



In this Issue

1. **Engaging Indian Religious Practices in Nigeria via Cinematic Experience of Indian Doctor**
Ajetunmobi Oluwasegun
2. **Impact of Bollywood on the Development of Kannywood in Northern Nigeria**
Olayemi Dotun
3. **Zimbabwe-India relations: Reception of the portrayal of the relations between the countries on Zimbabwean state media**
Jennings Joy Chibike
4. **Deconstructing Exilic Narratives of Tibetan Refugee Community in India and Residual Liberian Refugees in Nigeria**
Tosin Durodola
5. **Afforestation as a means to contrast aridity and soil degradation in Rajasthan, India and Sahel, Africa: Possible space for south-south cooperation and experience exchange between the two regions**
Ilaria Petrolati
6. **Indian NGOs and Organizations Working for the Siddi Community**
Jyoti Ravishankar Singh



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Editor's Note

This issue of African Currents is comprised of a selection paper, submitted as part of the International Online Internship programme organised by the Centre of African Studies, that study similarities and differences between peoples and cultures of India and Africa. It is these similarities that can pave the way for future co-operation and these differences that provide unique learning opportunities for the other.

Media such as films and TV have provided portal through which the other can be explored. They also have tremendous potential to unite, as we see in the cover image. The passion for Bollywood films on the continent reveals underlying aesthetic and moral sympathies. Geographical and ecological similarities provide opportunities for knowledge sharing and mutual assistance. Shared struggles provide the foundation for cultivating solidarity. Understanding each of these and their potentialities for bolstering South-South co-operation would have an enormous impact on the future of India-Africa relations.

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Contents

Editor's Note

List of contributors

1. **Engaging Indian Religious Practices in Nigeria via Cinematic Experience of Indian Doctor**
Ajetunmobi Oluwasegun pg 1
2. **Impact of Bollywood on the Development of Kannywood in Northern Nigeria**
Olayemi Dotun pg 14
3. **Zimbabwe-India relations: Reception of the portrayal of the relations between the countries on Zimbabwean state media**
Jennings Joy Chibike pg 27
4. **Deconstructing Exilic Narratives of Tibetan Refugee Community in India and Residual Liberian Refugees in Nigeria**
Tosin Durodola pg 41
5. **Afforestation as a means to contrast aridity and soil degradation in Rajasthan, India and Sahel, Africa: Possible space for south-south cooperation and experience exchange between the two regions**
Ilaria Petrolati pg 59
6. **Indians NGOs and Organizations Working for the Siddi Community**
Jyoti Ravishankar Singh pg 95

1. Engaging Indian Religious Practices in Nigeria via Cinematic Experience of *Indian Doctor*

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Abstract

Oftentimes, nations use their cultural traits to break the barriers that hard power could not break in a foreign land. These cultural traits include religion, food, and films, among others. This phenomenon is conceptualised as 'cultural diplomacy'. This paper analyses how a Nollywood film, rather than a Bollywood one, propagates Hinduism in Nigeria. This research explores the fusion of Indian cultural practices (especially religion) with the Nollywood Cinematic experience, using the film *Indian Doctor* as a case study. The theoretical framework utilized for this paper includes travelling theory and concepts of soft power. This study gives insight into the various ways India has used her cultural diplomatic tools to penetrate the Nigerian and African socio-cultural conscience. The film, *Indian Doctor*, is discussed in this paper with the suggestion that film experiences are great propagators of spreading culture and religious practices in foreign spaces.

Introduction

This research centres on the engagement of Indian Religious practices in Nigeria via cinematic experience. It argues that *Indian Doctor*¹, a Nollywood film, is a subtle reflection of the advocacy for the acceptance of Hinduism in Nigeria. It is interesting to note that a Nollywood film rather than a Bollywood film is the instrument of what appears to be cultural diplomacy in Nigeria. Yet it could not have been without the several cultural intricacies, influences and experiences of Bollywood, India and the religion of the producer of *Indian Doctor*. The central theme of this paper is that cinematic experiences have further strengthened the presence of Indian religious practices in Nigeria. This research explores the fusion of Indian cultural practices especially religion in Nollywood Cinematic experiences using *Indian Doctor* as case study. This paper also provides insight on the various ways India has used her cultural diplomatic tools to penetrate the Nigerian and African socio-cultural spaces. The film *Indian Doctor* is discussed in this presentation with the suggestion that filmic experiences are great proponents of spreading culture and religious practices.

Joseph Nye's proposition that a country can co-opt another country to do what it wants it to do without force reflects the very true nature of diplomacy in the modern era. This he termed soft power which he measured as a concept in the caprices of cultural diplomacy (Nye, 2004). Cultural diplomacy may come in diverse ways like cuisine, sport, cinematic practices and other forms. Films and cinematic practices have a subtle appeal to people and can influence or shape the ideology of people. It has been used as a means of diplomatic relations over the years. They represent the identity and lived experiences of a group of people. Films also highlight the historical details of a group of people in some instances. Hollywood, the film industry of the United States of America, is a powerful tool in the expression of the American culture in the world. This can be said of Bollywood as the expression of Indian culture anywhere in the world. Citizens of other countries in many cases have been

¹ This film is different from the series that aired on British television in the 1960s. This is a Nollywood film produced by Theodore Anyanji.

familiarised with American culture and the American dream without visiting the country. This has simply come about through influences from Hollywood. Nigeria's film industry has been well-received in Africa and throughout the world too. The popularity of Nollywood has placed Nigerian culture in a position of strength to influence other Africans in a subtle manner.

Indian Doctor- A film of different cultural backgrounds

Although Nollywood has showcased Nigerian culture and proved to be a valuable soft power tool in Africa, *Indian Doctor* is different from Nollywood films, in that it tells the story of culture diffusion and culture shock. Theodore Anyanji, the director of the film, properly introduces the cultural implications of a new religion to a society. The film is different from the series *Indian Doctor* that aired in the United Kingdom in the 1960s which depicted the challenges faced by Indian migrants in the United Kingdom. Rather, Theodore Anyanji tells the story of a young man named Chibuzor (Frederick Leonard) who returned from India after studying for medicine. Chibuzor's arrival heralded joy in his family and the entire village. However, the new religion, Hinduism, and culture that Chibuzor embraced and now practices soon became a major threat in his family and the village. Chibuzor's declaration that he converted to Hinduism while training in India was soon accompanied with the revelation that he changed his name to Satia Sal. Although Hinduism is not a proselytizing religion, Chibuzor made frantic efforts to convert people to Hinduism and went as far as mandating vegetables only for his patients. His practices did not only contradict the traditional religion but also Christianity which is prominent in the land too. Chibuzor's affirmation of a Hindu religious difference in this setting soon became the reason for several conflicts. Theodore Anyanji concludes his story on a good note after peace was restored in the village and people were able to coexist with each other without any form of force.

Hinduism in Nigeria

According to Professor Gavin Flood, Hinduism is perhaps the oldest religion in the world with no specific date tied to its origins. The religion has existed for over four thousand years. Today, Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world with over 1 billion adherents. The religion has over 25,000 adherents in Nigeria, mainly in Lagos. The activities of the missionary arm of Hindu organisations, the migration of Indian expatriates, educational and cultural exchanges between Indians and Nigerians, and presence of Bollywood in Nigeria are responsible for the visibility that Hinduism has gained in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The core principle of this work is built on two theoretical frameworks. The first is the 'travelling theory', which seeks to understand how religious practices migrate from a place of origin to other spaces. The second is how cinematic experience has become a diplomatic tool within the framework of 'Soft Power'.

Travelling Theory

Edward Said introduced the metaphor "traveling theory" to describe the transfer of theories within the humanities and the social sciences (Said, 1983). Theories, Said argued, journeyed both in space and in time and they are marked by places and by historical constellations through which they travel. En route, they are continually shaped and reshaped according to the local conditions of production, reception, transmission, and not least resistance. Scholars in the field of migration studies have found a way of channelling the theory to migration discourse. In light of this, Senayon Olaoluwa has considered Edward Said's notion of traveling theory to include the

notion that “when people travel, abstract phenomena (culture, religion, event, family, food) travels with them”². This notion offers the perfect understanding towards the lives of Indian migrants (expatriates) in Nigeria. It can be deduced that when these migrants travel, they take along the memory of the homeland and their religion. The memories that go with these migrants are redefined in their host communities. Various Hindu organisations have been established in Nigeria, which offer space for Hinduism to adapt to local matrixes, in conversation with Nigerians. One such organisation is the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON),³.

Frank (2009) posited that Edward Said in his 1982 essay on ‘Traveling Theory’ argues that the transfer of ideas in the humanities and the social sciences is influenced by both ‘conditions of acceptance’ and ‘resistances’. The journey of theories, he explains, is never unimpeded. According to Said, there is, however, a discernible and recurrent pattern to the movement itself, three or four stages common to the way any theory, ideas and cultural way of life travels. First, there is a point of origin, or what seems like one, a set of initial circumstances in which the idea came to birth or entered discourse. Second, there is a distance traversed, a passage through the pressure of various contexts as the idea moves from an earlier point to another time and place where it will come into a new prominence. Third, there are a set of conditions, call them conditions of acceptance or, as an inevitable part of acceptance or resistances which then confront the transplanted theory or idea, making possible its introduction or toleration, however alien it might appear to be. Fourth, the now full (or partly) accommodated (or incorporated) idea is to some extent transformed by its new uses, and its new position in a new time and space (Said, 1983).

² Senayon Olaoluwa is the coordinator of the Diaspora and Transnational Studies unit and currently the Acting Director of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. His class notes and seminar expounded Said’s travelling theory to incorporate abstract phenomena in human’s tangible and intangible culture.

³ ISKCON, unlike mainstream Hinduism, believes in proselyting.

Considering Said's four stages in relation to this study, it becomes instructive to say that as people move a cultural life and religion from one environment to another, there is the possibility of a change, being 'to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and place'. As seen in the film *Indian Doctor*, Chibuzor (Frederick Leonardo) gave new meanings to Hinduism in his village after his return. Hence, it can be observed that, even when people (migrants) move with memories, ideologies and religions from a space to a definite new location, there is always a diffusion with the original. This may be as a result of contestation of space in the environment. It may also be as a result of the loss of original meanings and cultural adaptation. In the case of *Indian Doctor*, the contestations of space fits the situation. There are still some lapses however, and this is the question of how cinematic experiences can express religious ideas in another space. The second theory attempts a solution to the question raised.

Soft Power

Hard power is the ability to affect others to get the outcomes one prefers, and that can be accomplished by coercion, payment, or attraction and persuasion. Soft power is the ability to obtain these preferred outcomes by attraction rather than coercion or payment. The manner in which soft power has been used, has been conceptualized under international relations as the practice of cultural diplomacy. Hence, it becomes axiomatic that cultural diplomacy is inter-linked with the concept of soft power as discussed and conceptualised by Joseph Nye. It is from all the aforementioned that this essay discusses cultural diplomacy as a performance of soft power. Power, says Joseph Nye, is "the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes you want" (Nye, 2004) he goes on to note that this can be achieved using three avenues of influence comprising "threats and coercion ("sticks"), inducements and payments ("carrots") and attraction that makes others want what you want". Soft power is concerned with the attractiveness of a nation, the business of inspiring others to want what you have, although it is often focused on intangible and elusive notions such as culture, political values and foreign policies. The deployment of

soft power can be influenced by institutional suspicion of its efficacy. According to Wilson (2008), soft power is not the concern of a single institution, government department or ministry. It is mainly concerned with the actors and influencers of the process. Soft power is consistently identified in both the academic or grey literature as a cultural process intended to achieve a derived outcome through cultural diplomacy.

Cultural diplomacy on the other hand is an act of soft power intended to coerce an individual into liking or getting attracted to a set course, nation or agenda. The concept of cultural diplomacy has been widely discussed by scholars from various fields of study. According to Ambassador Cynthia P. Schneider, cultural diplomacy is an effective strategy to expose the values and culture of a foreign nation, as well as correct the negative perceptions of the said nation amongst the citizens of the other nation (Schneider 2006). Joseph Nye's conception of Cultural Diplomacy as 'soft power' produces an apt to draw the foreign people to an exchange of ideas, a displacement of national sentimentality and an attraction that may increase its tourism as well as an acquisition of respect for her foreign image. According to Milton Cummings (2003), cultural diplomacy has been defined as 'the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understandings. Cultural diplomacy transcends the limitations of public diplomacy by interacting with members of the foreign state without the bottlenecks that may occur with public diplomacy.

Discussing cultural diplomacy as an act or performance of soft power, Lenczowski (2009) noted that cultural diplomacy is a type of international public relations that is understood as a form of soft power in the global system today. It includes the "exchange of ideas, information, art, language and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding". He thus noted that the various tools used in cultural diplomacy can be seen in every aspect of a nation's culture. These tools include arts, exhibitions, educational programs, exchanges, literature, broadcasting of news and cultural programs, gifts to a nation, and religious diplomacy (Lenczowski, 2009).

Finally, in the discussion of cultural diplomacy as an avenue towards the performance of soft power, film is a viable tool. In light of this, Okunna (1999) points out the relevance of a film like *Titanic* to have made 'Non Americans recognize the power of American culture more than Americans themselves. Okunna (1999) points out that the dimension of the euphoria that the film generated was extraordinary. It was the most successful movie ever in Mexico, in Hong Kong, in France, in Brazil. Moreover, on the internet, the movie website was averaging 4 million hits daily. In the same light, this essay asserts that there is a subtle message of Hinduism and by extension Indian culture passed through *Indian Doctor* to Nigerians and Africans at large. The cultural inclination⁴ of the film in a Nigerian cultural matrix and the presentation of the religion by the Nigerian film industry gives it more interest from Nigerians and Africans generally, than a presentation from Bollywood would have received. Thus, providing a cultural diplomatic pathway for Nigerians and Africans to accept Hinduism as a religion of peace and not to discriminate against the adherents.

Films as Good reflection of Storytelling

Cinematic experiences in Nigeria have always portrayed India as home of magic and supernatural powers. This is commonly reflected in Nollywood films and skits like *Alfa Sule*. This assertion has formed an identity of Indians, in the subconscious of the people in Nigeria, as people with exotic magical powers. Contrary to the malignity attached to Indian religious belief system in Nigeria, *Indian Doctor* passed a subtle message on Indian religious belief systems (especially Hinduism) and its appeal for its acceptance in Nigeria.

⁴ The film represents multiple religions coexisting in the same space peacefully on one hand. On the other hand, it promotes both African cultural heritage as well as Indian cultural heritage in Africa

The core of the film, *Indian Doctor*, is a sharp contrast of belief between Hinduism and the existing religions in Nigeria. Chibuzor, the main protagonist of the film, opposed the killing of animals. According to the filmic experience, Hindus do not kill any living thing, holding the principle of ahimsa [non-violence] in high esteem.. This idea is a subtle reflection of Indian religious practice and the cultural Diplomacy at large in Nigeria. As posited by Olaoluwa (2018), *Indian Doctor* portrays a feistier cultural practice as opposed to Christianity and African Traditional Religion. The understanding of identity representation in cinematic experience is important to the reading of a cultural background in another space. For instance, cinematic experiences provide a perfect way for Nigerians and Africans to read Indian cultural heritage including its religion. This is what plays in the filmic experience of *Indian Doctor*.

Why is *Indian Doctor* a perfect blend for the image of Hinduism in Africa?

To offer an argument that films do not tell compelling stories and portray the identity of some ethnic groups or ideological groups is totally inappropriate. Fayomi (2015) opines that Nollywood's productions reflect the situations of Nigerians and represent many issues to which both Nigerians and other African citizens can relate with. In other words, cinemas present to the wide-ranging audience an identity of a group or groups that the producer wants to pass across. Fayomi (2015), points out that:

In line with the integration agenda of ECOWAS, Nollywood films have been upholding African cultural practises and promoting such among Diasporas living in the various countries in sub-region and in addition re-infusing the African practices and cultures into the original inhabitants of the various countries within the West Africa. Nollywood's productions reflect the live-in situations of Nigerians and represent many issues that both Nigerians and other African citizens can relate with. (Fayomi 2015: 35).

Nollywood has become a household name in African countries and amongst African diaspora populations around the world. Nollywood reflection on African identity is a big plus for this reception. The Nigerian film industry, Nollywood, is practically a reflection of the Nigerian identity and culture. This is evident in the films produced through the industry. Again, some films from the industry also reflect the situations of the inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria and Africa in general. This is very evident in Afolayan's *October 1*, which detailed the fragility of Nigeria's nationhood and how the Europeans defiled the cord that bound our existence. In films like *October 1*, and *Mo Abudu's Wedding Party*, inter-ethnic relationship within the same geographical space was portrayed with its ambiguity. While there is plausibility of inter-ethnic marriages, it comes with difficulty in some instances especially if there is a class gap. This is the reality in many African cultures and the portrayal of this reality has helped Nollywood's reception in the hands of other African countries.

Afrocentric Centred Films

McCall (2007) who examined Nollywood's invention in Africa highlights that by the 1990s, Nigerians were tired of foreign films and the results that followed was a quick degeneration of theatres and Eurocentric storyline. Nigeria's old movie theatres shut down in their large numbers. However, the yearning for a media culture that evolves around African culture soon became widespread. A number of marketers, producers and filmmakers soon took the opportunity of the celluloid film to bring African cinema to the African audience. 'Afrocentric' images of 'daily lived experiences' or the 'common concerns' of most Nigerians and Africans, and in addition, offer people a platform 'to express opinions and commentaries on the society' (Abah, 2009: 733). Nollywood audiences gather in video parlours and engage in vivid discussions about the stories and the events in the films, and such conversations allow people to relate their everyday lives to the films, but also to create public discussions of critical enquiry on Nigerian and African societies. McCall (2007) concludes that Nollywood does not essentially offer a lucid philosophy or ideology of 'pan-Africanism', but that Nollywood is a primary catalyst in an emergent continent-wide popular discourse

about what it means to be African. Nollywood represents the story of Africans told by Africans and largely for Africans to understand.

Yet in the very midst of what is perceived as Afrocentrism, *Indian Doctor* as a Nollywood promotes Hinduism and the peaceful co-existence that many African countries have practiced with other religions. In a well knitted story, Theodore moved from the contestation of space between popular religions (African traditional religion and Christianity) to incorporating a new religion and what is perceived as minority religion in the contestation of Nigerian religious space.

African Diaspora Appeal

Nollywood has been able to influence its large African diaspora audiences of various national origins to relate to Nigerian films. Films like *Ije* and *Across the Desert* portray the desperation of many Africans who seek greener pastures outside the continent. This appeal has become a selling point and a subtle way to involve other Africans' stories into cinematic practices. The *Indian Doctor* has presented Hinduism as a religion of peace and a cultural identity to be accepted by Africans in and out of Africa.

Conclusion

McCall (2007) contends that the most radical development in African media culture is the rise of Nollywood. Nollywood's rise with its prolific output, its spectacular popularity and its unprecedented ability to reach remote and non-elite audiences has helped put it in the mainstream of Nigeria's cultural diplomacy in Africa. The very nature of Nollywood has continued to help it generate popularity and subtly acts as catalyst of Nigeria's cultural diplomacy in other African countries. While skits like 'Alfa Sule' and some Nollywood films portray a harsh imaginary position of Indian culture Keeping them at arm's length, 'Indian Doctor', is a subtle influence portraying

a kinder imaginary view of Indian Culture, its acceptance and the promotion of the culture.

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2. Impact of Bollywood on the Development of Kannywood in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the globalisation of culture and the role of the media in disseminating cultures to different parts of the world. Bollywood has become an international movie industry and continues to grow tremendously, thus prompting this research work to examine the impact of the movie industry in cultural development in Nigeria. The paper highlights the basic concepts of globalisation and its effects in spreading the Bollywood movie industry into developing countries such as Nigeria. It studies the influence of Bollywood movies in the growth and development of the Kannywood industry in Northern Nigeria, and also brings out the similarities/differences between the two movie industries.

Introduction

The movie industry plays a significant role in preserving and developing the cultural heritage of any given community, especially in terms of socio-economic life of the people as well as entertaining/educating audiences within and outside the community. Beard (1994) opined that films are among the most common artefacts of modern popular culture that generate and reflect traditional values of a society. Consequently, films have become a major part of modern society, through which people are becoming aware of different cultures from all over the world. It is in view of this fact that this paper seeks to highlight the impact of the Bombay-based movie industry known as Bollywood on the

development of the Kannywood movie industry in Northern Nigeria. The paper seeks to highlight the ongoing cultural transformations that have happened over a point of time in the movie industry in Northern Nigeria owing to the contributions made by Indian cinema. Moreover, an attempt is made to understand how Indian movies have initiated various changes with regards to thought process on one hand, and lifestyle on the other in Northern Nigeria. There have been changes with regards to the ways institutions of marriage and instances of live-in relationships have been portrayed in movies in Northern Nigeria, thanks to the influence of the Indian movies. The distinctive contribution of the presentation is to offer an understanding of the impact of Indian movies on cultures in Northern Nigeria.

Method

This research work seeks to build new knowledge from empirical research, and the most appropriate strategy for that purpose is the case study method. Unlike other methods, the case study method allows for insights into the processes of observed phenomena, thus making it suitable for building theories about their conditions and causes. This research paper will take a historical narration approach to carry out an appraisal of the impact of Bollywood on Kannywood.

Conceptual clarification

Kannywood: The Hausa film industry known as “Kannywood” was born in Kano, the largest northern state in Nigeria, in 1990 (Adamu, 2018). It is quite distinct from the widely known Nollywood, which is the larger pan- Nigeria film industry. Nollywood is primarily based in the South, although in recent times, it has begun to expand its audiences to the Northern part of the country. It produces films with Christian themes and mostly western-influenced motifs, mainly in English or Pidgin. On the other side of the coin, we have Kannywood films, which are almost exclusively in the Hausa language. Islamic

themes are their trademark, though what they portray may always appeal to Muslim conservatives. It has been observed that a lot of Kannywood films draw their inspiration from Bollywood, which is not surprising as we will see in the course of this discussion (Ibrahim, 2019).

Bollywood: It is an Indian movie industry based in Mumbai, formerly known as Bombay. Bollywood is a cultural paradigm for modern India, a representation of society's realities, aspirations and fantasies (Mishra 2009). Bollywood films exhibit features such as Kitsch, song and dance, and melodrama (Dwyer 2006). A typical Bollywood movie lasts for two-and-a-half hours, slowly unrolling storylines of epic proportions, usually incorporating the break-up and make-up of extended families (Mehta and Pandharipande 2010). A lot of movie directors in Bollywood make use of at least six to eight songs and complex choreography, in which the leading characters themselves participate, to under-score the story's emotional high points (Bouman et al. 2010).

Impact of Bollywood on cultural development

Bollywood has for a long time exerted a strong influence on cultural development in India, hence, it has now become the norm for ladies to don the finest garments modelled after Bollywood fashion and revelers dancing to throbbing hit songs during the ceremony (Mandaiker, 2014). Unsurprisingly, outfits adorned by an actor or actress in a hit movie immediately becomes a trend for tailors to reproduce for average Indians. The fashion industry has taken this a step further by naming new styles after the character or movie. This is evidenced through the anarkali suit, the jewellery in Jodha Akbar (2008) and the masakali suit from Delhi-6 (2009) to name just a few (Mandiaker, 2014).

India has a rich tradition of music and dance and they are an integral part of narrative expressions. Mainly, Indian tradition relies on oral tradition mainly to create images and this trend has been encouraged by producers and filmmakers while creating a story

(Thoraval, 2000). Music, dance & songs are major sources of entertainment in cinema irrespective of the composition of viewers. The songs act as a medium to portray the story and make it engaging for the audience. It acts as a medium for declaration of emotions like love, hatred, sadness, happiness. It connects the audience with the movie and often portrays the happenings in the story which have happened or may happen (Thoraval, 2000). As a result of this culture, Mandiaker (2014) observes that Bollywood dancing is very popular among girls in India who are keen to learn this art more than any classical dance. In India, movie actors have adoring fans that form clubs in their honour, ape their looks and style, and are not shy to loosen their purse strings to buy products their favourite star endorses (Mandiaker, 2014).

According to Mandiaker (2014) movies have become an integral part of everyday life in India and to get away from the economic challenges, Indians go to the cinema to entertain themselves.

Emergence of Bollywood in Africa

Bollywood is now being recognized and achieving box office success in some parts of Africa such as Nigeria, Morocco and South Africa because of its increasing Indian diaspora. According to Larkin (1997), Indian movies offer an alternative style to Hollywood movies and music videos that both Indian diaspora and African youth could follow without the fear of becoming western.

Entry and development of Bollywood into Nigeria

Bollywood films being a global product have a very long history and its entry into Nigeria must be understood to place this paper in the right context. Unlike other regions of Africa, Bollywood films' entry into West Africa, particularly Nigeria is quite distinct. Bollywood movies were not as popular in the early days in Nigeria as they were in East and South African countries due to the large Indian diaspora

there (Bertz, 2019). Bertz (2019) also observed that the majority of people showing Indian movies in Nigeria during the early stages in the 1950s were not Indians, rather they belonged to the Levantine community which includes Syrians, Lebanese, Jordanians etc. Despite the barrier of language between the cinema owners and these audiences, Indian movies gained a lot of traction in Nigeria especially in the conservative Northern region. Prior to the introduction of Indian movies, the culture of congregating in large numbers to watch American movies had long been established in the Northern part of Nigeria. Hence, it was not surprising that when Indian movies were introduced, they drew large crowds (Bertz, 2019).

Very few literature exists on the reason for the success recorded by Bollywood in Northern Nigeria. However, few people have pointed to the overlap between (often Hindu-coded) Bollywood and local cultures in northern Nigeria, including conservative sensibilities relating to dress, morality, family relations, gender and marriage.

Another similar sentiment in Indian movies that resonated in Northern Nigeria is the portrayal of negotiating times of profound change, first coming about through the colonial encounter and subsequently due to the forces of nationalism and then globalization (Bertz, 2019).

Scholars have attributed the success of Indian movies in Nigeria to the sheer visual and aural spectacle of Bollywood which has lured audiences. Representations of ideas about negotiating tradition and modernity in developing societies also contributed to the popularity of Indian cinema in Hausaland, as elsewhere in Nigeria (Bertz, 2019).

Hence, it is not surprising that Bollywood movies remained the dominant genre in Northern Nigeria until wrenching economic changes hit the entire continent in the late 20th century. The most significant difference in West Africa was the rise of popular Nigerian cinema in the form of Nollywood, which offered viewers a different, more localized form of parallel non-Western modernity for consumption (Larkin, 1997).

Influence of Bollywood on the development of Kannywood

Indeed, a lot of research works have asserted that the emergence of the Hausa entertainment industry, popularly known as Kannywood, has indeed reshaped Hausa/Fulani culture and the way people around the world once thought about the conservative region. Many have attributed the development of the movie industry in the region to the need for a local competition for the southern based Nollywood and the need to promote the culture of ethnic groups in the nation. However, very few works have examined the external influence that led to the development of the movie industry. Having established that Bollywood thrived in the Northern region, it is only natural when one assesses the influences of Bollywood on early movies produced in Kannywood.

Hausa films began to grow large as a result of the demand for Indian movies. This can be gleaned from McCain (2012) work on the development of Kannywood. She opined that " ...the market for Hausa videos grew out of a demand for content dubbed from television and sold illegally by marketers who sold American and Indian films." In essence, Kannywood was sustained between the early period and the late 1980s as a result of the localisation of Indian films.

However, McCain (2012) established that Kannywood took a different turn in the early 1990s to establish a foothold in the entertainment sector of the country through the production of the first commercially successful video film in 1990 titled *Turmin Danya* (*The draw*) produced by the Tumbin Giwa Drama group. Tumbin Giwa also produced the hit *Gimbiya Fatima* in 1993, which gained popularity in Kano, and then Jos and Niamey (Niger). Other movies that thrived during this period included, *In Da So Da Kauna* (With love and care); *Munkar* (Angel), and *Ki Yarda Da Ni* (Trust me). This development in the 1990s led to the development of the Hausa film industry as a parallel industry to Nollywood. The standout features of most of these films were the themes of the movies. Indeed, some had well-developed genres of comedy and political drama, however, most had themes of love stories and domestic dramas

similar to those in Bollywood movies. This view was also espoused by Aliyu (2020), who in his work established that for stakeholders in Kannywood to attract more Hausa audience, “adopted a new concept of cinematic synthesis of Indian and Hausa culture, which evolved and became extremely popular.” This point shines light on the influence of the Indian movie industry on the growth of the movie industry in Northern Nigeria.

It is important to note that despite the success recorded with the Indigenisation of movie contents in Kannywood, the industry never really moved away from adopting Indian culture. McCain (2012) observed that “films such as USA Galadima’s 1995 National Film Corporation supported film Soyayya Kunar Zuci had been adapted from Indian films.” However, the 1999 blockbuster movie “Wasila,” has been credited with the now-characteristic “Indian” look of Hausa films. A critical look at the films produced in Kannywood towards the closure of the 20th century till the present time shows the presence of Indian-style song and dance sequences in most Hausa films. McCain (2012) observed that the Indian themed dancing and singing became a popular culture whereby Kannywood producers feared their films would not record financial success without giving the consumers their demand.

The consequence of this pattern was the rise of a new music industry in northern Nigeria based on film music, a similar culture to the one in India. Similar to the pattern in India, film singers became music stars, releasing their own best selling video albums (Lere, 2017). The films and especially the songs and dances were the source of great anxiety to conservative critics, who believed that the films were introducing alien influences to audiences.

Similarities between Kannywood and Bollywood

At this stage, having looked at the influence of Bollywood on the growth and development of Kannywood, it is imperative to examine some similarities in the movies of the two parallel industries. According to Bertz (2019), some of the similarities between

Bollywood and Kannywood include dressing, morality, marriage institutions, focus on religion, transitioning from a traditional to a modern society to mention a few. A critical look at selected movies in the two industries gives credence to this claim by Bertz. For the purpose of this study, we will examine some major similarities which have remained dominant in both movie industries over the years namely:

Dressing, and morality

Kannywood films and Bollywood movies have the same respect for women as they dress conservatively in a way that the skin of the female actor is not revealed to the audience throughout the course of the movie. The conservativeness of Kannywood can be gleaned from the controversy generated by the actress Rahama Sadau in 2020 for posting a picture of herself in a gown that showed her back (BBC News, 2020). Umar, Mustapha & Muhammad (2013) observed that a major criticism of Kannywood is that the mode of dressing by the artistes shown in the films "do not tally with the typical Hausa dressing code, rather western/Indian styles". A look at some Kannywood films such as Mansoor, Rariya, Kanwar Duba Rudu, Auren Manga, Mijin Yarinya, Yaki A Soyayya, which have recorded success at the box office in the last few years (Aliyu, 2020) elaborates the conservatism about dressing in Kannywood and the resemblance with Bollywood. Kannywood has been established to be one of the movie industries where a man and a woman cannot be shown sleeping on the same bed, among other religious-cultural boundaries (Aliyu, 2020). However, in modern times, due to infiltration of external influences resulting from expansion beyond Kano State, gestures such as a hug, kiss and cuddle, are now shown in Kannywood movies. More profound displays of affection are not acceptable. The same can be said for Bollywood movies. In the early times, Indian actresses donned outfits that covered their full body, but in recent times, due to western influences, the female actors now rock jeans, shorts that show parts of their body to the audience (Matusitz & Payano, 2011).

Cultural display

Umar, Mustapha & Muhammad (2013) observed that as regards to singing/dancing, they have totally abandoned the cultural norms of the Hausas, they adopted the western/Indian cultures.” This statement gives credence to the argument that Kannywood tailored a lot of its activities in line with the obtainable in Bollywood movies. A Bollywood film on the average lasts for about 2.5 hours (Mehta and Pandharipande 2010), where singing and dancing at intervals occurs on average 6- 8 times lasting about 5 minutes each (Bouman et al. 2010). Kannywood movies also average about two hours with singing and dancing occurring an average 4- 5 times in a movie (Ibrahim, 2019).

Movie theme

Bollywood has had a deeper impact on Indian society in the same vein as Kannywood. Mandiaker (2014) established that the film *Baabul* (2006) raised the issue of widow remarriage, while *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* (2001) extolled the virtue of respecting elders. He also established that the widely acclaimed *Rang De Basanti* (2006) gave voice to youth angst about the nation’s corrupt politics and politicians (Mandiaker, 2014). Kannywood also touches a lot on the events happening within the immediate society rather than science fiction movies. Aliyu (2020) established that Kannywood touches on the subject of marriage in Northern Nigeria, where young girls are married off to old rich and powerful men in polygamous unions. To promote culturally acceptable morals, the Kano State Censors Board (KSCB) was instituted in 2000. This board was created to assure the government and conservative critics that religious interests and culture would be protected (McCain, 2012), and foreign influences deemed against local culture would be petered down.

Conclusion

This research work has examined the cultural relationship between Nigeria and India by focusing on the impact and influence of Bollywood on the growth and development of Kannywood in

Northern Nigeria. The first major take away from this research is the impact of globalisation in the cultural development of the world. The spread of Bollywood movies outside the shores of India led to the entry in Nigeria which ultimately resulted in the growth and development of another movie industry.

Another major takeaway of this research work is that there is room for cooperation between different countries beyond economic relationships as seen in the acceptance of Bollywood movies in Northern Nigeria, which became popular despite the language barrier. This research work showed that a cultural similarity between different peoples is a solid foundation for promoting bilateral relationships among countries. As this research paper has shown, Bollywood movies thrived in Northern Nigeria and influenced the growth of Kannywood as a result of cultural similarities. The themes espoused and morality promoted in India movies resonated well with the majorly Hausa-Fulani dominated society.

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3. Zimbabwe-India relations: Reception of the portrayal of the relations between the countries on Zimbabwean state media

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Abstract

This paper takes an audience approach in examining meanings made by readers of the portrayal of the India-Zimbabwe relations on state owned media outlet, Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC)'s twitter page. Through the lens of critical cultural studies theory, the paper examines the sorts of meaning audiences attached to the portrayal of the two countries, the sort of aid they offer each other and to examine the similarity between India and Zimbabwe based on how their relations are portrayed on ZBC's twitter page. This qualitative study extracted empirical data from 12 participants who were subjected to semi-structured interviews. The study concluded that Zimbabwe and India have good economic relations; however, Zimbabwe benefits more from these economic ties than India. Moreover, the two countries' relationship is characterised by the desire to improve secondary industries in both countries. The study also examines shared similarities between India and Zimbabwe in the socio-cultural sphere.

Introduction

Historians have it that Zimbabwe-India relations date back into the 17th century. The relations were cemented by economic trade which saw Indian traders trading with locals. The relationship has fared well from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial

period of both countries. Most importantly, it should be emphasised that the relationship had its foundations on economic partnerships (Chakrabarty, 2016). The two countries consolidated their interests in agriculture and food production (Chakrabarty, 2016) initially. This is evident in the fact that they jointly worked on the Agricultural Framework Proposal which was aimed at improving the agribusiness of both countries. These economic partnerships have prompted scholars to interrogate relations between the two countries. As such, scholarly work on the relations between the two is dominated with discourses about economic partnerships such as investment and trade.

This paper however takes a detour from in-depth analysis of economic activities that the two countries are undertaking. Instead, it contributes to the understanding of India-Zimbabwe relations as portrayed by state media, Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC)'s twitter page. This paper adopts an audience reception approach in examining meanings made by readers of the relations between India and Zimbabwe based on the portrayal of the two countries on the state broadcaster's official twitter page. Studies have neglected how the relations between the two countries are being mediated by state media. As such it is the intent of this study to consult literature on how media audiences received the coverage of India-Zimbabwe relations in the media. This study will add to the body of literature which proves useful to media studies, political science and African studies scholars seeking to understand the portrayal of relations between India and Zimbabwe.

This paper begins by critically discussing the relations between India and Zimbabwe. It will also highlight shortcomings of previous studies on the relations between the two countries. The paper will also highlight the theoretical foundations informing this particular study before laying out the methodology. Finally, it will discuss the findings of the study and the conclusions as informed by the gathered empirical data.

Background of India-Zimbabwe relations

India-Zimbabwe relations are backed up by the Bilateral Investment Promotion Protection Act aimed at achieving economic prosperity of the two countries (Nyemba et al., 2013). India has come to the aid of the steel industry in Zimbabwe as it rescued ZISCO Steel, the largest steel production company in the country. The Indian community has invested in the research and running of hydro electrical projects in Zimbabwe. As such the corporation backed by this Act has had intensive media coverage. However, there is need for an interrogation of the mediation of these projects which are being funded by Indians against the backdrop that most academic work has solely explored how and why India is financing these projects. Therefore, this study deviates from merely discussing activities informed by the Act but it seeks to examine how these activities are portrayed in the media through the lenses of audiences. It takes an audience reception trajectory in examining meanings attached by readers to the portrayal of India-Zimbabwe relations as portrayed by ZBC's twitter page.

Much India-Zimbabwe cooperation was seen during the time where Zimbabwe adopted a multi-currency system. Indian business persons descended to invest in the country since inflation rates were significantly low (Nyemba et al., 2013). The relations between India and Zimbabwe are characterised by what people call the 'take and give' scenario. This implies that both countries benefit from each other. As much as Indians invest in Zimbabwe and create jobs for the locals, they also benefit from the vast mineral resources that Zimbabwe has to offer. This strengthens the notion of globalisation which argues that no nation can prosper in isolation (Blackmore, 2000). It is therefore the aim of the study to examine how this 'take and give' relationships are portrayed on ZBC's twitter page.

The World is in the midst of the deadly Covid19 pandemic which has claimed millions of lives globally (WHO, 2021). Against this milieu, countries around the world including India have been at the forefront of manufacturing Covid19 vaccines and distributing them globally. Consequently, Zimbabwe received its first batch of Covid19 vaccines from India. This proved to be of public interest and was extensively covered by ZBC. In light of this, this study aims

to unravel how audiences appropriated meaning to the portrayal of the two countries' relations during the Covid19 pandemic.

It is clear from past studies and observations that India and Zimbabwe enjoy cordial economic relations supported by various memoranda of understanding and pacts. Against the background that most academic articles have focused on investigating the nature of the economic relations between the two countries, it becomes interesting to examine how the coverage of these relations is received by audiences. By virtue of being newsworthy, India-Zimbabwe relations have found themselves filtering into both social and mainstream media channels such as ZBC. Instead of examining the coverage itself, the narratives, ideologies, and power relations in the texts, this study examines audiences' conceptualisation of the coverage. This is important because it brings to light how the general public conceptualises the relations between India and Zimbabwe. This study comes against a background that international media coverage is dominated by stereotypes propagating that India and Zimbabwe are very poor countries that cannot economically sustain themselves. As such this study will either conform or dismiss these stereotypes in international media outlets.

Theoretical considerations

In its quest to examine the meaning made by readers of the relations between India and Zimbabwe as portrayed by ZBC's twitter page, this inquiry uses critical cultural studies as a theoretical framework. Scholars such as Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall and Richard Hoggat are some of the proponents of this theory. There are many media audience reception studies that were informed by this theory for example Ang (1985) investigated how audiences appropriated meaning to a soap opera *Dallas*. The major argument here is that texts have multiple meanings and one's culture, defined as the lived experiences of a person, has an impact on how he or she makes meaning of texts (Strelitz, 2000; Fiske, 1987). As such cultural studies offer a framework for understanding the consumption and use of texts. This study therefore aims at interrogating the meaning made

of the tweets on ZBC's twitter pages pertaining to Zimbabwe-India relations. According to Silverstone (2002) the media is infused with texts which have various meanings hence texts are seen as polysemic in nature. In examining texts Johnson (1987) argues that there is need to pay attention to how the texts were created, the contexts in which they were created and the contexts in which the readers read them. This theory also posits that the creation and consumption of media texts is the epitome of identity formation. These identities inform how people make sense of the world (Hardt, 1986: 110). Critical cultural studies is however criticised for giving too much power to audiences while downplaying the fact that texts can have power over audiences. It should be noted that it does not affect this particular study as it believes that audiences have the power to make meaning of text. Therefore, critical cultural studies prove to be qualified to be a theoretical framework guiding this study.

Methodology

This study is purely qualitative. Qualitative approach allows the researcher to examine how people appropriate meaning to phenomena being studied (Cresswell, 2003). As such it used in-depth interviews with 12 participants who read the tweets on ZBC's twitter page about India-Zimbabwe relations. ZBC was chosen because it is the biggest broadcasting company in the country with a television channel and over five radio stations and has more following than any other broadcasting entity in the country. In-depth interviews were used as a mode of enquiry because they allow the researcher to fully extract in-depth data from the participants of the study (Jensen, 1982). In sampling the participants, the researcher used purposive sampling technique which entails the selection of participants based on their suitability to participate in a research (Jones et al., 2006). As such all the participants are twitter users from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, who have read the tweets about India-Zimbabwe relations by ZBC. Eight of the participants are of Zimbabwean origins while the other four are of Indian origin. This was done so as to avoid biased information regarding the relations between the two countries. The researcher visited shops located in

the central business where Indians and Zimbabweans work and asked for both India and Zimbabwean nations to participate. The researcher further employed purposive sampling technique in identifying samples of tweets that were used as exhibits. The researcher identified six tweets which exhibit India-Zimbabwe corporations. All the six were posted between the year 2018 and 2021. The researcher opted for this time frame because it was the period where the second republic led by President Emmerson Mnangagwa began its term after the removal of former President Robert Mugabe. The second republic's mantra has always been Zimbabwe is open for business hence it intrigued the researcher to focus on this time frame in which Zimbabwe is said to be open for business. The researcher took into account ethical considerations. The identity of the study's participants was concealed in line with their requests hence their responses were used without reference to their identities.

Overview of the findings

Empirical data gathered through in-depth interviews show that the participants attest to the fact that there exist good relations between India and Zimbabwe. However, Zimbabwe benefits more from its relations with India. The participants had it that the coverage of India and Zimbabwe on ZBC's twitter page exhibited the fact that the relationship between the two countries is built on finance. Also, India, just like Zimbabwe, seeks to improve its economy. Additionally, both countries share a similar trait in the way they embrace patriarchy, a system which seeks males as dominant over females. The following section discusses in detail the findings of the study, in thematic categories.

Discussion

Zimbabwe benefits more from its relationship with India

From empirical data gathered through interviews, Zimbabwe and India share cordial relations which however benefit the former more. What is evident is that Zimbabwe is enjoying a larger proportion of the results of their cooperation with India. Additionally, the data exhibit the fact that if the relations between the two continue Zimbabwe's economy will drastically improve and consequently reach its target of being a middle-income country by the year 2030. Against this background participant twelve states that

...the relations between the two countries are good in my views...they seem to be more beneficial to Zimbabwe than to India. Zimbabwe is always receiving goods and money from India.

This shows that Zimbabwe has been immensely benefiting from its relations with the Indian community. However, Zimbabwe has always been receiving aid from India. This aid has come in different forms ranging from direct financial injections to investments and scholarships for capacity building. This has led to the revitalisation of the local industries such as ZISCO Steel. The revitalisation of industries consequently leads to improved production of goods leading to a self-sufficient country. Besides an improvement in the production of local goods, the revitalisation of industries also creates employment for locals.

Participant eight adds that the fact that India is investing more in Zimbabwe than Zimbabwe is doing is a sign of generosity.

India's actions are very much beneficial to the country. I think India is just kind to Zimbabwe...they are more than a friend...this is something that the country needs at the moment.

Participant four states

It's obvious India is just helping Zimbabwe because of their long standing history of cooperation since pre-colonial period. During the war of liberation from the British they

helped each other. So I think India is helping Zimbabwe just like any true friend will.

This virtuous relationship between the two countries has its roots on generosity. This propagates the fact that India is a generous country whose quest is to better the lives of Zimbabweans. As such this has led to the country funding some of the projects in Zimbabwe. The Indian community has made it one of its mandates to help Zimbabwe's development goals.

Some of the participants were of the view that both countries were benefiting from each other. They argue that India is providing financial aid to Zimbabwe in exchange for moral and cultural support. This was submitted by participant seven who said

...this is a beneficial partnership between India and Zimbabwe. Both countries are benefiting from each other. From what I am seeing India is investing and injecting capital into the country while Zimbabwe is providing moral, political and cultural support ...this is a win-win situation.

Participant five submitted that

As much as India is injecting millions of dollars and providing Covid19 vaccines, the Zimbabwean government is tasked with protecting and helping India nationals residing in the country. As you can see the President is affirming his commitments to looking after the welfare of the Indians in the country.

The above points to the fact that both countries benefit from the existing relations. With Zimbabwe in need of financial assistance, India has come in to fill the economic void being felt by it. In exchange Zimbabwe has made significant strides in protecting the Indians in the country. This therefore fosters relations and future cooperation on a number of projects between the two. More so, participant ten feels that as much as some argue that the relations between India and Zimbabwe are beneficial, he argues that India is

immensely benefiting from the association with Zimbabwe. She submitted that

The relations between the two countries are good but I think India is benefiting more than Zimbabwe. The Indian business people in Zimbabwe are at an advantage because Zimbabwe uses a multi-currency system so they get to have access to powerful currency such as United States Dollars which they take back to India for further investment.

This extract shows that the respondent is of the view that India is befitting more than Zimbabwe in its friendship. Indian citizens in Zimbabwe are exposed to the much-needed foreign currency such as the United States Dollar, South African Rand and British Pound which are in circulation in Zimbabwe. As such by virtue of having business in the country they have access to foreign currency which enables them to invest in India.

India-Zimbabwe relations: A relationship whose backbone is finance

The majority of the sampled participants concurred that India was one of the countries helping Zimbabwe recover from an economic meltdown which has ravaged the country. According to respondent one India is committed to helping Zimbabwe escape the jaws of economic dilapidation. He submitted that:

Based on these tweets India is trying to help the ailing Zimbabwean economy. All these tweets talk of India injecting millions into the Zimbabwean economy...I feel this is a great way of investing. The more the investments the more the jobs for us and of course revival of industries that had closed down.

Participant three's submissions also add to the above. She said:

I feel India is showing that they can be reliable economic partners. Remember ED (President Mnangagwa) always talks of Zimbabwe being open for business so the Indians are here for business. They are revamping industrial activity in the country.

The relationship between India and Zimbabwe was founded on economic grounds. The major reason behind this is to improve each other's economies, particularly Zimbabwe's. India is supportive of the Second Republic led by President Emmerson Mnangagwa's quest to improve the economy of the country. Investments by India in Zimbabwe have facilitated the rise of once abandoned industries and job creation.

Participant eight acknowledges the economic ties between the two countries but questions the real intentions of India. He argues that India is not just merely helping revitalise Zimbabwean industries, it is targeting something from Zimbabwe. She submitted:

It is obvious that India is helping Zimbabwe in some of its industry revitalisation programmes. However, I think somewhere or somehow India is also benefiting from Zimbabwe. It is very rare to find a country giving you money without any terms and conditions.

This shows that India is also immensely benefiting from Zimbabwe. The benefits might be economic, social or political. This further cements the notion that the two centres are in an intrinsic relationship.

Besides issues around Indian aid in steadying the economic turmoil in Zimbabwe, some of the participants in the study had it that the relations were bordering around public health. India was attempting to help Zimbabwe in its fight against Covid19. Participant six submitted that Covid19 fostered relations between the two countries since Zimbabwe was in need of vaccines. This submission exhibits the fact that the relations between India and Zimbabwe were strengthened by the Covid19 pandemic. India showed its commitment to the people of Zimbabwe's cause by availing the

much-needed Covid19 vaccines. As such, these vaccines have gone a long way in Zimbabwe's fight against the global pandemic. Ever since the vaccination programme was rolled out there has been a significant decline in new Covid19 cases recorded per day. It can therefore be argued that India has had a hand in ensuring the safety of Zimbabwean community during the global pandemic

India-Zimbabwe: Countries with similar socio-economic grounding

The study's participants noted a couple of similarities between India and Zimbabwe chief among them the fact both countries are on a drive to eradicate poverty among its people. This was echoed by participant two who had it that India and Zimbabwe shared the passion to overcome poverty among its people through engaging in economic cooperation. The two countries are working towards economic empowerment and to achieve this they have decided to be economic partners. This is seen in how India is investing in the country and how Zimbabwe is allowing India businesspersons to operate without any hindrance.

One similarity that also arose based on the perceptions of the study's participants is that Zimbabwe and India are very diplomatic countries. This was submitted by participant nine who said

...look at the officials that represent India in Zimbabwe. Also, look at the officials receiving Indian delegates...Vice President Chiwenga, (former) Vice President Mohadi and ED (President Mnangagwa) himself. It shows that the two are very diplomatic nations and have great respect for each other.

The fact that Indian diplomats are received by high-ranking officials in Zimbabwe shows that their relations are of importance. Indian envoys were received by either the Vice Presidents or the President himself. This exhibits the fact that both countries are very diplomatic and serious about cementing their already existing bilateral relations.

The two countries also share similar etiquette. This is seen in how both envoys from Zimbabwe and India present themselves. This was noted by participant seven who said

In my view I think the two countries share similar protocol and line of dressing among emissaries. As you can see everyone is formally dressed. This shows that the meetings are being taken seriously and treated as important...it is the similarity I noted.

In light of this it can be argued that Indian and Zimbabwean diplomats share similar understandings of etiquette as evidenced by how they dressed. Both male and female diplomats were clad in formal suits. This goes on to exhibit the fact that they take their meetings seriously and professionally.

The two are portrayed as countries that embrace unequal power relations between men and women. They both see males as powerful over females. Participant four notes that both India and Zimbabwe are countries that embrace patriarchy. Additionally participant seven states,

In those representations men are at the forefront of the relations between the two countries. The ambassadors and presidents shown are all male... the Indians meeting ED were all male ... I don't see any women close by.

Sharing the same sentiments is participant eleven

Women are side lined...they only appear in the background. In all these representations I see only one Indian woman and one Zimbabwean woman... men are the majority.

This exhibits the fact that both India and Zimbabwe have a lot of work to do with inclusion, and involving women in public and official spaces.

Conclusions

This study's findings propagate the fact that there are bilateral relations between Zimbabwe and India however; it extends this view by arguing that Zimbabwe benefits more from its ties with India. This is so because India injects subsequent amounts of capital into the Zimbabwean economy compared to what Zimbabwe is injecting. Although the two countries have joined hands in various areas including health and politics their major concern is on the economy. Emphasis is on industrial rejuvenation than other economic activities such as trade. Lastly, the coverage of the two countries as argued by participants in this study exposed the fact that there are similarities between Zimbabwe and India, in terms of gender roles and the need to achieve gender parity in public spaces.

Disclosure statement

There was no conflict of interest reported by the author.

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4. Deconstructing Exilic Narratives of Tibetan Refugee Community in India and Residual Liberian Refugees in Nigeria

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Abstract

There exists a pressing need for an alternative view to the existing humanitarian narrative on protracted displacement situations in the global south. This paper broadens the discourse by examining the exilic condition of Tibetan Refugee Community in India and the post-refugee experiences of Residual Liberian Refugees in Nigeria without legal status and international protection. The rationale behind this comparative exposition is borne out of the similarity in their condition and time in exile. This paper is comparative in form in order to establish the connections of historic refugee populations with the past and present. Findings show that the exilic narratives of both refugee communities shape their identity and intersect with the agency deployed to transcend their location of dispossession within a shared space of marginality with their hosts. These findings have policy impact in the area of place making, transformative agency, and diaspora nationalism in exile.

Rationale

What happens when displaced persons without legal status are in protracted exilic situation without solutions in sight? How do these exile community construct home and space in ungoverned spaces without international protection? How do their narratives of the journey to exile intersect with the agency

deployed to transcend their location of dispossession within a shared space of marginality?

This paper attempts to examine the exilic condition of Tibetan Refugee Community in India through the lenses of the experiences of Residual Liberian Refugees in Nigeria. The rationale behind this comparative exposition is borne out of the similarity in their condition and time in exile. Following the failed 1959 Tibetan uprising, some Tibetans fled to India where they were granted asylum in designated settlements across the country. Although Tibetan refugee community in India reduced by 44%, from around 150,000 in 2011 to 85,000 (Tripathi, 2018), many are still in protracted exile. Worse still, Tibetans are not legally recognised as refugees in India, rather they are classified as “foreigners” (Purohit, 2019). This lack of legal status and absence of international protection exposes this ‘refugee’ community to vulnerability. Relevant literature have shown the socio-economic disparities, discrimination, and other obvious challenges that exist within the community. However, existing narratives show that the struggles of Tibetan exiles in India have shaped their identity and redefined how they permeate the politics, disparities, and marginality that confronts them in India. The methodological challenge of engaging ethnography to curate the narratives of Tibetan exiles in India due to the COVID-19 pandemic informs the researcher’s choice of examining the exilic community with similar circumstances- residual Liberian refugees in Nigeria alongside Tibetan exiles in India.

This paper offers an ethnographic reflection on the exilic experience of Tibetan refugees in India and residual Liberian refugees living outside the closed Oru Refugee Camp, Ogun State, Nigeria. The Liberian Civil War of 1990 resulted in a huge number of refugees moving to different parts of West Africa (Morten, 2005). The Oru Refugee Camp was part of the different camps created in the region by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to provide temporary accommodation for Liberian refugees until peace returned to their homeland (Adeleke, 2014). Despite the end of the Liberian Civil War in 2003 and UNHCR’s termination of their refugee status, some Liberian refugee residuals remained in a nearby uninhabitable bush where they were exposed to vulnerability without international protection and humanitarian aid

(Akinfenwa, 2016). Based on ethnographic fieldwork, this paper unravels how Liberian residuals, have accrued superior agency, since the closure of Oru Refugee Camp in 2012 by the Nigerian government, to transform the former uninhabitable space to a quasi-permanent home and exert strong sociocultural, political and economic influence in Oru town, Nigeria. From the narratives of respondents during fieldwork, residual Liberian refugees are inclined to attribute their resistance, resilience and transformative agency in exile to their experience of war and exilic journey from Liberia which influenced their condition of arrival in Nigeria, their subsequent adjustment and integration, and their ambulant perception of a home.

The findings in the case of Tibetan exiles in India and Residual Liberian Refugees in Nigeria offer us an alternative view to the engagement of Place making, Transformative Agency, and Diaspora Nationalism in Exile. It also helps us understand how thorough engagement of the exilic condition of Tibetan exiles in India can bring about new findings that can make original contributions to the discourse around protracted displacement situations, lack of durable solutions, and exilic condition in ungoverned spaces.

Methodology

This paper is comparative in form in order to establish the connections of historic refugee populations with the past and present. This study deployed ethnographic field work to engage the exilic experience of the residual Liberian refugee settlement in Oru, Southwestern Nigeria. Data collection started when the researcher was conducting the fieldwork for his Master's Thesis in July 2019 to December 2019. The major form of data collection was qualitative and was through key informants technique, snowball strategy, purposive sampling technique, in-depth interviews, participant observation, and focus group discussions. In the engagement of the exilic condition of Tibetan exiles in India, this paper adopted secondary data such as relevant literature, consisting of journals, books, newspapers, internet articles, conference papers, and official documents of government and refugee organisations.

Key Findings

Challenges

1. Legal Status

Both residual Liberian refugees in Nigeria and Tibetan exiles in India are confronted with issues around their legal status. While the refugee status of residual Liberian refugees was terminated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2012 following the return of peace to Liberia, the Tibetan exiles are not officially recognised as refugees in India, rather, on paper, they are classified as “foreigners” (Purohit, 2019). Findings from this study reveal that the failure of durable solutions is the major reason why many residual Liberian refugees still exist in a nearby bushy location close to the former refugee camp in Oru town. The residual Liberian refugees narrated that the UNHCR did not fulfil all its obligations in the Multipartite Agreement signed between the Government of the Republic of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This is particularly in the area of refugees relocation from Oru camp into the local communities with suitable accommodation prior to the end of their refugee status and closure of the camp by the Nigerian government in 2012. A respondent narrates:

I am 44 years old. All those who chose local integration received N75,000 without housing. What we desired did not happen. We hoped for a better life after the camp was shut down. I acquired a knowledge of textile and batik designs. I attempted to do something with the fund but I did not

*achieve anything. I fell ill and spent the money on treatment.*⁵

Equally, India does not have a legal obligation to provide refugee protections due to its abstention from the 1951 UN Refugee Convention (Feller, 2006). India's lack of legal obligation enables it to tweak refugee policies unilaterally, and often to suit its interests. This inconsistent approach results in unstable policy on refugees demonstrated in the variance of rights and services given to Tibetan exiles in line with their date of disembarkation. For instance, the first phase of Tibetans influx into India in 1959 was recognised and those who sought refuge were granted legal asylum (Artiles, 2012). These set of refugees had access to land and housing, and enjoyed privileges of indigenous populations in India apart from the right to vote and work in public establishment (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2009). The next wave of Tibetan refugees who arrived in 1963, 1972 and thereafter were not legally recognised and could not enjoy the rights and privileges of those ahead of them (Artiles, 2012). Worse still, like the case of residual Liberian refugees in Nigeria, the UNHCR shutdown its office in New Delhi and withdrew its aid to Tibetan refugees in 1975.

2. Dearth of Basic Amenities

Findings from this study show that there is a dearth of basic amenities in the settlements of residual Liberian refugees in Nigeria and Tibetan exiles in India. The lack of Tibetan exiles who disembarked during the second wave to rights to land and housing puts them in a position of vulnerability and undeveloped settlements. Poor accommodation and unsanitary facilities are part of the major development challenges affecting them and residual Liberian refugees living in Oru, Southwestern Nigeria. Both refugee populations face similar conditions as refugees in Cameroon and the Niger Republic with limited access to electricity, good housing,

⁵ Researcher's taped in-depth interview with Mohammed, male, 44 years old, former Sierra Leonean in Oru-Ijebu, 2019.

ventilation water, cooking facilities, and other basic services (UNHCR & World Bank, 2016). A respondent narrates:

*I have my bathroom and toilet at the back of those houses. Unlike many others which are sand, mine is built with concrete. We don't have good latrines and we sometimes defecate in the bush.*⁶

The shortage of water grossly affects the living condition and livelihood options of Tibetan exiles (Purohit, 2019) and the residual Liberian refugees (Akinfenwa, 2016). These exile communities suffer from inadequate quantities of water to meet their daily routines and lack clean water to drink. Limited access to drinkable water also exposes them to diseases such as diarrhea and cholera. Even where there were boreholes outside the settlements, residual Liberian refugees were reluctant to prioritise them because their location was too far (Durodola, 2020). There is also difficulty in purchasing drinking water on a daily basis due to family size and livelihood. The foregoing affirms the prevailing conditions of living outside a closed camp, without enough food or humanitarian aid. Thus, malnutrition became more prevalent as the quantity and quality of available food reduced drastically. This situation justifies a joint UNHCR and World Food Programme (WFP) study in 2006 which exposed the high degree of acute malnutrition in many protracted refugee camps, most notably in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Sudan (UNHCR & WFP, 2006).

Tibetan exiles in India and Residual Liberian refugees in Nigeria also have poor access to health services and cases of acute health problems with no solution in sight (Refworld, 1999; Adebayo, 2014). Participants believe that due to difficult financial conditions and expensive healthcare, most residual refugees in the settlement cannot pay their health bills or treat random illness. Many Tibetans in India suffer from acute health diseases chiefly due to poor

⁶ Researcher's taped in-depth interviews with Rebecca, female, 67 years old, residual Liberian refugee outside the closed Oru refugee camp in Oru-ljebu, 2019.

sanitation and a lack of hygiene that are exacerbated by poor water supply in the settlements and informal communities (Refworld, 1999). Their exclusion from the state or national health insurance scheme or free basic healthcare is tied to the failure of the UNHCR's durable solutions. Residual Liberian refugees who are financially handicapped often rely on the privileged few to acquire medicines and access medicare in hospitals (Durodola, 2020) while the Department of Health of the Central Tibetan Administration is responsible for managing the Tibetan health care system in India (Refworld, 1999). A respondent narrates:

The health situation has really been a challenge for us since the UNHCR left. There has been no assistance from the government but we created a situation to be our brothers' keeper. We don't sit and just look at the sick suffer. We mobilise and contribute money to pay hospital bills. When the situation is too big for us, we call our Diaspora organisation (Organization of Liberian Communities in Nigeria (OLICON)) in Lagos for help.⁷

Transformation

1. Homeland Attachment and Double Identity in Exile

Residual Liberian refugees in Nigeria and Tibetan Exiles in India exist in a discontinuous state of exile with the hope of arrival at a 'new home' or return to their 'homeland'. But since the absence of durable solutions, both refugee communities have redirected their energies to preserve cultural traditions and practices and influence

⁷ Researcher's taped in-depth interview with Boymah, male, 41 years old, chairman of the residual Liberian refugees in Oru-ljebu, 2019.

their host communities. Through the annual celebration of the Liberia Independence Day and Flag Day with other cultural groups, residual Liberian refugees gained recognition as a distinct cultural community authorised to perform at local festivals, particularly Ojude Oba where they display their artistry and music in front of the King. This attempt to retain homeland attachment is borne out of the "understanding of the nation as an entity that informs the collectivity of a people" (Olaoluwa, 2017, p. 84). Olaoluwa (2017) thus argues that the survival of a nation in exile depends more on the collective resolve of the exiled population to cope with the difficulties, challenges, and the trauma that persists in the place of refuge.

When we perform at Ojude Oba in Oru, other people love our costumes and dance. So they learn and perform a mixture of everything. We also learn how they do their dance, songs and costume.⁸

Rather than cultivate ties with Nigeria, or express a desire to assimilate ultimately, the residual Liberian refugees recalled their attachment to Liberia as home. Their collective ambivalence towards the culture of the host community was reinforced by the initial segregation and exclusive attitude deployed by the Oru hosts after the closure of the Oru Refugee Camp (Durodola, 2020). Marginalisation can cause the estranged community to feel homesick, depressed, and alienated. It is this space of marginality that reinforces the urgency for marginalised refugees to recall the agency of their homeland which is tied to culture and identity (McLeman & Gemenn, 2018). This situation finds relevance with the Tibetan Exiles in India who have maintained attachment to their homeland and preserved their identity in spite of the space of marginality and exclusion in India (CTA, 2014). Tibetans in India cannot own property, travel freely in India or outside India, have

⁸ Researcher's taped in-depth interview with Paye, male, 49 years old, residual Liberian refugee in Oru-Ijebu, 2019.

government jobs, or qualify for resident rates at many colleges and universities (TJC, 2016, p. 9).

This attachment to homeland without acculturation is subject to contestation in exile, especially protracted ones. For instance, residual Liberian refugee parents are confronted with the challenge of teaching their wards the Liberian-American style of pronunciation because the schools that exist in Oru town favour the British education system. Hence, efforts to totally ensure that the younger ones maintain the full identity of Liberia is disrupted by the culture of the host community. Most young Tibetans under the Dalai Lama have been educated in India and their cultural point of view has been influenced by their environment (CSQM, 1985). The respondent has this to say:

We don't have a school system where only Liberians teach, so all of them attend different schools. When they return, they find it challenging to speak like us because Nigerian schools teach the British way and we speak the American way...⁹

The above citation shows that while the younger residual Liberian refugees can speak the local dialect of Yoruba, they are unable to maintain the orthodox Liberian accent due to acculturation in the host community. The identity of Tibetan exiles in India is also under dispute as those born in the refugee community between 1950 and 1987 are eligible to apply for Indian passports (Artiles, 2012). This new offer of nationality threatens their spiritual attachment to Tibet and the link to their culture of origin, nostalgic feelings, and imagined moments of home. By taking the passport, some argue that applicants were betraying the collective struggle of the exiled community to maintain connection and return to their homeland – Tibet (Doshi, 2017). There is a strong attempt to preserve their identity, exilic experience, and diaspora community. The identity

⁹ Researcher's taped in-depth interview with Mohammed, male, 44 years old, former Sierra Leonean in Oru-Ijebu, 2019

struggle of this refugee community is complicated by the exposure of the younger generation to the culture and education of the host country.

A Tibetan born in India, Deshar lived a double life. She went to an Indian boarding school but spent summers in a refugee settlement, trying to learn to read Tibetan. She watched Bollywood movies with her Indian friends but fell asleep listening to her grandmother's stories about a Himalayan wonderland... (Doshi, 2017)

The above narration demonstrates acculturation and transnational belonging that could also be tagged as a "condition of straddling two localities and cultures within a space". Such a situation poses a dilemma for younger Tibetan exiles who aspire for an Indian passport in a community dominated by older refugees who still consider themselves ethnically and culturally different from the Chinese. Engaging in social and education spaces with peers from other cultural groups helps younger refugees to make sense of the host identities and construct a transcultural identity across the boundaries of the dominant cultures (Kim & Shammas, 2019).

2. *Diaspora Nationalism*

The transformation of Nigeria-based former Liberian refugees into embodiments of soft power occurred after the closure of Oru refugee camp by the Nigerian government in 2012. During interviews, participants explained that former Liberian refugees who are in academia, civil society and corporate business have organised into a diaspora association named Organization of Liberian Communities in Nigeria (OLICON) in the absence of international protection. Nye (2008, p. 11) posits that soft power relies on a range of intangible assets that comprises "an attractive personality, culture, political values, and institutions and policies that are seen as legitimate or having morality." Although the Nigeria-based former Liberian refugees do not fully possess all these intangible assets, findings from this study show that residual Liberian refugees rely on

OLICON since the departure of UNHCR to protect their interest and to provide civic engagement, public diplomacy, and development assistance in Nigeria. OLICON is organised along different types of hierarchical structures that play various roles on behalf of its thirteen (13) active states (Eastern region – Anambra, Bayelsa, Delta, Enugu, Imo and Rivers States; the Northern region – Abuja, Niger, Kaduna, and Plateau States; and the Western region – Lagos, Ogun and Oyo States) in the country. The hierarchical structure ensures that its impact is felt at the subnational, local and village levels rather than national levels alone. This bottom-up approach has helped institutionalise OLICON's processes and policy formulation and implementation across member states. In fact, OLICON has assumed some of the core responsibilities previously discharged by UNHCR. A respondent says:

OLICON has been of great help, especially where it concerns healthcare and scholarships for our children. We contact our regional coordinator who liaises with counterparts in Lagos and Oyo States to provide basic social and financial interventions. So if the region cannot help, then we take it to the national body. And that is how we have been doing it for the past few years.¹⁰

The heavy reliance of residual Liberian refugees on the diaspora organisation has helped reduce the devastating impact of UNHCR's aid withdrawal such as health risks, economic difficulties, risk of statelessness, and socio-cultural differences in Nigeria. This scenario is demonstrated in the role that the Government of Tibet in Exile, now called Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) plays for Tibetan exiles in India (Refworld, 1999). CTA has become a source of motivation for the young Tibetan exiles to contest the status-quo and aggressively pursue their dreams to acquire dominance in the socio-political and economic space in India. Thus, CTA offers

¹⁰ Researcher's taped in-depth interview with Boymah, male, 41 years old, chairman of the residual Liberian refugees in Oru-ljebu, 2019.

Tibetan exiles a pathway from the myriad of socio-economic challenges to acquire basic and tertiary education from the best institutions in India (Purohit 2019). Nevertheless, Nye (2008) asserts that diaspora groupings often seek to address some of the economic causes of familial groups by making a positive contribution towards the reduction and stabilisation of the social tensions of the vulnerable in society. In the same vein, both OLICON and CTA are exerting soft power influence towards development assistance and job creation avenues amongst residual Liberian refugees in Nigeria and Tibetan exiles in India. The involvement of OLICON and CTA in the social and economic dynamics of these refugee communities has seen the coordinated and frequent provision of basic social services such as healthcare, job referrals, solidarity, and social justice

3. **Political Agency**

Fassin (2005) argues that the refugee is incapable of voicing his political rights but rather appeals to common humanity by showing his wounds. This appeal to compassion reduces the refugee to his wounded body – to biological life rather than political subjectivity (Turner 2015, p. 143). In the same vein, Nyers argues that the human victim lacks the agency to express a political voice; he can only moan in agony (Nyers, 2006, p. 38). However, these arguments fail to recognise the situation where residual refugees contest their vulnerable conditions to make political demands without any humanitarian support. In divergence to the positions of the aforementioned scholars, residual Liberian refugees are, without any humanitarian aid, tackling the unique challenges of the political culture in the host community. They have assumed powerful agency to shape the political discourse and influence elections of public office holders in congruence with their preference.

During personal interviews, participants revealed the rationale behind the transformation of residual Liberian refugees to a politically active community recognised during elections to be counted and empowered to vote. The findings have demonstrated that residual Liberian refugees desired something more concrete and assertive – political power to protect their interest and sustain their gains in Oru town. The search for power underscores how the

question of survival and success between residual Liberian refugees and their Oru host is closely connected to power struggle. Ultimately, the centrality of power to residual Liberian refugees' aspiration inheres in its being about the privilege or the dispossession of power. Rather than moan in agony on the existing political culture, residual Liberian refugees have assumed powerful agency (through voter's registration and membership with political parties) to shape the political discourse and influence elections in Oru town, Ogun State and Nigeria at large:

Electoral officials come here for voters' registration. Since we have been living here for more than 10 years, we are eligible to vote. Many of us belong to political parties and attend political meetings. Here, we vote based on campaign promises, the candidate's capacity and possibility of protecting our interests and demands.¹¹

The statement above reflects that by registering to vote, Liberian residuals have assumed powerful agency to make political demands and shape the governance system of Ogun State. The foregoing also begets a political argument on whether it is safe to still refer to them as Liberians since only qualified Nigerian citizens are registered to vote. Nonetheless, rather than moan in agony on the existing political culture, Liberian residuals have transformed into a politically active community (*through voter's registration and membership with political parties*) recognised during elections to be counted and empowered to vote in Oru town, Ogun State and Nigeria at large. The foregoing demonstrates that residual Liberian refugees desire something more concrete and asserting – political power to protect their interest and sustain their gains in Oru town.

¹¹ Researcher's taped in-depth interviews with Rebecca, female, 67 years old, residual Liberian refugee outside the closed Oru refugee camp in Oru-ljebu, 2019.

Ditto Tibetan exiles in India are exercising political power to transform their settlement into a politically active community that is highly reckoned with in the politics of the host community. Since 1959, Tibet's government-in-exile, now called the Central Tibetan Administration has had executive, judiciary and legislative arms, with candidates for the office of president, elected since 2011 by popular vote (Bhatia, 2021). Through voting and political leadership, Tibetan exiles have reconstructed their settlement in India to go beyond its previous designation as an ungoverned space. The foregoing suggests that Tibetan exiles do not consider themselves to be refugees, but rather as human beings who belong to a homeland called Tibet. This mentality has ignited a sense of motivation to assert themselves in the socio-political space of the host community without being apologetic.

Conclusion

Exilic journey as a term affirms the way experiences of exiles are transformed as they become narratives. Some of the Tibetan exiles in India and the residual Liberian refugees in Nigeria who arrived during the civil wars have elaborated meaningful narratives of journeys that build an 'exile' identity. Their existence in the countries of asylum is rooted in exile and their evolution into a diaspora community is built on suffering and exile. These narratives, which combine several experiences, have become predominant among the Tibetan and Liberian refugee community. The shared experience of the journey to exile thus apparently gave rise to the common perception of being Tibetan and Liberian.

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5. Afforestation as a means to contrast aridity and soil degradation in Rajasthan, India and Sahel, Africa: Possible space for south-south cooperation and experience exchange between the two regions

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Abstract

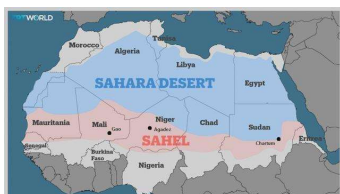
Africa and India as developing countries in an increasingly globalized world, face very similar challenges - namely, fierce economic competition, rising poverty, disruption of local equilibria, rising poverty, and various other environmental threats. While Africa and India have a long tradition of mutual support in many areas, SSC programs rarely address possible solutions to shared environmental issues, such as desertification. The Indian region of Rajasthan and the African region of Sahel are the most affected by the desertification phenomenon. The present research aims at analysing and comparing causes and solutions implemented in both these regions, while also looking at possible room for cooperation between Indian and African governments on this issue.

Introduction

India and Africa have a long tradition of mutual support and respect in the framework of South-south cooperation. However, while most of the SSC projects focus on health, economics and education, little attention is given to cooperation on environmental threats. UNDP 2017 report on SSC does not mention specifically

cooperation on climate change management, but it very generally touches on the necessity of cooperation to achieve “sustainable development”¹².

Figure 1: Map of Sahara Desert and the Sahel region



Source: Google Images

Both India and Africa are highly affected by environmental crises, first and foremost by land degradation. Particularly, two large regions in India and Africa are prone to soil aridity and are threatened by the spread of desertification: Indian Rajasthan (North-west of India) and the African Sahel (a traversal region stretching from Senegal to Eritrea and encompassing other 6 African countries - Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and Sudan). Human well-being of dry land people is still lagging significantly behind the world average, and the mitigation of desertification effects is critical and essential in meeting the 2030 Agenda SDGs in these territories.

¹² UNDP, NEPAD/AUDA (2018), *First African South-South Cooperation Report*.

Figure 2: Rajasthan, India



Source: Google Images

The present research is a comparative study of desertification processes in these two regions: its root causes, the socio-economic context, the impact on food systems, and solutions implemented by local and national governments to stem the effects of land degradation. Particularly, the research focuses on the afforestation projects implemented in India and Africa arid lands, trying to assess achievements and failures of this practice, and highlight its controversial issues. The final aim of the paper is to understand whether the Indian experience in afforestation programmes can be an example for African Sahel, taking into account all the similarities and differences of the two contexts.

The paper is structured in two main chapters: the first one gives an overview over the problem of desertification, providing specific data on Rajasthan and Sahel, while the second one illustrates past and current afforestation projects implemented in these regions. In the last paragraph, conclusions are drawn over possible room for SSC cooperation and experience exchange between India's and Africa's dry lands.

Methodology

This paper mainly relies on articles published by scientific journals, as well as data and reports provided by international organizations committed in monitoring and assessing desertification and deforestation processes, and their impacts on local livelihoods.

The following websites have been particularly useful to get a wide overview over the issues addressed in this study:

- WOCAT, a global network on Sustainable Land Management (SLM) that promotes the documentation, sharing and use of knowledge to support adaptation, innovation and decision making in SLM.
- Our World in Data, which provides an impressive amount of data and graphs on the most diversified global issues, including desertification and deforestation.
- Global Forest Watch, which collects data on changes in forest cover through advanced remote sensing.

Specific information about Rajasthan have been withdrawn from Indian research institutes, government portals and official Atlas:

- Central Arid Zone Research Institute (CAZRI), one of the biggest research institutes of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), specifically devoted to arid zone research and development. It is part of the Department of Agriculture Research and Education (DARE) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare of Government of India.
- BHUVAN open Data Portal, which reports maps and data based on satellite images acquired by Indian Remote Sensing Satellites.
- Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India, prepared by the Space Applications Centre (SAC), Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change along with several Central, State and academic institutions.

It maps land use based on satellite imagery comparing the extent, process and severity of land degradation in the country.

As for the Sahel region, the most exhaustive source of information has been "Sahel and West Africa: Atlas of Land Cover Maps" by Sahara and Sahel Observatory (2019), as well as a number of reports and articles by CILSS, IUCN, GEF and World Bank.

Finally, information on afforestation projects is mainly based on official government websites, reports and newspaper articles.

1. The challenges of desertification

Desertification is an issue of increasing global concern. When land becomes desert, its ability to support surrounding populations of people and animals declines sharply: food often doesn't grow, water can't be collected, and habitats are degraded. This often produces several human health problems that range from malnutrition, respiratory disease caused by dusty air, and other diseases stemming from a lack of clean water¹³. Moreover, land degradation results in an increase in GHG emissions following the destruction of soil organic matter, causing significant impact on the global climate system. If not controlled, desertification can permanently undermine people's livelihoods and their ability to attain sustainable development. The problem was discussed in the United Nations

Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), established in 1994. The Convention's 195 parties - including India and all Sahel countries - committed themselves to work together to improve the living conditions for people in drylands, maintain and restore land and soil productivity. These efforts involve working with farmers to

¹³ WHO (2020) *Climate change: Land degradation and desertification*
<https://www.who.int/newsroom/q-a-detail/climate-change-land-degradation-and-desertification>

safeguard arable land, repairing degraded land, and managing water supplies more effectively.

Natural and anthropic causes of desertification

Desertification can be driven by different natural processes – vegetation degradation, water erosion, wind erosion – which are interlinked and mutually enhancing: when a soil loses vegetation cover, it becomes more susceptible to wind and water erosion, which results in loss of organic material; consequently, the water-holding capacity and the nutrient content of the soil are reduced, and this becomes an additional strain on vegetation survival¹⁴.

These natural processes can be facilitated by human activities. A constant increase of population in arid and semi-arid lands is putting natural resources under enormous pressure. The problem is aggravated by the lack of a serious planning for land management, which leads to misuse, underuse or overuse of land¹⁵:

- Uncontrolled wood harvesting, land-clearing for housing and illegal farming have seriously reduced the forest cover and favoured soil erosion. Much of the land currently under cultivation is actually not fit for cultivation. Growing food crops on such land has led to the development of unsustainable agricultural practices such as intensive irrigation and overcropping. Irrigation of soils makes them prone to salinization, alkalinization and waterlogging, while over-cropping reduces the available organic matter in the soil, which decreases the ability of the soil to hold water while increasing the chance of flooding and water erosion.

¹⁴ *Erosion*, Soil science Society of America,
<https://www.soils4teachers.org/erosion>

¹⁵ Beinroth, F.H., Eswaran, H., Reich, P.F. and Van den Berg, E. (1994) *Land related stresses in agroecosystems. In: Stressed Ecosystems and Sustainable Agriculture*, New Delhi, Oxford and IBH.

- Overgrazing. The invasion of lands by agricultural activities pushed grazers onto more marginal land where vegetation is more fragile. Grasses get stressed because of animals constantly stepping on them and plucking out newly regrowing parts before plants have time to multiply.
- Trade liberalization and globalization, which contributes to land gradation by pushing the primary sector towards intensive mining and mono-cropping¹⁶.
- widespread urbanization: continuous expansions of cities, industries and other infrastructures have been usurping fertile and productive soils.
- obsolete technologies damaging soil health¹⁷;
- climate change and extreme weather conditions (draughts and uncertain rainfall), which seriously disrupt arid lands ecosystems, because of the fragility of environmental equilibria and low resilience of these territories

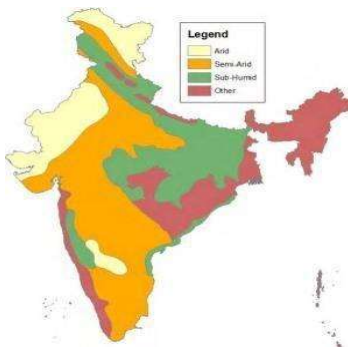
1.1 The case of Rajasthan

The analysis published by the *Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India* reveals that 29.32% of the Total Geographic Area (TGA) of the country was undergoing a process of land degradation during 2011-13.

¹⁶ Pohit, S. (2009) *Land Degradation and Trade Liberalization: An Indian Perspective*, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1457666>

¹⁷ Virmani, S.M., Katyal, J.C., Eswaran, H. and Abrol, I., (1994) *Stressed Agroecosystems and Sustainable Agriculture*. New Delhi, Oxford & IBH.

Figure 3: Climate and soil conditions in India



Source: Google Images

Figure 4: States in India



Source: Google Images

As can be noted by overlapping the two maps above, the Indian state experiencing the most severe degree of aridity is Rajasthan: it is the state with highest area under land degradation with respect to

country TGA and second highest area under land degradation with respect to state TGA (62.90% for the period of 2011-13)¹⁸.

Located in the north western part of India, on the border with Pakistan, it is the largest state of the country. It has a population density of 200 persons per sq km- lower than the national average of 382¹⁹. The major geographic features of Rajasthan are Thar desert, alluvial plain and Aravalli ranges. Soils are mostly sandy, saline, alkaline, calcareous, Clay, loamy and black lava and so on. Seasonality consists of four distinct seasons: pre-monsoon, monsoon, post-monsoon and winter with very scanty rainfall²⁰.

The pie chart shows the land use in Rajasthan. Area under forest is very small, especially in the arid zone districts. Permanent pasture and grazing land constitutes about 5% of the reporting area in Rajasthan. Cultivable wastelands - wastelands that can be brought under cultivation by providing irrigation - and fallow lands - lands that a farmer ploughs but does not cultivate for one or more seasons to allow the field to become more fertile again - together represent 17% of the territory²¹. However, the most striking data is that more than half of the total area is under agriculture. Indeed, although Rajasthan lacks in basic resources like fertile land and water

¹⁸ *Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India (2011-2013)*, Space Application Centre, Indian Space Research Organization, Government of India, https://www.sac.gov.in/SACSITE/Desertification_Atlas_2016_SAC_ISRO.pdf

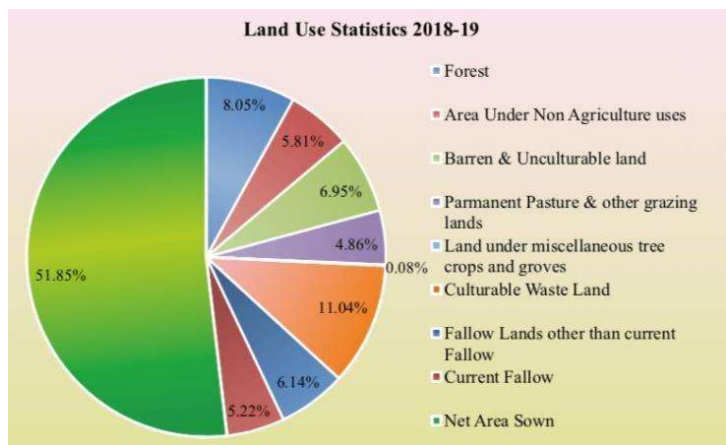
¹⁹ Low population density of Rajasthan contradicts the general belief that soil degradation is mainly driven by demographic pressure.

²⁰ *Rajasthan*, Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Rajasthan>

²¹ *Land use patterns in Rajasthan*, (2019) Pajras, <https://www.rajras.in/rajasthan/geography/land-use-pattern/>. "Non-agricultural uses" include settlements, building roads, mountains, shifting dunes, etc...

resources, agriculture continues to be the backbone of its economy²².

Figure 5: Land use in Rajasthan



Source: Pajras, 2019

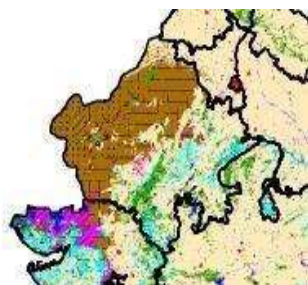
The dominant farming model in the state is family farming, based on crops association to take advantage of natural synergies. Crops are grown in rotation to maintain the fertility of soil, and to make an efficient use of water resources and farm labour. Although production has not always been “natural”, today Rajasthan is one of the Indian states most committed in agro-ecological practices, particularly organic farming, with over 81,000 hectares of registered organic farm area. Monocultures are rare, and they have been largely replaced by integrated farming systems over the last years²³.

²² *Agriculture in Rajasthan*, (2019) Pajras
<https://www.rajras.in/rajasthan/economy/agriculture/>.

²³ Singh, R.B and R. Soni, (2015) *Integrated Farming System Approach for Livelihood and Nutritional Empowerment of Tribal Farmers of Southern Rajasthan*, Popular Kheti, (3).

In recent times, thanks to advancing technology and heavy investments in infrastructures by the state, the region has achieved better productivity lifting farmers from subsistence production. The total area under cultivation has increased, and Rajasthan produces a fair share of national crops, especially mustard, pearl millet, cumin, coriander and fenugreek. Despite these improvements, yields are still very volatile, threatened by unforeseeable climatic variability, uncertain rainfalls and desertification²⁴.

Figure 6 The state of desertification in Rajasthan



Source: Google Images

The most significant process of desertification in the state is wind erosion (territories coloured in brown in the map) followed by vegetation degradation (green) and water erosion (blue)²⁵.

Wind erosion is playing a prominent role in the western part of the state and is especially active in the core of desert, resulting in loss of topsoil, damaging crop plants, and burying viable agricultural lands. Severe water erosion is found in central highland, including Aravalli

²⁴ Singh, R.B. and A. Kumar.(2016) *Agriculture Dynamics in Response to Climate Change in Rajasthan*. The Delhi University Journal of the Humanities and the Social Sciences (3: 115-138).

²⁵ *Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India*, SAC.

mountains, where it causes loss of topsoils through sheet and rill erosion, and also terrain deformation through gully and ravine land. With the introduction of canal irrigation systems, water table of the area is rising, causing salinity of the soil²⁶.

All these kinds of erosion seriously affect agriculture, aggravating poverty and threatening food and water security, especially in most arid lands. It is of the utmost importance to take action to stabilize local microclimate in order to maintain the pace of agriculture development and guarantee people's livelihoods. National and local governments have already designed and implemented several interventions intended to reduce the impact of desertification in the area, but their impact so far has been too small. According to the Atlas of India, the desertification/ land degradation area in Rajasthan has decreased by only 0.29% since 2003-05²⁷.

1.2 The case of the African Sahel

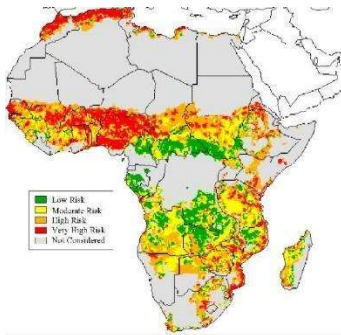
Practically every country of Africa is prone to desertification, but this is particularly true for Sahel countries. In the Sahel region soils are in general poor, sandy, not very fertile and very fragile, but the causes of such aggressive desertification are human-driven, and have been found primarily in climate change and demographic explosion of the region²⁸.

²⁶ LCLUC NASA, (2016), *Dryland Degradation in Rajasthan, India*, [https://www.lcluc.umd.edu/hotspot/drylanddegradation-rajasthanindia#:~:text=Approximately%2092%25%20of%20the%20area,%20Falkalinity%20\(Narayan%202006\)](https://www.lcluc.umd.edu/hotspot/drylanddegradation-rajasthanindia#:~:text=Approximately%2092%25%20of%20the%20area,%20Falkalinity%20(Narayan%202006).).

²⁷ *Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India, SAC*.

²⁸ USDA (2001) *Land resource stress and desertification in Africa*, https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/soils/use/?cid=nrcs142p2_054025

Figure 7: Human-induced desertification in Africa



Source: Google Images

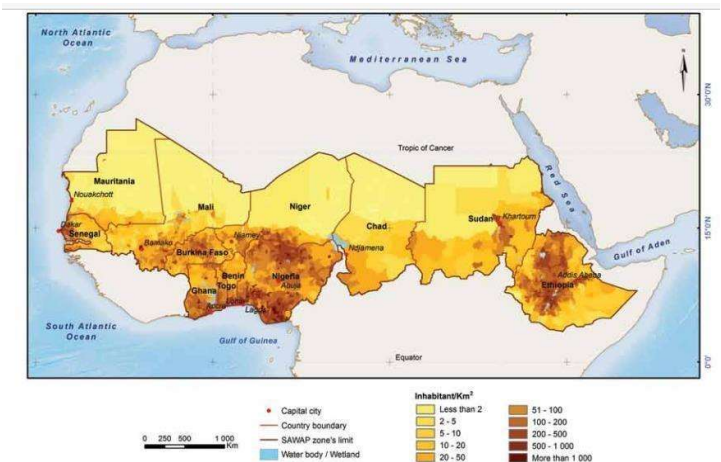
The map above (Fig 7) shows the level of risk of human-induced desertification. There is a huge debate over the links between land degradation, demographic increase and agricultural technologies, but the Sahel case of study seems to confirm the traditional view that population density and low-input agricultural systems result in high land degradation. Sub-Saharan Africa's population is growing at 2.7% a year, which is more than twice as fast as South Asia (1.2%) and three times as fast as Latin America (0.9%)²⁹. Indeed, Sahel has been defined as a "demographic bomb": according to some projections, the total population of 5 Sahel countries (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Chad) will increase from 83.7 million inhabitants in 2019, to 196 million in 2050³⁰.

²⁹ *Africa's population will double by 2050*, (2020) The Economist, <https://www.economist.com/specialreport/2020/03/26/africas-population-will-double-by-2050>

³⁰ *The Sahel is a demographic bomb*, (2019) Défis Humanitaires, <https://defishumanitaires.com/en/2019/11/27/thesahel-is-a-demographic-bomb/>

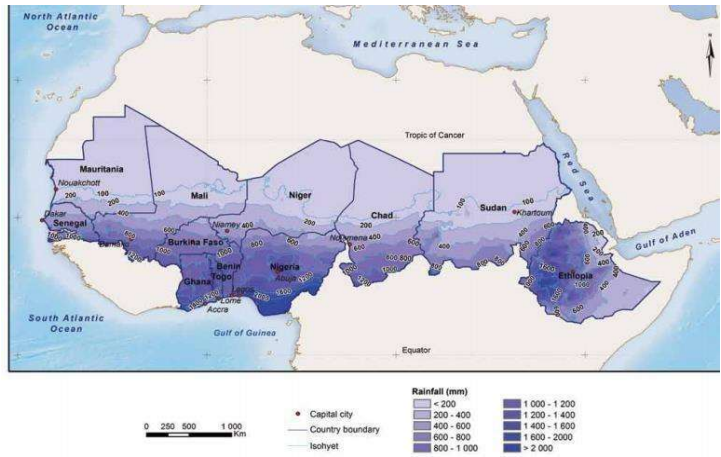
Population is not equally distributed in the territory: peaks of density are reached in the lower strip of the Sahel region, where climate conditions are more livable and lands are more fertile -although they are undergoing a severe process of desertification. By confronting the three maps below, we can easily notice that the highest concentration of population is in territories with lower levels of aridity and more abundant rainfall.

Fig 8 Population density in the Sahel Region and West Africa, 2018.



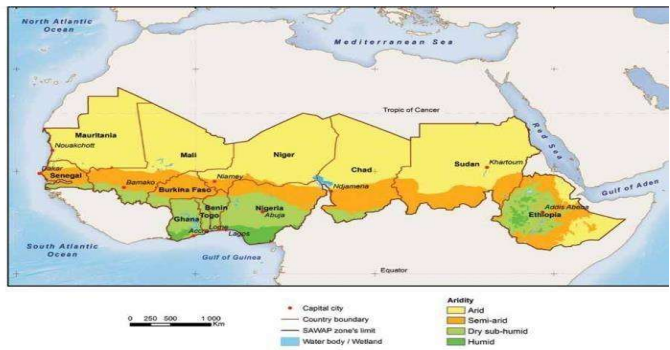
Source: Centre for International Earth Science Information Network, CIESIN

Fig 9 Average annual rainfall in the Sahel region and West Africa, 1981-2016



Source: Centre for International Earth Science Information Network, CIESIN

Fig 10 Aridity index in the Sahel zone and West Africa, 2018



Source: Centre for International Earth Science Information Network, CIESIN

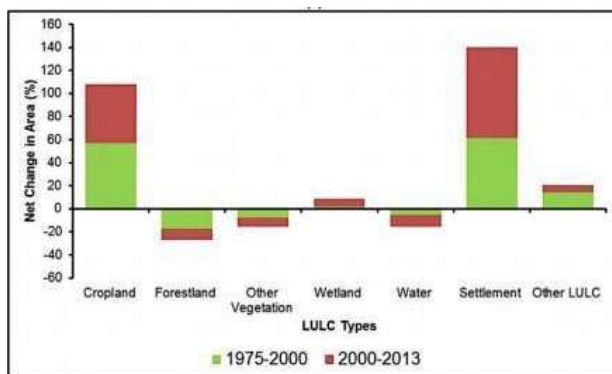
The sharp demographic increase of Sahel countries is seriously pressuring both eco- and social systems. Rural population is growing and is now three times higher than in 1968, but its increase is nothing compared to the explosion of the cities. This demographic instability and tension between urban and rural population – taking place in a context of deep poverty and vulnerability – has had dramatic consequences for social peace and economic systems³¹.

The graph shows the relative net changes (%) of the seven aggregated Land Use Land Cover (LULC) classes during 1975-2000 and 2000-2013 in the whole of West Africa³².

³¹ World Bank, *Sahel Refugees: The Human Face of a Regional Crisis*.
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28565>

³² Barnieth, A., Li Jia, M. Menenti, Jie Zhou, Yelong Zeng, (2020) *Mapping Land Use Land Cover Transitions at Different Spatiotemporal Scales in West Africa*, MDPI sustainability.

Fig 11 Relativenet changes of seven aggregated LULC classes during 1975-2000 and 2000-2013 in West Africa



Source: Barnieth, 2020

We see that the area occupied by settlements has sharply increased, and so did the area for cropland. On the contrary, forests and other type of vegetation declined, due to the search for new spaces where to farm and graze. The expansion of agricultural land in Africa accounted for around 17.5% of deforestation, but this figure can underestimate the loss of forests in Africa, for two reasons:

- much of Africa's deforestation has been driven by subsistence agricultural activities, which are not always fully captured in national statistics.
- depending on the permanence of agricultural activities such as slash-and-burn farming, some of this forest loss might be classified as "temporary forest degradation" rather than "permanent deforestation"³³.

³³ Ritchie, H. (2021) *Cutting down forests? What are the drivers of deforestation?* Our world in data, <https://ourworldindata.org/what-are-drivers-deforestation>

Agriculture and pastoralism are the most common activities in the area. Pastoralism is the only type of livestock farming able to adapt to major seasonal and inter-annual variations in plant biomass and water resources flexibly and quickly³⁴. However, due to scarcity and mismanagement of resources, this activity has become environmentally unsustainable resulting in overgrazing, soil degradation, and the failure of natural vegetation to regenerate. Herders and livestock raisers are facing continuous shortages of water, grass, and tree leaves. Under the pressure of increasing population, farmland and grazing have expanded disorderly to "residual" tracts, fallow areas have disappeared, and farming and livestock productivity has inevitably declined. For the local people, already suffering poverty, this has meant a further drop in income.

Sahel countries are trying to address these problems by converting to agro-ecological principles of merging animals and crops. Indeed, animals can play a key role in the process of intensifying sustainable agriculture by making the soil more fertile thanks the manure, as well as providing meat and energy³⁵. Integrating herding and farming activities would also reduce conflicts between herders and farmers for land and water use. Over the last years, conflicts concerning natural resources and herd mobility have increased in number and severity, further aggravating the depletion of local resources³⁶.

1.2.2 The state of desertification in the African Sahel

West Africa experienced severe drought from 1968 to 1993, which was all the more brutal as it followed a very wet period from 1950 to

³⁴ CIRAD, FAO, (2012) *Information system on pastoralism in the Sahel - Atlas of trends in pastoral systems in the Sahel 1970-2012*, <http://www.fao.org/3/i2601e/i2601e.pdf>

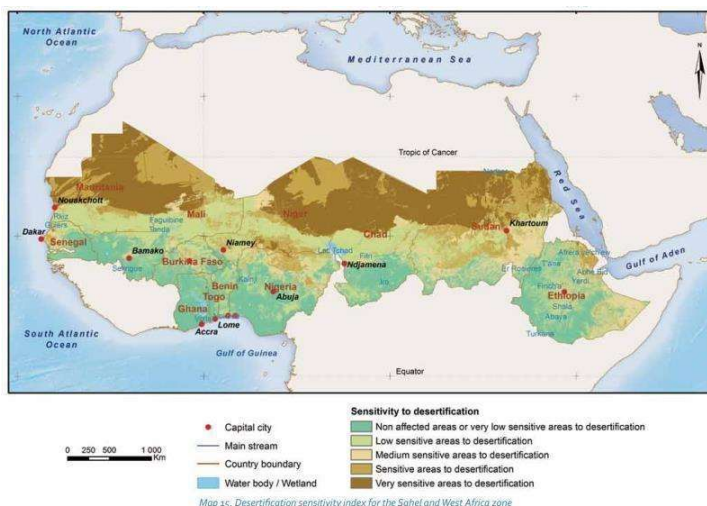
³⁵ *Farming and livestock production in the Sahel: merging the two solitudes* (2005) International development research centre <https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/bitstream/handle/10625/34869/126870.pdf>

³⁶ CIRAD, FAO (2012), *Information system on pastoralism in the Sahel*.

1967. This drought was both exceptionally long, severe (a 15-25% rainfall deficit compared with the long-term average, and a 25-50% deficit compared with the previous wet period) and spatially extensive (more than 5 million sq km). Naturally semi-arid

The Sahel zone was most affected, and still today it remains particularly sensitive to the risk of desertification. The drought resulted in vegetation degradation, which in turn resulted in soil degradation and even soil crusting, with lasting effects on soil permeability by water.

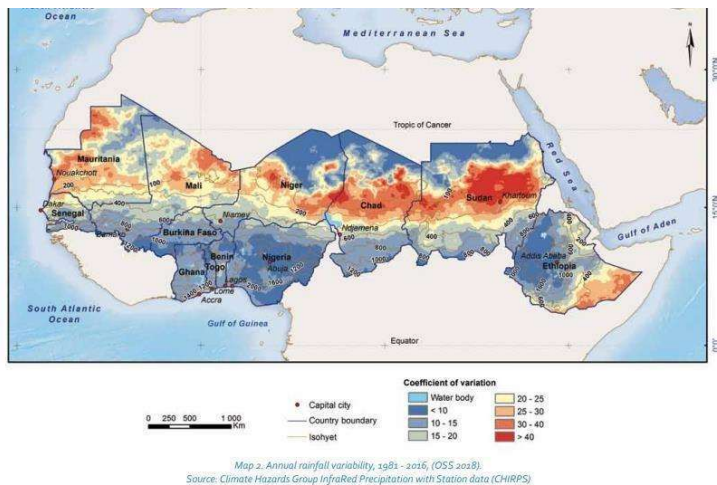
Fig 12 Desertification sensitivity index for the Sahel and West Africa zone



Source: Centre for International Earth Science Information Network, CIESIN

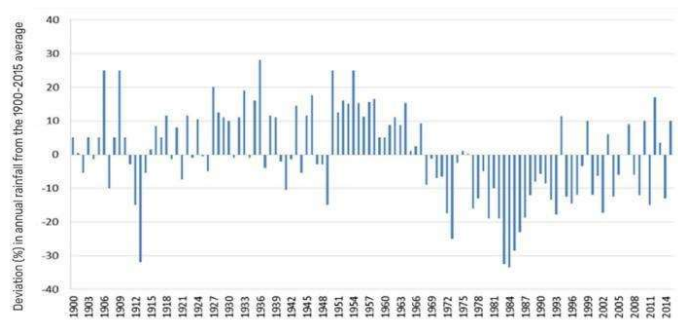
Since the mid-1990s, rainfall has returned to its long-term average level, but its frequency remains largely unpredictable, especially in Sahel. This, of course, affects the capacity of rain-fed cultivations to produce constant yields.

Fig 13 Annual rainfall variability, 1981-2016



Source: Centre for International Earth Science Information Network, CIESIN

Fig 14 Percentage change compared with rainfall average from 1900 to 2015



Source: *Our World in Data*

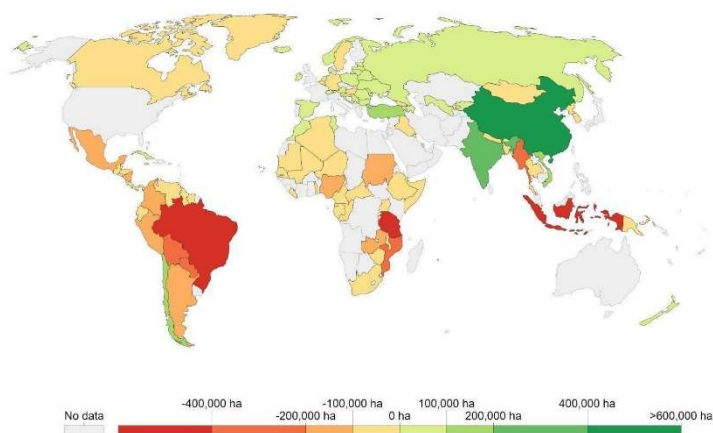
Nowadays, 25 years after “normal” frequency of rainfall, we are witnessing a widespread greening of the Sahel, attested by remote sensing. This re-greening was mainly due to herbaceous plants between 1990 and 2010, while in the last decade it has been driven by trees, which take longer to grow and therefore to be seen from satellites. Vegetation revival can be seen in areas both with and without Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) or NGO actions, suggesting that it is essentially spontaneous - although the process was accelerated by government policies and NGO projects. Savannah parks are expanding, as well as other types of highly vegetated agro-systems, such as West African mangroves; orchard areas (mango, citrus, cashew, and others) and market gardening around Niamey, northern Benin, or in the Saloum area in Senegal³⁷.

2. Afforestation as a possible solution for soil restoration: benefits and controversial issues of this practice

Practices to tackle the problem of desertification are many and diverse. However, a major activity carried out by governments, NGOs and UN agencies has been afforestation.

³⁷ UNCCD (2021) *Drought, desertification, and re-greening in the Sahel*, https://catalogue.unccd.int/1715_Drought_desertification_regreening_Sahel_Eng_Final.pdf

Fig 15 Annual change in forest area, 2015



Source: FAO, *Forest Resource Assessment*

This map shows the net change in forest cover³⁸ across the world. Countries with a positive change (shown in green) are re-growing forest faster than they're losing it; countries with a negative change (shown in red) are losing more than they're able to restore. We can easily see that, overall, India has a positive net change in forest cover, while Sahel Africa a negative one. Let's now analyse more in detail the net change in forest cover in Rajasthan and in Sahel region. Over the following two paragraphs we will encounter several labels and concepts which should not be confused. Mainly, the distinction between forest area and forest cover should be bared in mind:

³⁸ The net change in forest cover measures any gains in forest cover - either through natural forest expansion or afforestation through tree planting - minus deforestation.

- forest area: geographical area recorded as forests in government records. It is also referred to as recorded forest area.
- forest cover: all lands, more than one hectare in area with a tree canopy density of more than 10 per cent is called.

Moreover, you can refer to the following table for forest cover classification:

Table 1: Classification of forests

Class	Description
Very Dense Forest	All lands with tree canopy density of 70% and above.
Moderately Dense Forest	All lands with tree canopy density of 40% and more but less than 70%.
Open Forest	All lands with tree canopy density of 10% and more but less than 40%.
Scrub	Degraded forest lands with canopy density less than 10%.
Non-forest	Lands not included in any of the above classes.

Source: ENVIS RP on Forestry and Forest Related Livelihoods, 2015

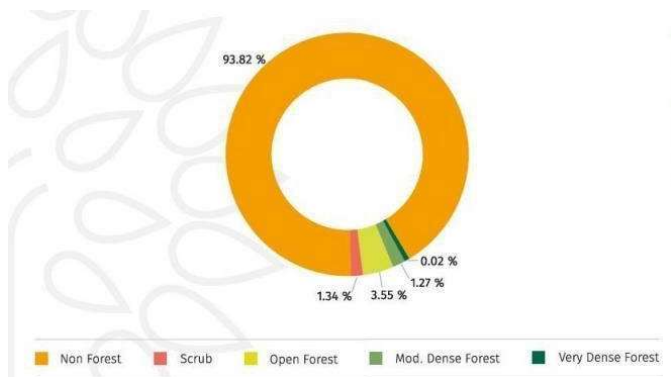
2.1 Afforestation in Rajasthan

The Rajasthan Forest Report of 2017 states that “a net gain of 466 sq km has been observed in forest cover of the State which can be attributed to plantations, regeneration of fast growing species and conservation efforts³⁹”. Although growth in forest area is positive, forests are only 7.8% of total geographical area, which is well below the minimum norms of 33% of geographical area under forests as set under the National Forest Policy in 1952⁴⁰.

³⁹ *Rajasthan Forest Report*, (2017) Forest Survey India (FSI), <https://www.brlf.in/wpcontent/uploads/2018/08/Rajasthan-Forest-Report-2017.pdf>. The estimate of the forest gain is compared to datas collected in 2015.

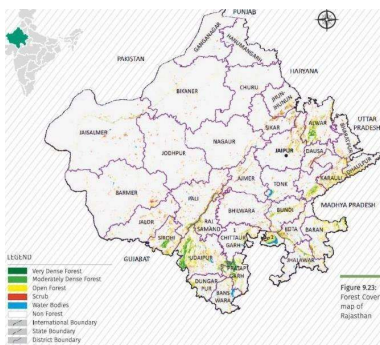
⁴⁰ *Land use patterns in Rajasthan*, (2019) Pajras. In 1952, India began an afforestation plan to cover one-third of the country with forests. The success of this plan is said to depend on the success of projects

Fig 16 Forest cover of Rajasthan



Source: *Rajasthan Forest Report, 2017*

Fig 17 Forest cover map of Rajasthan



Source: *Rajasthan Forest Report 2017*

to bring trees to Rajasthan, which is commonly referred to as the "Desert State".

One of the main projects implemented in Rajasthan is the *Rajasthan Forestry and Biodiversity Project (RFBP)*, assisted by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA). It covered 15 districts of Rajasthan State - out of which 10 are desert districts - and 7 Wildlife sanctuaries, over a 8-years period (2011-19). The project's objectives were afforestation, soil and water conservation, biodiversity conservation, poverty alleviation and livelihood improvement in selected 650 villages of the project area through active peoples' participation⁴¹.

Another major ODA afforestation project was *The Aravalli Afforestation Project*, also assisted by Japan and local NGOs. This project is much older than RFBP - it was launched in 1992 - and therefore its effects are more evident on the Rajasthan landscape. Under this project, trees were planted in 115,000 hectares in the Aravalli mountain region, with the participation of the local population both in the planning and in the planting phase. Participatory forestry was considered to be the key to break the cycle of poverty and environmental destruction, and to create mechanisms for the sustainable use of forestry resources in the region. Village Forest Protection and Management Committees (VFPMC) were established, but in practice it was difficult for the committees to be truly independent: following a government order in 1999, the Department of Forest placed cattle guards or provided VFPMCs with financial support to do so, to guard the forests after planting. The project aimed not only at halting desertification, but also at producing timber, animal feed, and fruit, thereby contributing to development of the local economy. Intermediate products such as fallen timber, pasturage, feed from leaves and branches, and fruit were entirely the property of the local residents, while final products such as firewood, lumber, and bamboo will be

⁴¹ RFBP (*Rajasthan Forestry and Biodiversity Project*), Phase II, NYVAS, http://nyvas.org/rajasthan_forestry_biodiversity.php#:~:text=RFBP%20is%20JICA%2C%20JAPAN%20funded,biodiversity%20by%20undertaking%20afforestation%20and

split equally between the Department of Forestry and the residents⁴².

An impact evaluation of the project was carried out in 2000, assessing that the results of the project were overall “largely consistent”, especially regarding afforestation, job creation and improvement of habitat for wild animals by promoting forestry. Moreover, the project had a very positive impact on the stimulation of self-governing organizations through the founding of VFPMCs – although a major problem was the inclusion of all villagers⁴³.

2.2 Afforestation in the Sahel region

Between 1990 and 2005, in the West Africa and Sahel region, forest cover decreased by 1.2 million hectares per year, which is well above the continental average. The reduction in forest cover is essentially related to the conversion of forests for agriculture, logging (fuel wood and exporting raw logs), extractive operations, infrastructure development and fires⁴⁴.

⁴² ODA, *Afforestation Plan for Rajasthan State - Afforestation Project in Aravalli Mountains*.

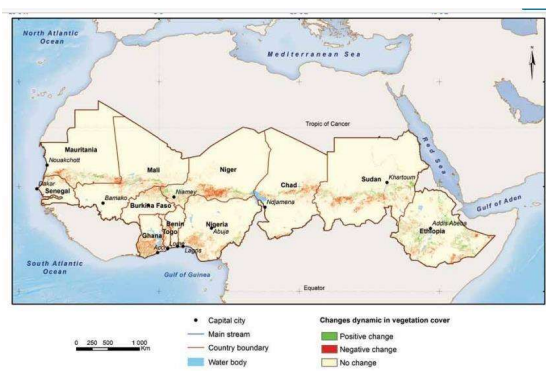
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/summary/1997/topics1.html>

⁴³ *Afforestation Project in Aravalli Hills - Impact Evaluation*, (2001)

https://www.jica.go.jp/english/our_work/evaluation/oda_loan/post/2001/pdf/e_theme_07_smry_01.pdf

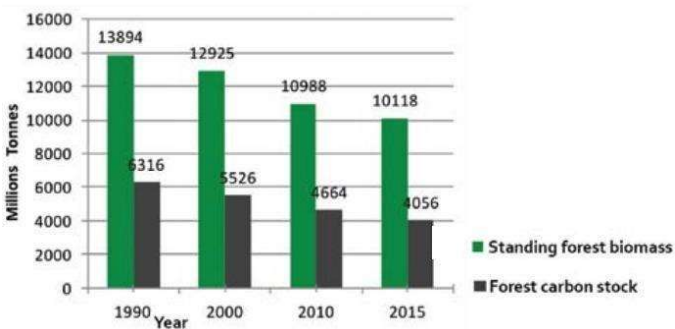
⁴⁴ FAO (2020), *The state of the world's forests*, <http://www.fao.org/state-of-forests/en/>

Fig 18 Changes in land use in the Sahel zone and West Africa, 2018



Source: European Space Agency, ESA

Fig 19: Evolution of living biomass and carbon stock in the forests of the Sahel zone and West Africa



Source: Global Forest Watch

SLWM (Sustainable Land and Water Management) practices have received much attention over these last years. These practices always include agroforestry, assisted natural regeneration, reforestation and afforestation. The idea that the world needs more vegetation for sustainable development seems to be widely shared by all environmentalists and economists. Apparently, planting new trees brings all the benefits: they would halt the process of global warming by sucking carbon out of the atmosphere; curb wind and water erosion; restore degraded lands; provide food and timber for people and animals⁴⁵. The Sahel, with its vast, empty savannahs and arid plains, offers a great opportunity to create enormous forests with relative ease. Planting trees that are very adapted to their arid environment –such as *Acacia Senegal* and *Acacia Seyal* - would enable the mobilization of water resources and nutrients that are beneficial to soils.

In the light of these considerations, the UNCCD in 2007 promoted the epic Great Green Wall Initiative, an effort to plant a green belt spanning 7,675 km from Senegal to Djibouti. The Sahel and West Africa Program (SAWAP), financed by the World Bank and the Global Environment Facility, supports this initiative. It is composed of thirteen projects: 12 national projects in 12 countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan, and Togo), on various issues and themes relating largely to SLWM, and a regional project on “Building Resilience Through Innovation Communication and Knowledge Services”, called BRICKS. Not all the national projects are specifically about afforestation, but all of them include re-greening through different practices. Moreover, all SAWAP projects are coordinated through annual conferences, regional meetings that bring together

⁴⁵ An example of the beneficial effects of afforestation comes from the gum Arabic in Niger. The restoration of gum Arabic has revitalized ecosystems and the local economy, as gum Arabic is highly sought-after worldwide by the food, pharmaceutical or cosmetic industries. (Dudje, I., Gambo and Adewusi (2007), *The prospects of integrating gum arabic (acacia spp.) into the traditional farming systems in nigerian semi-arid savannah*, Researchgate,,https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264205362_THE_PROSPECTS_OF_INTEGRATING_GUM_ARABIC_ACACIA_SPP_INTO_THE_TRADITIONAL_FARMING_SYSTEMS_IN_NIGERIAN_SEMIARID_SAVANNA/citations)

all the countries and agencies implementing the project, providing the opportunity for exchange and discussion on best practices⁴⁶.

On a wider scale, beyond the Sahel region, afforestation is promoted by the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative, financed by WB and Western countries. 30 African countries all over the continent adhered to the project and agreed to reforest 100-million hectares by 2030⁴⁷. As noted by the journalist Allison:

*The project is presented as a win-win: for foreign donors, who can bolster their green credentials; and for African leaders, who can claim to be fighting climate change while generating a sizable financial windfall for their governments. [...] But it might not be a win for the environment*⁴⁸.

Besides, it is far from settled whether substituting African grasslands with forests would have the intended effect: several researchers have argued that the grassy biomass targeted for afforestation are better than forests at conserving carbon, especially because forests are more subject to fires⁴⁹. Moreover, it can't be excluded that some types of trees will turn out to be invasive and problematic.

⁴⁶ TerrAfrica, World Bank, GEF, (2011) *Sahel and West Africa Program in Support of the Great Green Wall Initiative*, http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/SAWAP_English_Fin_al_1.pdf

⁴⁷ AFR100, <https://afr100.org/>

⁴⁸ Allison, A., (2019), *The trouble with indiscriminate tree-planting in Africa*, Mail Guardian, <https://mg.co.za/article/2019-10-31-00-the-trouble-with-indiscriminate-tree-planting-in-africa/>

⁴⁹ USDA (2017) *Considering Forest and Grassland Carbon in Land Management*, https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/wo-

A panel of 46 scientists from around the world - many of whom are leading scientists in Africa - in a Technical Comment published in the journal *Science* argued that “afforestation of large areas of Africa to mitigate climate change will destroy valuable ecological, agricultural, and tourist areas, while doing little to reduce global CO₂ levels”⁵⁰. Moreover, the impact of afforestation on water consumption should be considered, especially in areas affected by scarcity of water resources like Sahel.

It is important to carefully consider places best suited for afforestation, as the amount of water reduction is very context-dependent and varies across the regions, according to land use history, the level of rainfall, and other factors. There is the danger that in some areas changes in water availability would make costs of tree-planting programmes higher than benefits⁵¹.

Finally, it should be considered that the Sahel region is troubled by constant conflicts for land and resources, and afforestation could aggravate these conflicts by “sucking up” large lands which are considered “nobody’s land” but that are actually “somebody’s land”.

Conclusions

Over the last three decades, afforestation has been largely promoted by international organizations as well as by national and local governments. Results of afforestation projects are overall positive: land restoration through afforestation is a proven and cost-

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⁵⁰ Alan Grainger, Louis R. Iverson, Gregg H. Marland, Anantha Prasad, (2019) *Comment on “The global tree restoration potential*. *Science*,

⁵¹ Ogada, J., (2020) *Rivers running dry as reforestation grows*, SciDevNet, <https://www.scidev.net/sub-saharan-africa/news/rivers-running-dry-as-reforestation-grows/>

effective strategy that can jumpstart a green economic recovery. It creates green jobs, uplifts rural communities, and delivers significant benefits for human health, biodiversity, and climate change⁵². However, there are some important by-products of afforestation that cannot be ignored – namely disruption of local ecosystems and social equilibria. This is true especially in the Sahel, where the problem of desertification is particularly difficult to tackle, compared to the Rajasthan case, because in the Sahel the crisis is multi-country and is aggravated by frequent conflicts between tribes, villagers, farmers and herders. For sure Africa must find a judicious use of soils to sustain their productivity in the foreseeable future, but ecological restoration should work on restoring local ecosystems, not on creating new ones *ex novo*. In other words, the focus should not be exclusively on forests, but also on grasslands, savannahs, and shrub lands.

The final take away of this paper is that while land degradation is a global problem, it takes place locally and requires local solutions. What is proved to be effective in one region is not necessarily effective in another part of the world. The Rajasthan and the Sahel case do present important similarities – climatic conditions, type of socio-economic structure – but specific contexts are very different. Mutual exchange of experiences can certainly be helpful in creating a set of best practices which could be of inspiration for both parties, but final results are inevitably affected by a number of factors which are closely dependent on local conditions and equilibria.

⁵² UNCCD (2021) *Restored Land, Healthy People, Green Recovery. Build Forward Better with Land-Centered Solutions*, <https://knowledge.unccd.int/publications/restored-land-healthy-people-green-recovery-build-forward-better-land-centered>

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6. Indians NGOs and Organizations Working for the Siddi Community

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Abstract

The Siddis are a community that have their origins in East Africa. They presently occupy small areas in some Indian states. However, indifference on part of the government has led to their social exclusion, resulting in poor living conditions. Organizations such as the Siddi Education Welfare Society (SEWS) and the Bridge of Sports are working to uplift the Siddi community in India. The article discusses the various efforts taken by these organizations and their ongoing efforts to empower the community in the fields of education and sports. This research argues that there is also a pressing need for intensive government effort to integrate the Siddi community into mainstream society.

Introduction

This research paper focuses on the condition of the Siddi community, who have their origins in East Africa. They came to the Indian sub-continent about 400-500 years ago and are currently scattered across various Indian states like Gujarat, Karnataka, Goa, and Andhra Pradesh. They are also found in small groups across the Sindh region (Pakistan), Sri Lanka and the Maldives Islands. The Siddi community in India still survives in poor living conditions and are socially and economically disadvantaged. Although the Indian government has done little to empower the Siddi community in the past few years, there are some Indian not-

for-profit organizations working to uplift the community at the ground level.

Who are The Siddis?

Siddis live in small, isolated communities. Their ancestry can be traced back to the Bantu people who were brought to Indian subcontinent through slave trade, mostly by Portuguese and Arab traders. There are about 50,000 Siddis living in India, of which a third lives in Karnataka. They are settled mostly in or around Yellapur, Haliyal, Ankola, Joida, Mundgod and Sirsi talukas (Districts) of Uttara Kannada, and in Khanapur and Kalghatgi districts of Belgaum and Dharwad, respectively.

Historical background: Historical references to Africans in India can be found from the thirteenth century onwards. The lucrative East African slave trade carried out by the Arabs involved the transportation and sale of Africans from the Swahili coast to the Persian Gulf, Red Sea ports and India. The region known as the Swahili coast extended from the shoreline of Northern Kenya to Southern Tanzania and included Zanzibar, Mozambique, Madagascar and South-eastern Somalia. Most of the slaves arriving in India came from Zanzibar via Muscat and Oman. In India, Siddis were mostly brought in to be palace guards in Kodagu during the reign of Doda Veerajendra (1763-1809) (as is referenced in the Kannada book, *Kodagina Itihasa*). A Siddi Gajaveera is noted to have forged an alliance with Sangoli Rayana in his revolt against British in 1829-30 near Kittur.

It should be emphasized that not all people of African descent can be traced to have slave origins. African migrated or were brought to India throughout various time periods in history. Many of these also came as sailors, soldiers, mercenaries, merchants, eunuchs, pearl-divers, concubines. Some of these also served as the body-guards of princely rulers.

The descendants of African slaves or sailors residing in Gujrat are popularly referred to as 'Habshis' or 'Siddis'. There are several theories regarding the origin of the word 'Siddi'. Some historians believe it stems from the word 'sahib' – a term used in India and Pakistan to convey respect, and a term of veneration utilized in North Africa. The word could also have been derived from the word 'sayyid' – which was used to refer to the captains of the Arab vessels that brought the Siddis into the Indian subcontinent. Similarly, the term 'Habshi' was used in Arabic and Persian to refer to Abyssinian and/or Ethiopian captains. The Siddis in India speak the language of the states they live in.

The physiognomy of the Siddis resembles that of African ethnic groups. They are considered courageous, industrious, hard-working, and loyal. Siddis have successfully maintained their African cultural features, despite living in India for centuries. This is because they largely marry within their own community to preserve their cultural heritage. It's quite rare for a Siddi to marry outside their community.

The Siddi population across the Indian subcontinent has been ignored, socially and economically. This is despite the fact that the community is well-known for their physical and athletic abilities. In fact, in the 1980's, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) decided that the natural athleticism of Siddi children could be tapped into to help India win medals at the international stage. Kamala Mingel Siddi is considered one of the best athletes in India and in the Siddi community.

Siddis were brought under the category of Scheduled Tribes on 8th January 2003, to empower them constitutionally. Policies were devised to provide them with homes, facilities, water and sanitation, education, roads, family hospitals and the right to collect forest produce. In 2006, UNESCO also voiced support for the rehabilitation for this tribe. However, despite gaining national rights, as well as international acclamation and recognition, the tribe is still far from receiving benefits from the government. Educational standards have been dismal and they have poor living standards in India. Despite this, some Siddis have reached prominent positions in the Deccan. They have a rich cultural lineage and are of historical significance.

This research emphasizes the work done by the not-for-profit organizations of India namely: the 'Siddi Education Welfare Society' and the 'Bridges of Sports Foundation'. It highlights the efforts to uplift the social and economic conditions of the Siddi community through their interventions in the education and sports sector which has benefitted the Siddi tribal children and brought them into the mainstream.

The Siddi Education Welfare Society (SEWS)

The Siddi Education Welfare Society was founded with the main aim of alleviating poverty among the Siddi tribal community living in the forest regions of Karnataka state in Karwar district. They live a life of absolute poverty due to lack of education and training. Mr. Bosco Kaweesi, president of the Siddi Education Welfare Society in Gadgera, Karnataka, is a Ugandan national. He came to Pune, India as a student in 1995. After completing his studies, he took up activism and social work. He was interested in the origins and socio-economic status of the Siddi Tribal community in North Karnataka after being introduced to the community by a friend. He conducted a need-based assessment research to identify the problems affecting the community and understand their causes. He also devised plans for intervention such as through education of the Siddi children, who had thus far been highly inadequate in developing skills and in securing gainful employment. In fact, they were taught only in Kannada medium. Mr Kaweesi realised that only 1 per cent of students were able to introduce themselves in English.

During his research, Mr Kaweesi came across a teacher, who was running a school that taught 1st to 6th standard in a single room. The first-row was allotted the 1st standard; second row for 2nd standard, and so on. When the students of the first standard were taught, the rest were asked to keep silent. The students of each standard were taught in a similar way. Mr Kaweesi was appalled to see the education that Siddi children were receiving as compared to the level of education for the rest of Indian rural community. He concluded that the government had not paid adequate attention to the development of the community.

Mr Kaweesi believed that Siddis were marginalised and discriminated against. They were accorded the Scheduled Tribes status but did not have any political representation, such as an MP in the parliament. At the beginning of his research, Mr Kaweesi found that a majority of the Siddi people worked for Brahmins, as bonded labourers on their farms. Brahmins controlled the resources of the society and the Siddis had little access to employment opportunities

Mr Kaweesi realised the need for quality education and established the Siddi Education Welfare Society (SEWS) – the first school of its kind in India for the Siddi tribal community. It is a not-for-profit organization which provides social education and higher education to enable the Siddi community to improve their standard of living. It educates over 200 Siddi children in various schools across India. More than 20 young boys and girls have graduated through the organization. It also conducts several other activities such as, health/ medical programmes, creation of awareness, training/ skilling of youth etc.

The Bridges of Sports Foundation:

The Bridges of Sports Foundation is a Bangalore based non-profit organisation. It was established in the year 2016. It trains children from the tribal and marginalised communities to develop their latent potential for sports. The organization aims to provide an opportunity for tribal youth to excel and build a career in sports. It was recently selected for the incubation program at the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore. The organisation is supported by the Infosys Foundation, the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, NSRCEL (a leading startup hub incubation centre in India), the Deshpande Foundation, and N/core.

The Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE) – a private university in Manipal, Karnataka – conducted a scientific sports program for the first time in 2019 under its corporate social

responsibility (CSR) fund. Sports science students visited athletes and collected data to assess their performances, in collaboration with the Bridges of Sports Foundation. Most of the athletes belonged to the Siddi community, and some were from other tribes. The programme included physiological tests to ascertain areas of improvement and a 15-day training camp in Manipal. It was guided by the Department of Exercises and Sports Sciences at the university. The department is also working with the Bridges of Sports Foundation to coach children from the Siddi community for the 2024 Olympics.

The Bridges of Sports was started with the initiative of a few Olympians who had worked with communities in Karnataka, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. Till today, almost 1800 children have been trained under these youth coaches. Most of the athletes are from the Siddi community who were otherwise 'neglected'. The community is mainly settled in forest dwellings which has cut them off from mainstream resources and opportunities. The Bridges of Sports Foundation focuses on providing access to children to learn, play, and excel in athletics in the state of Karnataka, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh and to have some representation in mainstream society.

The foundation has collaborated with local schools in the regions where Siddi communities reside to provide training for popular sports and encourage skillbuilding and employment. In an attempt to revive these efforts, the organization is building a sustainable sports ecosystem in North Karnataka. The organization's annual grassroots community league called PATANG (Planning Athletic Training and Nurturing Grassroots) conducts events to identify and select hidden talents in children from remote areas. The sports abilities of the participants are recorded and compared with international records for that particular sport and age. Based on the time differences, the children are categorised in youth level coaching and senior level coaching. The best athletes (within 10% of the international record) are taken through rigorous physical training, nutritional support, sports psychology, personality development and injury prevention, with the aim of preparing them for the Olympics. It also conducts information sessions for parents, team building activities and workshops for athletes.

In April 2017, selected coaches from the Bridges of Sports foundation travelled 800 kms across Karnataka to reach Siddi children and convince their parents to allow them to join schools and trainings for sports. Coaches like Anil and Malangoudar visited shelters of Siddi families in rural areas and found them living in extreme poverty. The coaches managed to enroll at least 30 Siddi children in the foundation at Mundgod town in Karnataka. Ravikiran and Yesumariya were two of the children enrolled, both former residents of Yellapur – a Siddi settlement in the remote forests of Karnataka. Ravikiran was admitted into Loyola school in Mundgod with the help of the foundation. He received rigorous training for track athletics and won a gold medal at the taluk level and a bronze at the district meet. Coach Anil mentored these and supported them throughout their schooling. Partnership with the local schools provides the Siddi children with education, accommodation and food throughout the schooling year. Support is provided to all children and not just the successful athletes.

Coach Anil recounts that when he met Yesumariya for the first time in Haliyala, she was hesitant to join the training program but consented for her daughter to join instead. She was selected along with her brother for training in shot put and discus throw. She bagged gold in both the events at the taluk level. The Siddi children selected from Mungod have bagged more than 12 medals, 7 of which were won in only 3 months. This surprised everyone, especially the local authorities. The organisation thus realised the significance of sports as a means of social development and in lifting the younger generation out of poverty. One prominent outcome of these initiatives is the mobilising power of sports to promote, sustain, and enable social development.

Government Schemes:

The Sports Authority of India started the 'Special Area Games Scheme' scheme in 1987, under the leadership of the then Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sport, Margaret Alva. It catered to the training and support of members of the Siddi community. About 65 Siddis were initially selected to be trained in athletic events as a part

of this initiative. However, it was discontinued in 1993. There were several efforts to revive it in the 2000s, but they were unsuccessful. The scheme has been criticised for being short-sighted, lacking inclusiveness and good coaches.

Conclusion:

Clearly, there is an urgent need for quality primary and higher education in English that can be provided free of charge to the marginalised communities such as the Siddis. To uplift these isolated communities, the Gol needs to take dedicated steps to ensure the continuity of schemes in sport and education that they can benefit from. The schemes also face other issues such as unsatisfactory performance of students, lack of trained coaches, and athletes dropping out. These problems need to be addressed in the long term.

The efforts of the Bridges of Sports Foundation and the SEWS have shown that the youth of the Siddi community have the potential to empower themselves, their families and their community as a whole. Poverty alleviation, training and skilling, employment generation and proper integration into mainstream society are all possible for the Siddis with support from educational and sports associations. Several among the Siddi community have gained professional expertise in their respective sports field, and are now coaching the younger athletes.

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India pioneered the establishment of Area Studies Programmes (ASP) in the developing world since the mid-1950s, under the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, to understand and manage India's external relations. The first Centre for African Studies in India was established at Delhi University (1955) and at Mumbai University in 1971. The Centre is a teaching cum research department and generates knowledge on various facets of Africa, its; history, culture, politics, geography, economic development, South- South Development Cooperation and Africa in global affairs. The current focus of the Centre has been on India- Africa contemporary and historical connections across the Indian Ocean world through trade, inter- alia, in the textiles, agriculture, engineering goods, energy and pharmaceutical sectors. It works closely with the private and government sector- the ministry of external affairs, the Exim Bank of India, NGO's and think tanks.

The Centre completes fifty (golden jubilee) years in 2021. It offers a certificate course in trade with Africa and degree courses at the Masters and Ph.D level. Its outreach activities are via seminars, publications and online internships. Students from the Centre (including from Africa) are engaged in administrative, diplomatic and defence services, in teaching and at research centres, globally.