.8	16.1	67.5
Nepal	25.4	29.5	45.0
Pakistan	37.1	25.4	37.5
Sri Lanka	26.5	26.5	47.0

Source: <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/country-profiles/> accessed on 15.04.2025.

Table 3 reflects the dominance of agriculture and its implications on individual SAARC Nations. Agriculture continues to dominate the employment structure in

most SAARC nations. Countries like Afghanistan (48.8%), Bangladesh (41.3%), Bhutan (43.4%), and India (43.5%) still rely heavily on the agricultural sector signaling early or mid-transition economies where which reflects a structural inertia where the majority of the population remains in low-productivity activities due to lack of viable alternatives. Contrary to this Maldives reflects a geographical and economic uniqueness with agriculture’s share at 12.8% and service sector comprising of 67.5%, which can be attributed to its tourism led economy and limited arable land. Nepal (25.4%) and Sri Lanka (26.5%) with 25.4% and 26.5% dependency on agriculture indicates a diversification from agriculture. This can be attributed to factors like international migration and urbanisation.

The analysis of industrial sector provides a mixed picture across SAARC nations. It reflects the differences in resource endowments, industrial policy, and economic diversification. India and Pakistan show a relatively balanced industrial sectors, supported by manufacturing and construction. Bhutan and Bangladesh have a lower industrial employment. Nepal has a surprisingly high industrial share, largely driven by reconstruction efforts and hydro-power infrastructure projects. During this period the service sector has shown a robust growth in countries with strong tourism, financial, and public administration bases. Maldives has a staggering 67.5% employment in services while Sri Lanka and Bhutan also show significant service sector employment with 47% and 40.5% respectively. This trend is suggestive of the fact that as economies mature, labour gradually shifts from agriculture to services, usually bypassing large-scale industrialisation in some cases.

B. Employment prospects of SAARC Nations

According to the most recent data, the global employment trends indicate a relatively low level of global unemployment, which is less than 5 per cent. The economic and social sectors are focusing on promoting decent employment for all people around the world with efforts to remove the contradictions and challenges faced by the women and youths in particular. According to the World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2025, decent work and productive employment are essential for achieving the SDGs by 2030. However, in the present times the global youth have been facing many challenges including the decent work and fair pay. More than 90 per cent of the work is of informal in nature, with around 13 per cent of global youth population being unemployed. The recent geopolitical conflicts, economic uncertainties and climate changes are discouraging the additional employment and have exacerbated op special inequalities in many countries, including SAARC nations. Examples include the economic crisis in Sri Lanka, tax wars between west and east, and rising temperatures and climate changes in South Asia. Table 4 presents the employment prospects of SAARC countries in recent times.

Table 4: Employment prospects of SAARC Countries

Countries	Informal Employment	Employment- Population Ratio	Unemployment Rate	Youth Unemployment Rate
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Afghanistan	86.1	46.9	5.0	8.8
Bangladesh	84.9	59.0	4.6	11.5
Bhutan	NA	63	2.4	12.2
India	88.8	53.4	4.2	15.5
Maldives	48.1	60.7	4.6	13.9
Nepal	81.6	35.7	10.7	20.5
Pakistan	84.3	49.4	60.3	11.1
Sri Lanka	67.0	47.5	4.5	22.1

Source: <https://ilostat ilo.org/data/country-profiles/> accessed on 15.04.2025. Note: NA = not available.

Table 4 reflects that SAARC labour markets are highly informal in terms of employment. Except for Maldives with 48.1% labour in informal market, all countries report informality in employment at a staggering rate of 80%, with India leading the list with 88.8% informal labourers followed by Afghanistan at 86.1%. Informal work dominates due to agrarian dependence, the prevalence of small-scale unregistered enterprises, and limited state capacity to enforce labour laws. Although countries report modest unemployment rates, especially India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, these figures are deceptive as the youth employment in all these three countries falls far behind in terms of youth employment. This may be due to the cultural expectations, poor labour absorption, and long public-sector job queues that exacerbates to youth joblessness. It is also noticed from the data Pakistan's unemployment rate is unusually high at 60.3% indicating underemployment or vulnerable employment possibly reflecting data inconsistency or misinterpretation.

The Labour force participation rates (LFPR) also vary significantly across SAARC nations. Bhutan and Maldives have high LFPRs with 65% and 63.6% respectively. This can be attributed either to greater female participation and minimal outward migration. On the other hand, Nepal has a low LFPR at 39.9% which can be attributed to massive migration of working-age males for overseas employment. Both Afghanistan and Sri Lanka also have a LFPR. For Afghanistan the reason behind subdued LFPR, is the social and political barriers limiting women's work participation. But for Sri Lanka it is a possible reflection of discouraged female jobseekers in a slow-growing economy.

A synthesis of the combined sectoral and employment data across SAARC nations reveals a classic pattern of structural transformation. It positions the countries into three broad developmental stages viz. agrarian economies, transitional economies and service-led economies. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and India represent agrarian economies, characterised by high agricultural employment, elevated levels of informality, and relatively low unemployment the classical hallmarks of early-stage development. Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka on the other hand represent the transitional economies that are gradually diversifying into industrial and service sectors. However, these countries are facing mounting pressures such as rising youth

unemployment and structural underemployment. Further, Maldives, exemplifies a service-led economy, with its tourism-driven growth model, relatively lower informality, and better employment outcomes reflecting a more advanced stage of economic evolution within the region.

Table 5 presents the general labour force participation rate of SAARC nations. The general labour force participation rate is measured by the ratio between the total labour force divided by the total working age population. According to the ILO definition, the labour force (employed + unemployed persons) divided by the total working age population and multiplied by 100, in formula (LFPR = (Labour force/Working-age population) * 100). In short, the labour force is the sum of employed and unemployed individuals.

Table 5: General Labour Force Participation Rate (GLFPR)
in percent (SDG: 10.4.1)

Countries	GLFPR	Labour income shares as a percent of GDP	Working poverty rate	Share of employed working more than 48 hours per week	Population covered by at least one social protection benefit
Afghanistan	49.7	38.7	NA	15.4	7.5
Bangladesh	61.9	43.1	2.6	36.4	22.0
Bhutan	65.0	44.8	0.1	61.3	11.9
India	55.8	56.8	8.7	50.1	48.8
Maldives	63.6	42.5	0.1	32.1	30.1
Nepal	39.9	45.4	0.2	28.1	21.0
Pakistan	52.7	45.2	4.2	39.7	20.2
Sri Lanka	49.7	34.4	0.9	28.1	41.3

Source: <https://ilostat ilo.org/data/country-profiles/> accessed on 15.04.2025. Note: NA = not available.

From Table 5, it can be observed that the general labour force participation rate was high in Bhutan at 65%. However, India dominated in labour force contribution to GDP at around 59%. Unfortunately, India also had a higher level of working poverty as compared to other SARRC countries, while Bhutan and Maldives reported poverty rates at less than 0.5%. An examination into the share of employed individuals working more than 48 hours per week, countries such as Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Maldives reported figures less than 50 per cent. However, the Covid – 19 and other internal and external economic and political crises had adversely affected the development of all the SAARC nations.

C. Progress of SAARC Nations SDG 8-Decent work and Economic Growth

Economic growth, in a simple way economic growth is nothing but it is the increase in the value of goods and services an economy produces over a period of time, normally a year. It is measured by the changes in GDP (real). The economic growth clearly says that high economic growth will leads to higher standard of living, stimulate the

consumption, and greater in saving and income, these things will lead to sustainable human development.

The SDG goal 8 aims to encourage sustained economic growth through the productivity level and better technological supports, it is also promoting the policies that encourage entrepreneurial and employment creation for effective abolition of forced labour, slavery and human trafficking at all levels for men and women by 2030.

Table 6: Decent work and Economic Growth

Countries	GDP Growth Adjusted (in) 2022	Unemployment Rate (Above 15 + in %)	Labour Rights (0 is worst 1 is best)
Afghanistan	-15	16.3	0.37
Bangladesh	0.7	4.2	0.44
Bhutan	-3.7	6.1	NA
India	-1.3	4.7	0.51
Maldives	-1.6	4.3	NA
Nepal	-3.9	10.9	0.54
Pakistan	-2.7	5.8	0.34
Sri Lanka	-6.5	6.6	0.59

Source: Sustainable Development Report, 2024. Accessed on 15.04.2025.

Note: NA = not available

Table 6, represents SDG 8, which focuses on decent work and economic growth shows that except Bangladesh all the other countries faced negative growth rate in GDP during the assessment period. This can be attributed to the global economic slow-down and the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that not only disrupted supply chains and reduced investment but also hampered recovery efforts across the region, contributing to negative GDP growth in most SAARC nations. Of all the SAARC nations Afghanistan's economic scenario is in the most critical with negative GDP Growth at -15% coupled with high rate of unemployment and poor labour rights at 16.3% and 0.37 respectively. This can be but not limited to due to severe political instability following the Taliban's return to power along with various international sanctions, and the collapse of formal economic institutions in the country.

Although not very high, Bangladesh has relatively stable indicators with positive GDP growth, low rate of unemployment and moderate labour rights at 0.7%, 4.2% and 0.44% respectively. Thus, Bangladesh demonstrated largely driven by the strength of its ready-made garments (RMG) sector, labor-intensive manufacturing, and relative macroeconomic stability.

Contrary to negative GDP growth at -1.3%, India maintained a moderate unemployment at 4.7% and comparatively better labour rights at 0.51%, likely supported by government welfare schemes and a diversified economy that buffered labour market shocks. Nepal and Pakistan experienced a negative GDP growth rate at -3.9% and

-2.7% respectively, along high unemployment at 10.9 and 5.8% respectively. Further, the labour rights in both these countries were also moderate at 0.54 and 0.34 percent respectively. This may be attributed to limited industrialisation, reliance on remittances, and political uncertainties. The scenario is contradictory in Sri Lanka, which has a significant GDP contraction of -6.5%, but reflects the highest labour rights score at 0.59 percent. The GDP Contraction in Sri Lanka was primarily the result of a severe economic and debt crisis. The highest labour rights score on the other hand in Sri Lanka may be attributed to its relatively strong institutional and legal frameworks.

Overall, the analysis of data highlights the complex interplay between macroeconomic trends, governance, and labour conditions in shaping the progress of SAARC nations toward achieving SDG 8.

D. Progress of SAARC Nations in SDG 9-Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

Table 7 focuses on SDG 9 i.e. industry, innovation, and infrastructure. The data in table 7 reflect both progress and disparities in the development of industry, innovation, and infrastructure across South Asia.

Table 7: Industries, Innovation and Infrastructure

Countries	Rural Roads (All Seasons)	Internet connection and use	Subscriptions of Mobile Broadband	Expenditure on Research and Development (% of GDP)
Afghanistan	58.5	17.6	55.5	0.0
Bangladesh	98.0	44.5	55.9	NA
Bhutan	90.1	86.8	98.0	NA
India	99.2	48.1	56.4	0.6
Maldives	94.1	83.9	53.6	NA
Nepal	87.1	49.6	89.1	0.3
Pakistan	88.3	32.9	51.5	0.2
Sri Lanka	99.7	50.1	94.9	0.1

Source: Sustainable Development Report 2024. Note: NA = not available.

Of all the SAARC countries India and Sri Lanka stands out for their extensive rural road connectivity, both exceeding 99%, indicating a strong rural infrastructure network. This can be seen as a reflection of sustained public investment, rural development schemes, and well-established administrative frameworks. Of all the countries under consideration Afghanistan due to prolonged conflict, weak governance, and lack of infrastructure investment.

Bhutan and Maldives exhibit has impressive digital connectivity with internet connections and us reaching a mark of 86.8 and 83.9 percent respectively. This growth can be attributed to their small populations, focused digital policies, and strong investments in ICT infrastructure. On contrary to this Afghanistan with 17.6 percent

internet connection and use can be attributed to poor infrastructure, instability, and low digital literacy.

The data reveals that most SAARC countries such as India, Bangladesh, Nepal Pakistan and Sri Lanka have moderately fair internet connection and use. This can be attributed to issues such as rural-urban divides and affordability. There can also be economic constraints, infrastructure bottlenecks, and digital inclusion challenges.

But the subscriptions of Mobile broadband in Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Nepal is impressive at 98.0%, 94.9% and 89.1% respectively. Amongst the SAARC countries India has been leading the region in research and development expenditure at 0.6% of GDP, followed by Nepal at 0.3% owing to India's larger scientific base, industrial sector, and government initiatives like the National Innovation Mission. However, in terms benchmarked global standards of these figures are still relatively low, indicating the need for greater commitment to innovation-led growth.

D. Progress of SAARC Nations in SDG 1 & 10- No Poverty and Reduced Inequalities

Addressing the no poverty and reduced inequalities create an awareness to frame a sound policy at the national, regional and international levels, based on the pro-poor actions the poverty rate has been declining since 1990s. The recent data shows that more than 70 crore or 10 per cent and one in every 10 persons of the world population living in extreme poverty. The SDG goal 1 aim is ending the poverty at all level by 2030. Some portion of the population in the world has live in extreme poverty and they are denied or isolated from the decent work and life; people live in the vulnerable must be empowered.

Worldwide, the poverty rate in rural areas is above 17 per cent and it is more than three times of urban poverty rate. Unfortunately, according to the 2018 data, the working families' poverty is 8 per cent and every five in one child live in extreme poverty. This is indicating that the world is still to formulate better policy for remove the poverty and the world will live with the zero poverty. Inequality remains a primary challenge in present world and adverse effect on development, post COVID – 19 periods the gap between economic indicators shows a large-scale disparity in socio economic development and opportunities and it is full back the fostering of SDGs.

Table 8: No Poverty and Reduced Inequalities

Countries	No Poverty (HCR at \$2.15 per day)	GINI Coefficient	Palma Ratio
Afghanistan	65.2	NA	NA
Bangladesh	4.4	31.8	1.3
Bhutan.	1.2	25.5	1.0
India	1.2	34.2	3.1
Maldives	0.4	29.3	1.1
Nepal	3.2	32.8	1.3
Pakistan	3.8	29.6	1.1

Sri Lanka	3.1	37.7	1.7
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Source: Sustainable Development Report 2024.

Note: NA = not available

The SDGs 1 and 10, covers poverty reduction and inequality and yet again Afghanistan remains the most economically vulnerable nation, with 65.2% of its population living below the international poverty line of \$2.15 per day. Afghanistan’s prevailing poverty and the paucity of inequality data reflect its protracted conflict, political instability, and sanctions-driven economic isolation. This has led to shrunk formal employment, leaving most households dependent on low-productivity subsistence farming or humanitarian hand-outs and compressing the national distribution at the bottom.

Contrary to this, Maldives and Bhutan have the lowest poverty rates at 0.4% and 1.2%, respectively, along with relatively low inequality indicators such as the GINI coefficient and Palma ratio. This might be attributed to Maldives and Bhutan low populations with distinctive growth models uplifting its populations from the threshold of extreme-poverty while keeping income gaps moderate. For Maldives in particular its tourism-led economy generates high per-capita earnings while its geography concentrates opportunity in a few atolls, limits its rural-urban divides. India, on the other hand has a low poverty rate of 1.2%, but is characterised by a high Palma ratio of 3.1, which signifies a substantial income inequality. India’s paradox stems from decades of rapid, urban-centric growth that has not only lifted the rural poor above subsistence but has also funneled disproportionate income gains to the richest 10 per cent.

Besides Sri Lanka, too, has shown signs of economic disparity with a high GINI coefficient of 37.7 and a Palma ratio of 1.7. However, the poverty rate for Siri Lanka is moderate at 3.1%. This can be attributed to factors such as strong health and education that has helped keep extreme-poverty modest. However, the recent debt crisis, public-sector layoffs, and urban-rural wage differentials have stretched the income distribution, pushing the GINI and the Palma ratio to not so moderate areas.

Further, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan also exhibited relatively balanced figures, with modest poverty levels and manageable inequality. Their moderate poverty rates indicate that earnings in garments for Bangladesh, overseas labour markets for Nepal and Pakistan, and smallholder agriculture still cluster just above the extreme-poverty line.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the SAARC nations have potentiality and made a significant progress in many indicators of SDGs. However, only a significant improvement in SDGs indicators for all the members of countries can ensure a win-win situation for all and became super power of Asia. This will ensure equal opportunities to economic progress and move to an emerging economic category. The SAARC nations should

give priorities and special attention to the less performance indicators and concentrate on regional and sub-regional developments; this will facilitate and effective tool for reaching policy at the national level.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Copying, Collecting, Naming: Women's Writing and Colonial Knowledge in Assam's Frontiers, 1916–1953

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This article examines four books by three European women who wrote about Assam and its frontier regions between 1916 and 1953: Jessie T. Moore's *Stray Leaves from Assam* (1916), Jean Kingdon-Ward's *My Hill So Strong* (1952), and Ursula Graham Bower's *Naga Path* (1950) and *The Hidden Land* (1953). It places these works alongside selected writings by T. T. Cooper, F. M. Bailey, Frank Kingdon-Ward and Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf in order to examine how colonial knowledge was assembled, transmitted and recorded. Rather than treating gender as a self-evident determinant of textual perspective, the article distinguishes two recurrent registers: a transmitted documentary register, consisting of reports, statements, returns, correspondence and other materials reproduced from institutional sources, and a situated relational register, through which writers recorded the labour, translation, payment, negotiation and interpersonal relationships that made movement and knowledge production possible. The distinction is most visible in the paratexts and documentary insertions of the women's books. Moore's mission volume incorporates conference statements, statistical returns and resolutions while also recording the staff, linguistic work and domestic circumstances of a station. Kingdon-Ward's account of the 1950 earthquake preserves an expeditionary staff structure, payment arrangements and the labour behind botanical collection alongside official reports. Bower's *The Hidden Land* places an account of administrative methods and personnel beside an extended narrative of interpreters, traders, slaves and local intermediaries. Comparison with male-authored commercial and learned-society publications, including two authors who wrote in both venues, suggests that genre, institutional audience and publishing venue strongly shaped the visibility of local intermediaries and of documentary authority. The article argues that these women's writings are valuable not because they offer an alternative or inherently less colonial perspective, but because their particular institutional and practical positions preserved evidence of the relational

and material labour through which colonial knowledge was produced. Read as composite textual archives rather than homogeneous narratives, these books disclose people and transactions that official records frequently rendered peripheral.

I. INTRODUCTION: HOW COLONIAL KNOWLEDGE WAS MADE

Colonial knowledge of, in and about the northeastern frontier of British India is unusually rich and dense in official reports; but comparatively poor in accounts of the practical labour that made those reports possible. Who translated? Who carried the loads? Who negotiated access to a valley? Who was paid, how much, and on whose security? Who supplied the information that a monograph later presented as a finding? These questions tend to disappear the very moment moment field experience is transcribed into administrative or scientific prose. The disappearance is so absolute that the erasure is rarely noticed.

They are recoverable. But not from the sources historians of the region conventionally use. They are recoverable from works that stay lower in the pecking order of historical sources.

Consider one example. *The Hidden Land* was published in London in 1953 by a commercial publishing house and marketed as travel and adventure. Its author was Ursula Graham Bower, at that point the wife of a Political Officer, writing about her two years in the Subansiri region, a stretch of upland north of the Brahmaputra river. Libraries have shelved the book as travel writing. Tucked into its preface is a passage of methodological analysis with no counterpart in the anthropological literature it describes.

Its subject is Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, an Austrian-born anthropologist assigned by the Government of Assam as Special Officer for the Subansiri. In due course of his tenure, he had entered the Apa Tani valley, a densely settled upland basin known in the plains largely by hearsay. Bower is particularly concerned about his mobility. She first sets out the previously existing method he abandoned: a heavy escort, a slow baggage train, and a route chosen along empty river valleys; on the assumption that the local inhabitants were dangerous. She then describes what he substituted, a small and barely armed party moving from village to village, paying for carriage in cloth and salt, halting at each stage to build relations. She is precise about the costs. The method was cheaper and more effective, but far more dangerous. It depended on personal tact and on reading what she calls “tribal psychology” correctly. It was “purely for exploration” and nothing else, and was susceptible to collapse the moment it came in collision with administration. But above all it required constant vigilance, so that neither the travellers nor the local villagers could turn the visit to their private advantage (Bower, 1953, pp. xiii–xiv).

Fürer-Haimendorf’s own publication on the region, issued six years earlier by the Assam Government Press, contains nothing of this kind. Its introduction describes the notes as factual reports rather than anthropological essays, aimed at solving administrative problems (Fürer-Haimendorf, 1947, Introduction). The text proceeds

by numbered heading through land, slavery and ritual. How the material was obtained is not examined there. It is examined in the front matter of a book marketed as adventure.

This paper takes that asymmetry as a problem in the history of knowledge rather than as an irony. It examines accounts written by three women, reading each not as a homogeneous narrative but as a composite object assembled from materials of different provenance. Across these accounts, two kinds of writing share the page. The first has been lifted in whole from elsewhere: papers, statements, summaries, judgements handed down by someone else. The second is built as the writer goes, among the people concerned. The paper compares this composition with male-authored writing on and about the same territories. By doing so, the paper argues that the difference between the registers is produced by institutional setting, genre and audience rather than by any distinctive female way of seeing. Gender enters the account at a different point, and a more interesting one. Gender is engaged through the division of labour and access that placed these three women unusually close to the interpersonal infrastructure of colonial knowledge, and therefore required their books to describe it.

The three women stood in quite different relations to the frontier, and it is worth setting out those relations before the books are read. Jessie T. Moore sailed for India in October 1879, three months after marrying P. H. Moore, who had been appointed to Nowgong, now Nagaon, under the American Baptist Missionary Union and who served for many years as treasurer of the Assam Mission (Moore, 1916, pp. 117–118). *Stray Leaves from Assam* (1916) is the last of four volumes of her station journal, and by her own account it completes thirty-six years and more of work in the province (Moore, 1916, Preface). Ursula Graham Bower crossed into the Naga Hills in 1937 as a visitor of twenty-three (Bower, 1950, p. 3), returned the following year with a list of photographic subjects supplied by J. H. Hutton at Cambridge and by the Pitt-Rivers Museum at Oxford, and obtained permission to work alone in the hills with no institution backing her and no training (pp. 14–15). She spent the better part of seven years among the Zemi Naga, joined the guerrilla organisation V Force when the war came up through Burma, married Lieutenant-Colonel Betts of the same organisation, and went with him into the Subansiri when he was gazetted its first Political Officer (Bower, 1953, pp. 4–5). *Naga Path* (1950) records the first of those phases and *The Hidden Land* (1953) the last. Jean Kingdon-Ward, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, left for the Lohit valley in January 1950 with her husband Frank Kingdon-Ward on a plant-hunting expedition whose funds fell short of its costs, returning ten months later with the diary she had kept throughout (J. Kingdon-Ward, 1952, p. 13). *My Hill So Strong* (1952) is built from it. A missionary wife of long residence, a self-trained anthropologist who married into the Political Service, and a collector on a single expedition: the three held different institutional positions and wrote for different readers, which is precisely what makes the comparison informative.

Three limits should be stated at the very outset, since each corresponds to a claim this paper does not make. It does not argue that women possessed a distinct or more

accurate way of seeing colonial society. It does not treat relational writing as standing outside colonial power, since all three women were participants in missionary activities, scientific collection, administration or wartime intelligence; and sometimes in more than one. And it does not claim to recover any “indigenous” voices. What the sources used in this paper permit is the recovery of traces of participation, labour and negotiation; not direct access to the perspectives of the people represented.

The paper is also bounded in/by time. Its primary corpus runs from 1916 to 1953. Earlier writing by T. T. Cooper in the 1860s is used as comparative genealogy rather than as part of the corpus. The work of Barpujari, Guyot-Réchard and others is treated as historiographical reception, examined as a distinct problem.

A note on naming is necessary in an paper about classification. Where the historical texts are being described, their own terms are retained, since the categories are themselves objects of analysis. “Dafla” is the term used throughout Bower’s and Fürer-Haimendorf’s books for communities now generally known as Nyishi. Similarly, “Hill Miri”, “Apa Tani”, “Mishmi”, “Khamti” and “Naga” are colonial-era usages of varying precision. Place names follow the same rule, with present forms given at first mention: Nowgong is now Nagaon, Gauhati is Guwahati, and the Apa Tani valley is now commonly called the Ziro valley.

II. FROM WOMEN’S TRAVEL WRITING TO THE LABOUR OF KNOWLEDGE

Three bodies of scholarship frame this article, and a fourth supplies its regional ground.

The first concerns women’s travel writing. Mary Louise Pratt (1992, p. 7) supplied the contact zone, where the two sides of an imperial relation occupy one ground on radically unequal terms, and the seeing-man, the European observer whose looking amounts to claiming. Her reading of Maria Graham and Flora Tristan is more directly useful here, because she finds their narratives organised inward around a residence rather than driven outward by conquest, and sets that manner against the statistical and technical description that carried official authority (pp. 159–163). Sara Mills (1991, p. 12) explains how such books were cut down to size in their reception: reviewers called them autobiographical, which she reads as a refusal to treat women as makers of cultural artefacts, and then questioned the accuracy of what they had just classed as raw fact. Her more fundamental claim is that the difference in this writing arises from the conditions of its production and reception rather than from a distinct female way of seeing (pp. 5–6), and she warns against recruiting these writers as feminists ahead of their time, since selective reading can prove them proto-feminist or anti-feminist at will (p. 4). Indira Ghose (2000, pp. 1, 13, 15) carries the argument into colonial India, notes the shared root of gender and genre, and places her travellers awkwardly between two positions, held down by sex and raised up by race, producing knowledge that did the work of power.

The second concerns colonial knowledge, and it does more work in this article than any other. Bernard Cohn (1996, pp. 6–9) sets out the investigative modalities, the

routine procedures by which the colonial state settled what it wished to know, went out and found it, classified it and turned it into paperwork. Three are directly relevant. The survey modality covers any systematic official investigation of the empire's natural and social features, and Cohn lists the collecting of botanical specimens among its practices, which places a plant-hunting expedition inside the apparatus rather than beside it. The museological modality treats the country as a vast museum, a source of collectibles for European museums and botanical gardens, its people standing in for past ages. The enumerative modality turns populations into returns. A specimen sent to Kew, a photograph sent to the Pitt-Rivers Museum, a verdict of Late Neolithic and a table of baptisms belong to interconnected but distinct regimes of knowledge, with different institutions, protocols and audiences. What they share is that all four passed through the hands of the women examined here. Talal Asad (1973, p. 18) shows how anthropology's pose of detachment separated the anthropologist from traders, missionaries and officials while resting on a relation of force the discipline preferred not to discuss. Johannes Fabian (1983, pp. 32–33) names the operation by which living communities are placed in a time earlier than the observer's, calling the denial of coevalness the allochronism of anthropology.

The third concerns the archive and the paratext. Ann Laura Stoler (2009, pp. 2, 50) urges historians to take colonial paperwork first on its own terms, as a record of what officials believed and feared, and only afterwards to read it for what it conceals. Antoinette Burton (2003, pp. 5, 10, 25) asks that private and domestic writing be admitted as evidence rather than as colour, which is the permission this article uses. Gérard Genette (1997, pp. 1–3) supplies the formal vocabulary. In the taxonomy of transtextual relations that opens *Palimpsests*, architextuality is the set of general categories, types of discourse and genres from which a singular text emerges, and is assigned from outside rather than announced by the text itself; paratextuality covers the relation between a text and the materials attached to it, which Genette illustrates with chapter headings, drafts and abandoned conclusions, and which he elaborates at length in a separate study. Where this article refers to prefaces, notes, indexes and lists as paratext, it extends his category to the apparatus of the books examined here. The distinction matters because the paratext is where provenance becomes visible, and because a reader guided by the architext, in this case adventure, will not look there.

The fourth is the regional historiography. Sanghamitra Misra (2011, p. 1) traces the slow conversion of an interconnected region into a borderland, while its economy remained bound to events in the hills (Saikia, 2011, p. 167). Jayeeta Sharma (2011, pp. 122–123) describes the Non-Regulation system, instituted in 1822 for newly annexed territories, under which Assam was governed by officers exempt from the general regulations and in practice ruled by military men serving as civil officials, largely unfettered by the rule of law. Ray (2023, p. 20) argues that the flatness and crudity of colonial descriptions of hill communities was not a failure of understanding but served ideological and political ends.

These literatures have examined what colonial texts said. This article examines the traces such texts preserve of how the knowledge recorded in them was produced. The gap is not that women's writing has been ignored, since Pratt, Mills and Ghose have addressed it at length, nor that colonial knowledge has been under-theorised. It is that the internal textual composition of frontier books, the mixture of reproduced documents and situated observation within a single volume, has not been systematically compared across genres and venues in order to recover the practical labour underlying knowledge production.

III. READING THE BOOKS AS COMPOSITE ARCHIVES

Since the argument turns on a distinction between two kinds of material, both need definition, and the procedure for identifying them needs to be stated.

The transmitted documentary register refers to material incorporated into a narrative from an already constituted documentary source: reports, resolutions, returns, correspondence, official statements, telegrams and administrative histories. Such material enters the book finished. Its authority belongs to the institution that produced it, and the incorporating writer can reproduce it but cannot revise it.

The situated relational register refers to knowledge generated through sustained interaction with persons encountered in the course of missionary, domestic, expeditionary, administrative or ethnographic work, and is identified here wherever a text records names, wages, translation, bargaining, recruitment, refusal, labour arrangements or negotiation.

Three kinds of textual evidence are examined for each book. The first is paratext: prefaces, introductions, footnotes, indexes, lists, *dramatis personae* and appended documents. The second is documentary reproduction: government reports, correspondence, conference resolutions, official returns, diaries and administrative statements incorporated whole. The third is relational and transactional information: interpreters, porters, guides, cooks, scouts, wages, payments, translation, bargaining, recruitment and the recorded interests of intermediaries.

The male corpus is selected on two principles. Cooper and Frank Kingdon-Ward are included because each published on closely related material in both commercial and learned-society venues, which allows genre to be compared while holding the author constant. Bailey is included because he was honoured by the Royal Geographical Society and had served with an official survey expedition, yet published this journey commercially, which tests whether affiliation to a learned society rather than publishing venue accounts for the difference. Fürer-Haimendorf is included because his monograph covers the same country and the same personnel as Bower's book, within a few years of it.

One caution about method should be entered here. Counting quotation marks is not a reliable index of transmission, since they may mark reported speech, translation, technical usage, unfamiliar terminology, irony or citation. The relevant unit is the document reproduced whole, identified by provenance rather than by punctuation.

On that measure, none of the male texts examined here reproduces the kinds of documentary material that structure the women's volumes, while all four women's books do so repeatedly.

The composite character of the books can be set out directly.

Author	Textual component	Provenance	Function	Register
Moore	Conference statement on schoolhouse (p. 34)	Mission conference	Institutional authority	Transmitted
Moore	Provincial church returns (p. 82)	Mission and government	Enumeration	Transmitted
Moore	Resolutions and eulogies (p. 86)	Other hands	Commemoration	Transmitted
Moore	Letter on Darjeeling sunrise (pp. 17–18)	Miss Long	Description	Transmitted
Moore	Staff tenures and schooling limits (pp. 6, 15, 97)	Station experience	Labour and access	Situated
J. Kingdon-Ward	Assam Rifles patrol report (pp. 199–200)	Military	Official record	Transmitted
J. Kingdon-Ward	Footnote to Nature (pp. 170–171)	Scientific press	Corroboration	Transmitted
J. Kingdon-Ward	Mainprice tour diary (p. 48)	Manuscript, official	Verification	Transmitted
J. Kingdon-Ward	Staff list, wages, hiring (pp. 14–15, 59, 216)	Expedition	Labour and logistics	Situated
Bower	Administrative history of frontier (pp. xii–xiv)	Government	Territorial authority	Transmitted
Bower	Verdict of “virtually Late Neolithic” (p. xv)	Anthropology	Classification	Transmitted
Bower	Interpreter list with clan and village (p. xix)	Field experience	Mediation	Situated
Bower	Buda's trading and landholding (p. 114)	Field experience	Economic life	Situated

What the table shows is not a division between official and personal books. It shows movement between registers inside single volumes. Moore's supposedly personal journal carries government-funded budgets; Bower's commercial adventure narrative opens with an administrative history; Jean Kingdon-Ward's travel book prints a military report. The object of analysis is therefore not a binary between two kinds of writing but the traffic between them within one text, and what that traffic leaves visible.

IV. GENRE AS A CONTROL: COOPER AND KINGDON-WARD

If the difference between registers were a property of the observer, it should hold when the writer is held constant. It does not.

T. T. Cooper worked for a merchant house and spent the 1860s searching for a trade route from Assam into Tibet and China. The book he sold commercially, *The Mishmee Hills*, names Chowsam, his Khamti guide, 170 times, and records that the order of march of the party “had been arranged by Chowsam, and was never afterwards varied” (Cooper, 1873, ch. 13). His letter to the Royal Geographical Society, covering the same journey, names no local person at all. An interpreter appears once, as something to be acquired, when he complains of losing more than twenty days while he got hold of “mules, ponies, and an interpreter” (Cooper, 1868, p. 339).

Frank Kingdon-Ward did the same across fifty years. His trade books name his headman Tashi seventy-two times in *Assam Adventure* and a man called Yarter twelve times in *Plant Hunter in Manipur*, the volume in which he also describes the making of an earlier book: “I wrote the chapters, then Jean typed them, gave good advice, and corrected my spelling mistakes” (F. Kingdon-Ward, 1941; 1952, p. 17). His paper on the 1950 earthquake for the *Geographical Journal* gives the sediment carried by the Brahmaputra at Dibrugarh, stunned fish, dogs going silent and three porters buried by falling rock, and across fourteen pages names no local individual (F. Kingdon-Ward, 1953, pp. 175, 176, 178). His Royal Central Asian Society paper on the Assam Himalaya does the same (F. Kingdon-Ward, 1939).

Nor is it a matter of amateurs against the learned societies. F. M. Bailey had served on the Younghusband expedition of 1903 and as interpreter to a Survey of India party in 1904, and his title page announces him as a Gold Medallist of both the Royal Geographical Society and the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. Published with a trade house, his account of the 1911 journey from Tibet to Assam names his Tibetan servant Putamdu twenty times, and gives a sustained passage to Kintup, who accompanied two of the Survey’s pundit-explorers into Tibet in the 1870s as their servant and afterwards carried out the log-floating scheme himself (Bailey, 1945).

Counting requires definition. Named here means a personal name attached to an individual, not a title, an ethnonym or an occupational designation, so “the interpreter” and “a Mishmi” do not count while “Chowsam” and “Putamdu” do. Local means a person of the region, or of the wider subcontinent working within it, which includes Tibetan trade agents and men employed by the Assam Rifles, since the relevant contrast is between European authorship and the personnel on which it relied. Frequency is counted because it registers textual visibility: a man mentioned once is an incident, and a man mentioned seventy-two times is part of the book’s structure.

Text	Genre and venue	Local individuals named	Documents reproduced
Cooper, <i>The Mishmee Hills</i> (1873)	Commercial book	Chowsam, 170 times	None

Cooper, PRGS letter (1868)	Learned society	None	None
F. Kingdon-Ward, Assam Adventure (1941)	Commercial book	Tashi, 72 times	None
F. Kingdon-Ward, Plant Hunter in Manipur (1952)	Commercial book	Yarter, 12 times	None
F. Kingdon-Ward, Geographical Journal (1953)	Learned society	None	None
F. Kingdon-Ward, JRCAS paper (1939)	Learned society	None	None
Bailey, China, Tibet, Assam (1945)	Commercial book	Putamdu 20, Kintup 21	None
Fürer-Haimendorf, Ethnographic Notes (1947)	Official monograph	Kop Temi, Nendin Tagum	None
J. Kingdon-Ward, My Hill So Strong (1952)	Commercial book	Phag Tsering, Akkey, Samdup, Nima Tsering	Several
Bower, The Hidden Land (1953)	Commercial book	Seven interpreters, Buda, Kago Tajo	Several
Moore, Stray Leaves from Assam (1916)	Mission volume	Lucas Borua, Neyai Pandit	Many

Two conclusions follow. One conspicuous variable is the publishing venue, and it operates on men and women alike. But venue is not the only variable, since genre, audience, length, editorial convention and purpose move together with it, and the table cannot separate them. What the comparison does establish is that the distribution of visibility is not a property of the observer. The same man, on the same journey, made his guide structurally central in one book and invisible in the other.

V. JEAN KINGDON-WARD: BOTANICAL LABOUR AND THE EXPEDITIONARY ARCHIVE

In the summer of 1950 the Kingdon-Wards were camped near Rima, on the Lohit close to the Tibetan border, when an earthquake later measured at magnitude 8.6 struck the region. The figure comes from modern reconstruction (Guyot-Réchard, 2015, p. 2) and appears nowhere in either of the contemporary accounts examined here. My Hill So Strong is Jean Kingdon-Ward's narrative of the expedition and the disaster, and it is the fullest surviving record of how a plant-collecting expedition of this period actually worked.

Her technical writing is exact. At Denning she notes mould creeping over the earlier specimens because the air was too wet for them to dry, and at a later camp she works quickly to press a camellia, *Camellia drupifera*, recording that the Tocklai Tea Research Station at Jorhat, the laboratory serving the Assam tea industry, wanted every camellia whether tea or not, and that these were the only camellia specimens found above Denning in the Lohit (J. Kingdon-Ward, 1952, pp. 30–31, 46). Condition,

provenance, institutional destination and distribution are all present, and the passage quietly links a Himalayan camp to the research arm of the industry that had remade the plains below. This is the survey modality being carried out by hand.

The same manner of writing preserves what no other source does, a working staff list. Phag Tsering cooked and collected plants efficiently and spoke Hindustani, Tibetan, Bhutanese, Nepali and Sikkimese. Akkey, thirty-seven years old, spoke all of those with some English and German, and did the translating (pp. 14–15). Forty porters were engaged through Samdup, the Tibetan Trade Agent, because the Mishmi of the Lohit valley were already carrying rations for the Assam Rifles outposts and would not be free until mid-month; the Tibetans hired in their place were, she notes, a good deal more expensive to employ. The porters had their own headman, Nima Tsering, and the party that came to be paid was thirty-four Tibetan men and six women. A Jemadar, a junior Indian officer of the Rifles, stood by at the pay-out as what she calls an unbiased witness that their side of the contract had been fulfilled. Each porter received Rs. 44 (pp. 15, 59, 216).

Two details there deserve emphasis, because they show intermediaries acting on their own interests rather than merely being available. The Mishmi could not be hired because they had already contracted with a better-resourced employer. The porters arrived with their own headman and required a witness to the settlement, which is to say that the terms of their employment were negotiated and that they took steps to secure them. Elsewhere the same men buy brown gym-shoes in Sadiya, develop foot sores from wearing them and walk barefoot to save the shoes for later (p. 44). None of this makes them free agents. It does make them participants whose cooperation had to be secured, negotiated and maintained rather than presumed.

The chain of labour behind a scientific result can be followed almost to its end. The find of the season was a *Cornus chinensis*. Phag Tsering had located the tree in April, on the south side of the La Ti torrent above a run of landslips. When Frank went up in August and failed to relocate it, Phag Tsering volunteered to take a local man and return, coming back after ten hours with his pockets full of the fruit. Kingdon-Ward calls it the find of the expedition. It entered the botanical record as K.W. 19300, a number formed from her husband's initials (pp. 174–175). The sequence runs from local ecological knowledge to a collector, through an expedition, into a specimen number, and thence to a botanical institution, a scientific publication and eventually a horticultural market. The labour disappears at the third step, when the specimen acquires its number, and it is recoverable only because Jean Kingdon-Ward's index enters Phag Tsering as a plant collector with eleven page references.

Her book also performs two operations that its genre did not require. Frank told her that no other European woman had been so far up the Lohit valley. She wrote that she thought he must be mistaken, doubting that no Political Officer's or Assistant Political Officer's wife had ever taken the opportunity her husband's tours afforded, and then produced a source against him: in the tour diaries of an officer named F. P. Mainprice she had found "an elderly lady" who twice went several marches up the neighbouring

Delei valley to collect insects for the Natural History Museum (J. Kingdon-Ward, 1952, p. 48). The diary supplies no occupation for that woman and no city for the museum, and neither should be invented; what the passage shows is a writer checking a claim against a manuscript and printing the reference. Second, sleepless through weeks of aftershocks, she wrote that she had become more sensitive to the tremors than any seismograph, a remark placed among ground fissures three or four feet deep, a monastery leaning forty degrees to the east, and a clinical thermometer broken when the mercury rose above 110 degrees (pp. 169, 170, 177). Ghose (2000, p. 96) argues of the women's Mutiny narratives that, unlike the disembodied traveller of most travel writing, the body of the narrator underpins the account, so that suffering reinforces its authenticity. The Lohit material extends the comparison rather than fitting it. That is not the operation here. Her exhaustion is entered as a reading beside other readings, with its range stated.

What this book preserves, then, is not simply what the expedition saw. It is how the expedition functioned.

VI. URSULA GRAHAM BOWER: INTERMEDIARIES AND ADMINISTRATIVE KNOWLEDGE

Bower's position was not that of an observer standing outside colonial power, and the argument depends on saying so plainly. She entered anthropology deliberately and from outside the universities, writing from London to J. H. Hutton at Cambridge, formerly an officer in the Naga Hills, and to the Pitt-Rivers Museum at Oxford, and establishing that a gap existed which she could fill: crafts such as brass-casting, weaving and pottery had been described by trained observers but never photographed. She then obtained the Political Agent's permission to go into the Manipur hills alone, which she calls "a revolutionary step" (Bower, 1950, pp. 14–16). Years among the Zemi Naga followed. During the Second World War, with Japanese forces on the Burma border, she built and commanded a network of village scouts and runners reporting strangers, downed aircraft and movement through a junction of tracks (pp. 193–194). She later married a Political Officer and moved with him to the Subansiri.

That sequence matters. Bower supplied photographs to a museum, produced military intelligence for a wartime administration, and lived inside the establishment of a frontier official. She was an agent in the production of colonial knowledge rather than a witness to it, and the value of her books lies in what that participation required her to describe.

The Hidden Land opens with the region's administrative past, passes through the analysis of Fürer-Haimendorf's method quoted above, and closes its front matter with the staff. Kop Temi, an elderly educated Dafla from a plains village, is Head Interpreter; Bat Heli, much younger, is second; Nada Rika, Koj Karu, Tenyo Bida, Hage Tara and Kago Tajo follow, each with clan, village and standing (Bower, 1953, pp. xii–xiv, xix). Into the same pages the borrowed judgement that Apa Tani culture was "virtually Late Neolithic" passes unchanged (p. xv), which is Fabian's (1983, pp. 32–33) allochronism

in a single phrase, reproduced without comment by a writer who then spends two hundred pages describing people it does not fit.

Those pages record intermediaries with interests of their own. Kop Temi keeps a neat record of his cases in a pocket notebook (p. 7). Buda, a slave, went down to the plains to trade, buying cattle, Assamese silk, worn iron hoes and salt and carrying them back to sell at a margin; when his master Kago Tajo had to sell his best fields to pay for curative sacrifices, Buda had the cash to take them cheaply; wages from Bower's own household raised him further, until he owned land worth eight mithan, the cattle that served as the valley's currency, which she converts for the reader at £120. Tajo, entitled as an overlord to broker the sale, calculated his commission with evident pleasure (p. 114). Salt came from burning fern and sedge and washing the ash (p. 116). A classification scheme does not by itself explain the relationships and transactions through which such information became available, and this information required knowing the same men across years.

The book also carries what can only be called decision papers. The longest works through treaty obligation, illegality, the force available and the likely consequences before Bower pays Rs. 200, about fifteen pounds and the usual ceiling, to ransom a kidnapped Dafla boy (pp. 133–134). The passage is worth more than its narrative interest. An administrative category such as raiding records that an offence occurred. This narrative records the price of a person, the ceiling set on that price by custom or policy, the legal ambiguity of paying it, the calculation of whether force was available as an alternative, and the fact that a British official's wife exercised discretion in the matter. Almost none of that survives categorisation.

Fürer-Haimendorf's monograph handles the same country by another route, and the contrast is not between a sympathetic observer and a cold one. He was simultaneously anthropologist, fieldworker, colonial official and advocate of administrative reform, and the interest of his text lies in that combination. Apa Tani slavery arrives under numbered headings, from the standing of slaves through slaves acquired by inheritance, purchase and debt, with bride-price sums determining whose children belong to whom (Fürer-Haimendorf, 1947, pp. 28–29). One Nendin Tagum paid twenty mithan for land, nine of which had reached him as ransom for captured Daflas, entered as one form of money among others (p. 12). The work is careful and detailed. It is also an official document, and Asad's (1973, p. 18) objection to anthropology's claimed neutrality bites hardest on a monograph whose fieldworker was the administrator. He was not unusual in this. Ray (2023, p. 129) shows P. R. T. Gurdon thanking missionaries and other colonial figures for their information about the Khasis, thanking no local person, and saying nothing of a century of missionary activity in the hills he described.

What the monograph does contain is relational knowledge in transformed state. Fürer-Haimendorf states that when he first entered the Apa Tani country the dealings between a community of twenty thousand and the Government of India rested almost entirely on one Dafla interpreter, Kop Temi, the only man with both Assamese

and Apa Tani (p. 60). He then recommends turning that improvisation into a system: interpreters placed on the Government payroll, village spokesmen given red mantles to mark them out, porter headmen granted formal status and retainers, since interpreters, red-cloth holders and gang foremen will be the “three pillars” of Government influence (p. 55). The point is not that the monograph omits intermediaries. It is that it converts them into an establishment.

A similar arrangement was already in use with Bower, in a different setting and some years earlier. During the war her Zemi scouts came back complaining that they had no standing without red cloths, “the outward and visible sign of official status”; the civil supply having been cut off, she asked headquarters for red blankets from a woollen mill (Bower, 1950, pp. 193–194). Nothing here proves that he learned it from her, and the claim should not be made. Red cloth as a badge of official standing was common administrative currency in these hills, and the two cases lie in different provinces and different years. What the pairing shows is where such knowledge was generated and what happens to it in transit. In her book it arrives as a complaint from the men doing the work; in his it arrives as a recommendation, with the complaint removed.

VII. JESSIE T. MOORE: THE MISSION STATION AS DOCUMENTARY ARCHIVE

Nothing extraordinary happens in Moore’s book, and that is what makes it valuable. Nobody is rescued. No mountain is crossed. A school opens, a grant is banked, a girl dies, a headmaster completes his twenty-second year.

The volume is not simply a journal, and the distinction matters. *Stray Leaves from Assam* is a journal-derived compilation, assembled from dated entries and from documents supplied by other hands, and published by Moore herself as the fourth instalment of a series (Moore, 1916, Preface). Its institutional setting is documented. In 1846, Sharma records, the American Baptists resolved to bring out an Assamese periodical, the *Orunodoi*, under a masthead promising “Religion, Science, and General Knowledge”, and opened branches at Guwahati, Jorhat and Nagaon (Sharma, 2011, p. 135). Seeking educated converts and finding few, the mission had by the 1870s swung its effort toward the hills and toward supplying rudimentary medicine and schooling where the state provided none, with particular success among the Garos (pp. 144–145). Moore’s station belonged to the earlier valley project in its later, school-centred phase.

The form is that of a ledger. Entries carry dates, sit one after another without hierarchy, and price things twice over. A car from Gauhati to Shillong, sixty-three miles, came to eighteen rupees, six dollars; the government put up fifteen thousand rupees, five thousand dollars, towards a schoolhouse (Moore, 1916, pp. 13–14). The double currency suggests a volume written for an audience beyond the station while retaining the accounting habits of station life. Against that spine the transmitted material stands out: a mission conference statement about the new schoolhouse, with Public Works Department drawings, a government grant of Rs. 15,000, a matching \$2,500 from the Woman’s Baptist Foreign Mission Society and 170 pupils of whom 150 were

girls (p. 34); provincial totals for churches, members and baptisms (p. 82); and a closing quarter of resolutions and eulogies by other people (p. 86).

The evenness of the prose is a formal fact rather than a lapse. A colleague leaving for a holiday in the hills, a small girl dead of acute diarrhoea in the school dormitory, and a warning about the drinking water arrive in a single entry, in consecutive sentences and at one pitch (p. 16); Woodrow Wilson's election and Moore's own fifty-fifth birthday sit five days apart in the same shape of sentence (p. 23). Nothing outranks anything else. Ledgers do not rank, they list, in the order things happened, which is Cohn's enumerative modality caught one stage before it becomes a return. The single moment when the book reaches for beauty confirms the point, because the prose is not hers: Moore prints a letter from Miss Long, watching sunrise on the snows above Darjeeling, and lets her supply the roseate light and the gold-tipped peaks (pp. 17–18).

Her own writing supplies what the totals cannot. She records 987 girls at Christian schools across Assam, 520 of them Garo (p. 6), a distribution matching the mission's documented move from plains to hills. She is equally exact about limits. Hindu and Muslim girls received two or three years, and at twelve were married or withdrawn into the zenana, so that only Christian families' daughters continued (pp. 14–15). At one prize day, open to women and girls alone, Hindu and Muslim mothers came in curtained bullock carts and kept purdah (p. 7). Her gender and her position within the mission community gave her access to domestic and women's spaces that male officials did not routinely possess, and the record of that afternoon is a consequence of it.

The station's staff appear by post and length of service. Lucas Borua was a small boy in Nowgong when Moore's husband arrived thirty-six years earlier, and had long since become his right hand in building, pundit work and evangelism; Neyai Pandit had served as headmaster of the mission school for twenty-two years or more (p. 97). So does the linguistic labour that mission life involved: revised Assamese copy for the third part of a primer, *Line Upon Line*, reaches her from Henry Goldsmith to be forwarded to Calcutta for printing, with the proofreading left to her (p. 17).

Set that beside the mission's own historian. Barpujari (1986, pp. xxxvii–xxxviii) credits the American Baptists with the *Orunodoi* of January 1846, the first Assamese periodical, along with translations, tracts and hymns. In his account Brown's *Grammatical Notices* and Bronson's *Assamese-English Dictionary* put the language on solid ground, while Mrs H. B. L. Cutter's *Vocabulary and Phrases* of 1841, revised and reissued in 1864 by Mrs S. R. Ward, occupies a subordinate clause between them. The labour is in the sentence. The credit is not, and the mechanism is visible: the men's works are named as foundational acts, while the women's are described as revisions of existing material, so that the same activity is recorded under a category that does not confer authorship.

One further feature of the compilation bears on how the book should be used, since its evidentiary status varies from page to page. Moore was in the United States when

her husband Pitt Moore died at Calcutta on 3 March 1916, and heard by cable (pp. 83–84). The much-quoted detail of his last journey, a night in an ox-cart and twenty-seven hours by rail, therefore comes from another person's account bound into the volume rather than from anything she witnessed (p. 101). Read the book as a life and the difference vanishes. Read it as a file and it does not. A published volume of this kind is not a homogeneous authorial text, and the question of who authored a composite book is a real one, since Moore is by turns author, editor, compiler, transcriber and publisher.

VIII. THE AFTERLIFE OF THE RELATIONAL REGISTER

What later readers extracted from these books is a separate problem, and a documented one. Two moments of reading are involved, the contemporary and the scholarly, and the second is much the better evidenced, which is a limit on the available evidence rather than a conclusion about the period.

Moore's case shows attribution becoming unstable across bibliographic systems, and the instability begins inside the book. The title page of *Stray Leaves from Assam* reads "Mrs. P. H. Moore", and the imprint states that the volume was edited and published by her under that name. Three pages later the preface is signed Jessie T. Moore (Moore, 1916, Preface). Four distinct processes are involved and should be kept apart: title-page naming, publication responsibility, authorial self-identification, and later scholarly citation. Barpujari, quoting two volumes as evidence, copies the title page faithfully as "Mrs. P. H. Moore" (1986, pp. 175, 178). Guyot-Réchard (2015, p. 3, n. 5), reconstructing the earthquake of 12 June 1897, cites the first instalment beside the Government of Assam's report and two volumes of the *Assam District Gazetteer*, and the name given is "P. H. Moore". Whether the 1901 title page carried the courtesy title cannot be settled here, since that volume has not been consulted, and the reconstruction is therefore documented but incomplete. What can be said is that a woman whose own name appears once, at the foot of her preface, entered the catalogues under her husband's initials, and that the last marker of sex was subsequently dropped by a modern historian citing her as a primary source alongside government reports. The gazetteers in that same note were printed at the Baptist Mission Press in Calcutta, which indicates how far the official record depended on mission infrastructure.

Bower's material travelled in two directions at once. The photographs she had been asked for supplied museums with images of craft processes they lacked (Bower, 1950, pp. 14–16), and the scout network became a working arm of the wartime administration (pp. 193–194). Her preface preserved an analysis of Fürer-Haimendorf's method that his own publication did not contain, so that the fullest account of how the Subansiri was first entered survives in a trade book. His monograph, meanwhile, proposed for the region a system of paid interpreters, red-cloth holders and porter headmen resembling the arrangement she had already been operating.

Knowledge of this kind evidently circulated among people working the same ground. Citation did not follow it.

Jean Kingdon-Ward's case is the most precisely documented and the least acknowledged. The provenance of the season's principal find is recoverable from her book and nowhere else, and only her index identifies the man who spent ten hours on broken ground to fetch it. Naming caught her too, in the opposite direction. J. R. Sealy named the Manipur lily *Lilium mackliniae* in her honour, using the name she carried before marriage, and the honour was earned: she had done much to bring the plant into cultivation, and the scheme for shipping mature bulbs home and popularising them was hers (F. Kingdon-Ward, 1952, p. 122). The recognition was real, and it was also the only kind available. Phag Tsering ends inside another man's collection number and she ends inside another man's binomial, and neither performs any naming.

That sequence suggests a distinction worth stating generally, between who produced knowledge, who documented it and who was credited with it. Phag Tsering performed the collecting labour; Jean Kingdon-Ward documented it; Frank Kingdon-Ward received the specimen number and the scientific credit. The same three-stage sequence runs through the Subansiri material, where an interpreter mediated the information, Bower recorded the mediation, and an administrative text converted it into a proposed establishment.

Later readers have also got small things wrong about these books, and the pattern of error is consistent. No magnitude appears anywhere in Frank Kingdon-Ward's earthquake paper; the figure of 8.6 comes from Guyot-Réchard's reconstruction long afterwards (2015, p. 2). Bower's preface offers Fürer-Haimendorf a technical assessment of method rather than the warm tribute sometimes quoted from it. Errors of this kind accumulate around books that are cited from memory rather than opened.

IX. CONCLUSION: KNOWLEDGE, LABOUR AND THE ARCHIVE

Several conclusions follow, and they are narrower than the material sometimes tempts one to claim.

The difference between the two registers did not originate in gender. Cooper, Bailey and Frank Kingdon-Ward crossed it according to their publisher, Gurdon thanked his European informants and no others, and Fürer-Haimendorf's policy recommendation is written throughout in the situated register. No single variable accounts for the pattern: institutional location, intended audience, genre and the writer's practical responsibilities all bear on which kinds of knowledge become textually visible.

Gender matters, but at a specific point. It structured what work these women were assigned, which spaces they could enter, whom they could speak with and what forms of labour were expected of them. The positions available to them, missionary worker, expeditionary participant and collector, independent researcher, wartime organiser and, in Bower's later case, a Political Officer's wife, placed them close to the interpersonal infrastructure of colonial knowledge, and a book about that work cannot easily

omit its terms. Mills (1991, pp. 3, 5–6) locates the difference in production and reception rather than in temperament; this material specifies the difference in production as a difference in what the writer spent her days doing.

Three cautions belong in the conclusion rather than in a footnote. Naming does not recover Indigenous voice. Phag Tsering, Kop Temi, Buda and Chowsam can be counted, dated and placed, which is more than the learned-society papers permit, but what they knew and what they declined to say cannot be recovered here, because even the obliging register recorded them as staff. An employment record is not a testimony, though it is a place to begin. Relational knowledge is not more truthful than documentary knowledge; it can be coercive, selective, strategic and self-serving, and Bower's long acquaintance with the Zemi does not make her descriptions transparent. And official records are not empty of relational knowledge. Fürer-Haimendorf names Kop Temi and describes the interpreter system. The issue is not absence but transformation, since relational knowledge was regularly converted into administrative categories, recommendations and establishments, and the conversion is what removes the conditions of its production.

Nor is the useful object a binary between official and personal writing. Moore's journal-derived volume carries government budgets, Bower's adventure narrative opens with an administrative history, and Jean Kingdon-Ward's travel book prints a military report. What repays attention is the movement between registers inside a single volume, and what that movement leaves visible.

By working literature this article means writing that records the practical processes through which information, movement and institutional action were made possible: hiring, translation, transport, payment, correspondence, negotiation, domestic labour and intermediary work. Some of the most revealing surviving examples from this region came from these three women. Their books were classified as travel, adventure and mission memoir, and used, where used at all, for the least consequential material in them. The less frequently cited half of the evidence is the half that permits reconstruction of the infrastructure of knowledge production.

The final observation is the simplest. The specimen taken from above the Lohit landslide still stands in the record under the initials of a man who never walked up to it. The book that names the man who did has sat on the shelf since 1952, with the name in the index.

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BOOK REVIEW

Assam Was Not a Place: Review of Manjeet Baruah's *Hunter, Peasant, Rebel*

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THE BOOK

Manjeet Baruah, *Hunter, Peasant, Rebel: Colonialism and the British Assam Frontier*.
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One Sunday morning in the late 1930s a *gaon burra* [village headmen] came to a planter's bungalow in Lakhimpur. He had wounded a tiger and required the *sahib* to pick it up. He specifically wanted Mathaloo, a Naga man in the planter's service. Mathaloo had the reputation of never missing a shot. A.R. Ramsden, the planter, came to the verandah rail and said no. He had blackwater fever and could barely stand. But *shikar* was the sahib's prerogative. So Mathaloo packed the guns, drove the planter out, and was sent ahead. Ramsden fell asleep. Mathaloo took the rifle and the dog, tracked the animal through the forest that night, and shot it dead. Later, he drove the sick man home in his car (pp. 34–35). The skin went to Mathaloo. In Ramsden's 1945 memoir this is invoked as a generous master giving up a trophy that was rightfully his. Manjeet Baruah reads it as the night a planter stopped deciding what anything on his estate actually meant.

In 1839, almost a century before this incident, the Assam Company placed a memoir before its shareholders, rhetorically asking where Assam was. The answer that followed was that the province was at the far eastern fringe of the Queen's Indian territory, where a "spirit of enterprise" had recently germinated (p. 2). Charles Bruce, writing about Assam tea in the same year, put English consumption at 31,829,620 lbs annually. He worked out that meeting this requirement would take every hill and valley of Assam put to plantation (p. 2). They had asked the wrong question. Assam under the British was not just a territory. It was an arrangement of land, labour, hills, plains and people; held together so that colonial capital could keep reproducing itself.

The conceptual bulk of Baruah's *Hunter, Peasant, Rebel* comes from Althusser and Balibar. Capital arrives as the dominant mode of production. But it does not sideline the pre-existing peasant and kinship economies. It cannot, in fact. Capital leans on them, cuts them loose from the logic that ordered them, and keeps them impoverished. Because poverty makes accumulation cheaper. Amalendu Guha saw this, and called colonial Assam a plural economy of multiple structures (quoted at p. 7). Baruah's objection is that sitting side by side is not necessarily the same as being combined (p. 15). What looks like disorder on the frontier is the exact shape of its order.

Assam attracted one of the heaviest concentrations of British capital in India. By the 1900s, Assam was among the world's most extensive tea producing areas (pp. 12–13). Almost none of the tea revenue reached the treasury. Leases, taxes and royalties on capital were kept low. The state basically survived on land revenue and opium, both paid by the peasantry (p. 13). The cultivator paid for what the gardens needed, but also for roads and railways, courts and the revenue office, and for the police. Empire did not subsidise the gardens. The men clearing ground three miles away did. Baruah states it without embellishment, that "the burden of producing the British Assam frontier" felt disproportionately on the shoulder of peasants (p. 170).

Colonial reports repeatedly kept returning to the lack of agrarian improvement and blamed it squarely on the peasant's lack of capitalist spirit. The same reports admitted, albeit reluctantly, that revenue assessment, the pricing of land in money and the credit network had made agrarian improvement impossible. While naming the moneylender as the obstacle, they yet advised leaving him alone. Because a peasant without credit could pay no revenue at all (p. 169). One officer even remarked that a cultivator short of cash should walk, rather than indulge in travelling by the railway (p. 170). Making peasants and ruining them were not two stages. They were one policy, and the ruination was perhaps the point.

A CONFESSION, 2012

Baruah's previous work, *Frontier Cultures* came out in 2012. It opens by conceding a point. Baruah's thesis had asked how Assamese fiction between 1940 and 1980 handled identity. It found that the answer rests in how narratives were built, not in what they said (2012: ix). Then the doubt set in. If identity carried that weight, why had eighty years of it produced no common politics? Identity, he decided, cannot explain itself (2012: x). What he reached for instead was spatial. Assam as a pre-colonial crossroad once had a shared cartography of social and spatial relations. Colonialism wore it away, and once differences stood with nothing in between, they turned into contradiction (2012: xi, 169–70). The language carries over into 2025. But the machinery underneath has been torn out.

Lakhminath Bezbaroa appears in both books. The distance between the two depictions measures the change. In the 2012 work he is the outstanding, pathbreaking author of his generation, arguing in *Jonaki* for a standardised register Assamese; before modern thought could be articulated in it. In 2025 he is a timber dealer with

a rifle. His memoir read for what the shooting gives away about the class paying for it. The archive moves down and outward; from printed fiction to peasant songs and a rebel performing in villages. One man, two archives, two frameworks. The later volume does not contradict the earlier. It asks what had been paying for it.

Another 2017 essay by Baruah on Edward Gait's *A History of Assam* sits between them. And the method turns there. Baruah reads an imperial historiography for the seams where ideology comes apart from evidence. He then follows Gait into the hands of rival nationalists historians. A third reader arrives late. Bishnu Prasad Rabha used Gait's evidence against him, arguing that the core of Brahmaputra valley was Bodo-Kachari. And hence, he imagined a society made of class relations rather than one monolithic body (2017: 467).

Frontier Cultures names Rabha nearly a hundred and forty times, and ends hopefully on him (2012: xii). He returns in 2025 as the subject of the longest chapter. This time, the analysis takes the ground from underneath him.

THREE WINDOWS

The work is built around a triad of three categories: the eponymous hunter, the peasant and the rebel. David Harvey's reading of *Capital* provides the method here. The question becomes not what a text shows but what it is able to show (p. 9). Ramsden's *Assam Planter* came out in 1945. Nothing in it treats hunting as sport. Hunting is part of a way of ordering space. It is the apparatus that turns wild country into a managed [or manageable] industrial-era gardens (pp. 27, 30). But the memoir was written during 1930s and 1940s, a turbulent time. With protests, labour trouble and war around it, the planter's account reaches for a form from the previous century. A form that will not hold. No planters' genre existed in which Ramsden could say what was being done to him (p. 165). And the tiger skin comes back. Mathaloo said he would give it to his bride, as custom required. Ramsden's "magnanimity" was the only shape his lost authority could take, which is why Baruah reads it as a symptom, not a change of heart (p. 165).

Where Ramsden is gallant, Bezbaroa's *Mur Jivan Suaran* of 1944 turns to the comic path. One particular episode has him firing into a bloated fox carcass, certain that he has a python in his sights (p. 54). For a native bourgeoisie shut out of the ideology of *shikar*, hunting as a sport is what Baruah calls an accumulation of form. It is a cultural capital bought to shore up a class, albeit in a 'bumbling' form (p. 55). Bezbaroa presents his life as a passage from a monastic boyhood that forbade killing; to an adulthood that allowed it. Baruah finds this periodisation difficult, since Bezbaroa's father was in the colonial revenue service by the 1860s; and the family comprised of tea planters before the turn of the century. There was no childhood before capital and no adulthood inside it, only a "long capitalist moment" (p. 166). This turns mimicry into a question of rank within the dominant mode; rather than an affliction of the colonised mind (p. 167). Nationhood allowed Bezbaroa survive the crisis that destroys Ramsden.

While talking about form, three genres of historical ballads hold up the third component of the triad, the peasant. The first is *Barphukanar Geet* on the Burmese invasions. The second is *Moneeram Dewanar Geet* on the eponymous publicist-planter's execution in 1858. The third is *Doli Purana* on the killings of peasants at Patharughat in 1894. They follow the agrarian world closely, the boat trade, the village markets, the mustard and paddy, the revenue and the ruin it brought (pp. 82–86). *Doli Purana* names the peasantry's greatest fear exactly, that the countryside would be led to ruination so the tea estates could have access to destitute labour (pp. 71–72, 100). Then the firing starts against the congregating peasants in Patharughat. The ballad blames the killing on confusion on both sides, and the furthest it goes towards peasant agency is *mane guni saila, lahe lahe bhabi-sinti*, the peasants under fire having thought it over (p. 101). But nobody is ever named as the adversary.

Baruah argues this in terms of four inverse relations across the genre. The ballads mark a collapse without critiquing it, carry events as memory, describe them, and give the peasant something to do but with no past worth returning to. In each pair an attempt to represent is set against an inability to. And it never resolves (p. 94). That is not a defect in the genre. It is the genre.

Why the balladists stopped short is a question for literary history perhaps. The pre-colonial *Buranji* chronicles were equipped to deal with *paiks*, and the neo-Vaishnava writings with *bhakats*. Colonialism emptied both of them of content (p. 97). And, as a consequence, nothing written or sung in Assamese framed colonialism as a problem in ideological terms until the twentieth century (p. 172).

At this point, the transition to Bishnu Rabha feels almost inevitable. Saniram Kachari, Rabha's grandfather, rose from the ranks of sepoy to *jemadar* in the Gurkha Rifles. His son Gopal Chandra joined the Lakhimpur Armed Police Battalion, became aide-de-camp to the Governor of Bengal, and retired as a Rai Bahadur with a substantial property at Tezpur (pp. 118, 122). This is not old gentry easing into the colonial bourgeoisie. It is a peasant and tribal family carried into that class in two generations by the very soldiering that built the frontier. The grandson took a different path. He travelled between 1942 and 1944 collecting music among the Dimasas, Karbis and Nagas (p. 130). He gave away the land he held in Tezpur to peasants (p. 174). Later he joined the communists, which put him outside the law (p. 115). Relatives told him the people of Assam wanted him in the "cultural field". He asked who these people of Assam were, and whether they meant people like themselves (p. 132).

In hiding Rabha tore up whatever he wrote almost as he wrote it. Others who were with him took to 'recuing' his manuscripts, which is why the collection *Mukti Deul* exists (p. 151). Literature sold as a commodity was inaccessible to the poor, so he gave up the reader for the listener and told his stories aloud in the villages (p. 175). What he opened up was the gap between writing about peasants, a form Bezbaroa's *Bhadari* started in 1892, and a peasant writing meant to change things, not describe them (p. 176). But the chapter is no tribute. Rabha could imagine a peasant who crossed ethnic and tribal lines because he saw a shared domain underneath them,

held together by neo-Vaishnavism. But that domain was itself built by the nineteenth-century ideals (p. 178).

The revolutionary's universal was built out of the ideology he was running from. Baruah's account of why he believed it is arguably the most well-argued part in the book. The past survives only as a likeness, and inside that likeness a way of seeing finds whatever it needs to keep believing what it already believed (p. 178). Where the likenesses ran out the writing failed with them. As in the case of the story *Kuri Basar Jail*, set by Rabha among plantation workers with no folk material to draw on, whose protagonist cannot carry the weight put on him (p. 149).

AMONG THE HISTORIANS

Placing the book in the wider historiography starts with Ranajit Guha and the autonomy of insurgent consciousness, and Baruah's question is hard to shake off. If the peasant is a knowing subject who crafts his own culture, why does that culture keep reaching for forms that do not fit his condition (p. 15)? Dipesh Chakrabarty comes second. Baruah denies that Chakrabarty's "History 2" passes through capital untouched; and follows Chibber in arguing that a mode is changed by being kept subordinate (p. 6). Crisis is redefined to match. It is the point where the relations holding a form's contradictions together give way.

Planter-Raj to Swaraj by Amalendu Guha came out in 1977, and any work on political economy of colonial Assam is still measured against it. What Baruah owes is plain. Revenue and opium, the labour trouble of the 1940s, peasant politics from the 1860s on, all of it rests on Guha's archival endeavour. But the break is conceptual, and it is most explicit in the case of Maniram Dewan; a figure who appears in multiple registers: native planter, publicist, and anti-colonial resister. Guha noted that Dewan had started two small tea gardens, which were confiscated after he was hanged for treason in 1858. His politics, according to Guha, fell short of an ideology progressive even by the standards of his day, and yet folk-song has kept his anti-imperial image alive all the same, for his role in 1857 (1977: 21). Baruah moves the lack off the man onto the form, from what Dewan thought to what a nineteenth-century ballad could say.

Jayeeta Sharma is never taken on, and *Empire's Garden* does work quieter and heavier than Guha's. The turning of a pre-British gentry into a colonial bourgeoisie, on which the Bezbaroa chapter stand on, goes to her (p. 66n). Where Baruah parts from her he does it in a note, remarking that her account of gardens cut from jungle runs mainly through labour relations (p. 60n). Sharma reads the frontier through the bodies brought in to work it, Baruah through the structure that needed them. That note names the book's largest silence without being explicit about it.

Bodhisattva Kar states the same paradox from the other side. The tribal frontier of the northeast had the fewest garrisons, least mapping and thinnest administration. And yet it carried more capital than anywhere else in the British Indian empire (2016: 41).

He gets out of it through a culture of contracts tying communities, joint-stock companies and the frontier administration together. Baruah gets out through articulated modes. Both conclude that a light hand in government made the frontier profitable rather than limiting its profits. Gunnell Cederlöf has engaged with the same territory, however in an earlier phase, over the Company's trading decades from 1790 to 1840, and finds the fiscal subject of the *diwani* lands to be exactly what could not be made there (2014). Baruah's peasant is that subject a hundred years later, the beam that holds the plantation economy up.

THE SILENCES

The ballads survive only in versions nationalist scholars took down and printed. S.K. Bhuyan's *Barphukanar Geet* among them. Baruah admits in an appendix that the linear structure of the printed texts of the collections may be an arrangement collectors made out of pieces that once stood on their own (p. 196). The defence holds as far as it goes, because the same generic features turn up in ballads collected separately, by different men. But the difficulty is not hidden. Arupjyoti Saikia's study of Bhuyan has him building an archive while writing for two publics that wanted different things (2008). An argument resting on what these texts could not say ought to face their handling in the chapter, perhaps not the back matter.

Plantation labour gets no window of its own, and the book's own logic makes that absence structural. Workers appear as *coolies* inside other people's texts. The labour lines had forms of their own, the cultural repertoire above all, and none of it gets in. Since the argument turns on relations between forms, a missing form is where the framework goes untested. Gender is thinner again, with a tiger skin ending as a marriage gift and Rabha's plantation story turning on Phulmoni. In addition, Baruah counts ecology among his approaches; while leaving must more potential untapped.

The prose is the last difficulty. Its formulations come round again and again, and will try a friendly reader. But Baruah has seen the objection coming. Unless the many local arrangements are put into conceptual order, he writes, there is no colonialism to talk about, only a heap of features that never amounts to one (p. 188).

Two claims in his conclusion travel far past Assam. The first is that a periphery is never there in advance but always made. This turns metropole and periphery from a cause into a result mistaken for one (p. 187). The second is more unsettling. Colonial rule worked by refusing the subject any universal essence, so that the subject was never more than a creature of local qualities. And his resistance never more than a local disturbance; never a claim anyone elsewhere might share (p. 188). Taking from people the capacity to think past the local was one of the most silently devastating instruments of rule.

Since Guha, the political economy of colonial Assam has been written as economy, its cultural history as identity. This is the book that insists they are one subject.

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Vol. 2, No. 1

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Work that crosses disciplinary boundaries and reads questions of the region alongside wider scholarly debate, on themes including: history, historiography, archives and memory; economics, development, labour and livelihoods; governance, citizenship and political thought; literary and cultural studies, language and translation; sociology, anthropology, gender and migration; education, philosophy and ethics; environmental humanities and climate; caste, social justice and Dalit studies; and Assam, Northeast India and the Global South.

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Research articles (5,000–7,000 words), review essays (4,000–6,000), thematic commentaries (2,500–3,500) or book reviews (1,000–1,500 words).

An anonymised .docx manuscript; an abstract of 300–350 words with five to six keywords; a separate cover page with author details; and a signed Author Declaration and Compliance Form.

APA 7th edition referencing. Times New Roman 12 pt, 1.5 spacing, justified. No more than three authors.

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The field on the front cover of this issue is drawn to scale: one band for each article, its width in proportion to the pages it occupies. No two issues of ZEITGEIST can carry the same cover, and none of them was art-directed.

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ZEITGEIST is a peer-reviewed, gold open-access journal of the humanities and social sciences, published twice a year by the Internal Quality Assurance Cell of Bahona College, Jorhat. It publishes criticism, historiography, fieldwork and theory from Assam, Northeast India and the Global South, and reads them alongside the wider scholarly debates they belong to. Everything here is reviewed double-blind, carries a Digital Object Identifier, and is free to read and to reuse under CC BY 4.0. Submission and peer review are free; an article processing charge of ₹500 falls due only on acceptance.

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