Ethnicity and Inequality: Violent Conflict and Youth Mobility in Odisha, India

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Abstract: The potential of ethnicity-based horizontal inequality for violent group conflict and its implications for intra-generational mobility prospects of affected youth have been explored in this paper. Based on a field study in the remote and backward Kandhamal district in the poor eastern Indian state of Odisha, this paper argues that both the causes and consequences of ethnic conflict between the two warring communities of Kandhas and Panos in the area were inextricably and dialectically linked to the desperate attempts for up-ward social mobility by two of the most disadvantaged groups in Odisha. The efforts for socio-economic advancement and mobility by the minority Christian Panos, a former untouchable caste, were violently opposed by the numerically dominant Hindu Kandha tribals. The paradigmatic changes in the political-economy of the poor state since 1990s in the forms of the launch of economic globalisation and political ascendancy of Hindu right, gave a particularly virulent dimension to the ethnic conflict in the area. The intense struggle for increasingly scarce resources, competitive proselytisation, instigation of the fear of loss of cultural identity and perceived threat of political marginalisation, all fed into the deadly cocktail of ethnicity, horizontal inequality and the powerful drive for up-ward social mobility.

Key words: Ethnicity, Inequality, Conflict, Mobility, Kandha, Pano, Kandhamal.

Introduction: The study of ethnic relations is, in a significant way, a commentary on the relationship between ethnicity, socio-economic status and inequality. Ethnicity-based and induced inequality has more to do with group rather than with individual level differences. Thus when entire groups are disadvantaged rather than individuals, ethnic inequality becomes a vexed issue. Ethnic identities are ascriptive in the sense that they are linked to one’s skin colour or religious or caste backgrounds and therefore cannot be easily changed through individual choices (Horowitz, 1985). This makes ethnicity-based categorical or horizontal inequality (Tilly, 1999; Stewart, 2008) particularly durable. Ethnic inequality has a number of detrimental implications for society including violent conflict between different ethnic groups (Cederman, Weidmann and Gleditsch, 2011). Inequality propels conflict when it coincides with prominent group identities. Horizontal inequalities are translated into grievances, which in turn forms a mobilization resource for ethnic conflict. Inter-group disparities along ethnic lines have led to vicious intra-state conflicts in many societies. Violent conflicts between coexisting ethnic groups signal a breakdown of the regulated competitive framework of ethnic relations in the society.

Horizontal inequalities are inequities that may be reflected across various domains like economic, political and social between culturally defined groups. These groups may be
defined on the basis of geographical affiliation, gender, religion, class, caste or language, etc. This is different from vertical inequality that measures inequality between individuals irrespective of their affiliation with a particular group. Imbalanced development that involves sharp horizontal inequalities (group differences) is an important cause of conflict. These horizontal inequalities may have many dimensions including economic, social and political. Ethnicity may thus represent the manipulation and mobilization of group identity against structured inequalities, induced discriminations or power politics. It may be pointed out here that ethnic mobilization does not take place among disadvantaged or minority groups alone. Ethnicity may also be used by the advantaged groups in order to pressurize the power structure for the fulfillment of their rising aspirations, expectations and needs for upward mobility. It is thus a purposive mobilization of a group of people (Phadnis, 1995).

Violent conflict is interpreted here as a situation in which at least two organized parties resort to the use of force against each other1. Violent conflict is hence categorized by its collective dimension (i.e. violence executed by organized groups, as opposed to forms of violence put in place by single individuals), and its sustained nature (i.e. violence that is long-drawn-out in time, as opposed to forms of violence that take the form of occasional outbursts). It must be noted from its inception that this paper does not reflect other forms of conflict that are significant with reference to youth involvement i.e., gang violence and terrorism. However, the lines of differentiation between different types of violence are much more indistinct than a rigid classification might suggest, and various typologies often co-occur at the same time.

**Contextualising Kandhamal Conflict in Odisha, India:** One such violent ethnic conflict broke out between tribal Kandhas and a former untouchable caste of Dalit Panos during 2007, one day before Christmas in Kandhamal, a remote and backward district in the eastern Indian state of Odisha. These conflicts lasted for a few days, subsided, and then broke out again in August 2008. In the two rounds of Kandhamal conflicts, there were more than fifty-two deaths, 20,000 families were affected and around 25,000 people were rendered homeless. Dozens of cases of sexual assault and rape, destruction of thousands of homes, temporary or permanent displacement of over five thousand refugees also took place. More than 5000 houses and 250 religious institutions including places of worship, churches and prayer halls were damaged (Office of Kandhamal District Collector, 2009).

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The dialectical interface between ethnic inequalities and violence was writ large in the conflict between the scheduled tribe (ST) Kandhas and the scheduled caste (SC) Panos, the two major communities of Kandhamal. Tribals and Dalits together constituted about 70 percent of Kandhamal population with the Kandhas constituting 52 percent and the Panos constituting 17 percent of the district population. As is evident, tribal Kandhas constituted the majority and dominant community in Kandhamal, while the Panos constituted the minority community. Kandhamal was primarily a rural society with 92.70 percent of its population living in rural areas and more than two third of its population lived below the official poverty line (Govt. of Odisha, 2017). Kandhamal conflict involved two of the most marginalised communities of the state i.e., the Kandha tribe and the Panos, a former untouchable caste (presently known as SCs or Dalits).

Both constituted two important and numerically significant and socio-culturally different ethnic groups, each having a distinct culture of its own. The Kandhas were the early settlers of Kandhamal whereas the Panos were immigrants who had migrated long ago to serve the Kandhas as scavengers, weavers, musicians, messengers, companions, middlemen, procurers of victims for meriah sacrifice, and they constitute the bulk of the labour force for agriculture. In turn, the Kandhas provided them homestead land, wage for their labour, gifts in different socio-religious functions, etc. The relationship between the Kandhas and the Panos was that of master and subject.

Colonial intervention changed this scenario by introducing new land relations and depriving the Kandhas of their traditional rights over the forest land. Moreover, refusal by Kandhas to directly deal with the outside world, gave an opportunity to the Panas, both material and political. With the advent of Christian missionaries in the area in pre-independent times, the Panos embraced the new faith in large numbers to get rid of their despised untouchable status and to climb up the ladder of social hierarchy. Conversion to Christianity made them more resourceful in their exposure to education and other resources of modernity. They made material and symbolic gains in terms of getting modern education, jobs, undertaking small trade and even acquiring land under the colonial rule. This made the Kandhas resentful, and they started despising the Panos as was evident in the use of terms like “liars”, “hypocrites”, “cheats”, exploiters”, for them. In the post independence scenario, the situation got further crystallized with the perception that the Panos, with the help of the state as well as the
church, have been siphoning the maximum benefits due to their educational and economic advantage and better exposure to the outside world.

Thus a communal divide has been superimposed on the ethnic division between Kandhas and Panos. The divisive political, religious and extremist forces on both sides have exploited the situation to create disturbances and widen the gap between both communities. As a result, there have been periodic eruptions of ethnic violence in Kandhamal, particularly since the early 1990s, when the political-economic scenario in the state changed with the launch of unbridled globalisation and formal arrival of Hindu right wing on the political scene of Odisha. For instance, in 2004, a Catholic Church was vandalized in Raikia. In 2006, the situation further worsened when the name “Kui” was entered in the ST list of Orissa, as a synonym of the Kandhas. The Panos promptly demanded ST status, because like the Kandhas they also spoke the same “Kui” language. This further infuriated the Kandhas as they apprehended that their rivals would not only snatch away their economic resources, but also their sacred cultural resources and their reservation benefits by claiming an equal status. Their anger manifested in their attack on Christians on Christmas eve in 2007, following a brutal attack on Swami Laxmananda, who had been working in the region since the 1960s’. The Christians retaliated, some Hindu houses were burnt in Brahmanigaon, and the Swami and his associates’ were murdered in August 2008. This sparked off an ethno-communal conflict that surpassed all previous incidents in their ferocity and intensity.

Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug (2013) conceptualize a framework where four steps are needed to be in place for structural asymmetries to grow into grievances: 1) group identification, 2) group comparison, 3) evaluation of injustice, and 4) framing and blaming. Thus, in order for grievances to grow, group members have to identify with the group identity, make comparisons based on this group identity to other groups, gauge identified irregularities as unjust, and target the blame for this on a specific factor. Horizontal inequalities thus turn into grievances and lead to ethnic mobilisation to counter those grievances. This paper makes an attempt to capture how horizontal inequalities between ethnic groups lead to violent mobilization and conflict and the implications of such violent conflict for social mobility prospects of the affected youth.

**Inequality and Ethnicity in Kandhamal, Odisha:** The socio-economic and historical differences between the two most underprivileged communities – the Panos and Kandhas
were exacerbated by social inequality. Ethnic communities feel in terms of “us” and “them” in the process of generating ethnic consciousness. This feeling emerges when one group or community realizes its relative deprivation in comparison with others. Ethnicity, in this context, is the “phenomenon of an ethnic group coming to self-awareness that enables it to reaffirm its identity and pursue its interests” (Heredia, 1997: 1011). Social inequality leading to exclusion is a leading cause of conflict and insecurity in many parts of the world. Excluded groups that suffer multiple disadvantages may come together when they have unequal rights, are denied a voice in political processes and feel marginalized from the mainstream of their society (Beall and Piron, 2005: 8). According to Marshall Wolf, ethnicity is not the ultimate, irreducible source of violent conflict. In other words, violence does not spontaneously erupt between otherwise peacefully coexisting ethnic groups. Power and material gain can be strong motivations for leaders and followers alike, to choose “conflict over cooperation, violence over negotiations” in inter-ethnic relations (Wolf, 2006: 3).

Historically, the relationship between these two excluded and marginalised communities in Kandhamal was not disruptive and violent. A society previously marked by a pragmatic tolerance for differences or “civility of indifference”, as documented by British sociologist F.G. Bailey in the 1950s’, spiralled into genocidal violence during the 2000s. In fact, the violent turn in the struggle between Kandhas and Panas came during the 1990s, which reached a crescendo during 2007-08. This period was co-terminus with significant changes in the political-economy of Odisha, including the launch of neo-liberal economic reforms and political ascendancy of the Hindu right wing in the state. Writing during the 1950s, shortly after India’s independence from colonial rule in 1947, F.G. Bailey (1957) showed how changes in the polity and economy opened up new avenues of social mobility in Kandhamal. Bailey (1960) further highlighted how both conflict and cohesion used to structure the struggle for political power, land and other resources between Kandhas and Panas. Nearly 56 years later, another fundamental alteration in the opportunity structures for social mobility in the state went hand in hand with violent conflict between two communities. This broke down the “moral community” of Kandhamal and destroyed the “civility of indifference” between groups. This represents a classic case of the ethnicisation of inequality between the two communities, leading to violent conflict, which was studied so closely by Bailey’s colleagues belonging to the Manchester School (Cohen 1969; Fearon and Laitin 2000). In their attempt for social emancipation and mobility, the former untouchable caste of Panas had traditionally converted into Christianity, which provided them an escape route from their lowest position.
in the Hindu caste hierarchy. The tribal Kandhas who were neither Hindus nor Christians to begin with, had been co-opted into Hinduism. To counteract the conversion-induced up-ward social mobility and advancement of Panas, systematic efforts were made by upper caste dominated conservative and reactionary Hindu organisations to manipulate the differences between the two communities, radicalize the tribal Kandhas and mobilize them against the minority Christian Panas. Kandhamal conflict reflected regressive elite mobilisation of ethnic differences and intentional provocation of ethnic violence as a method to capture power and protect hegemonic imposition of ascriptive inequality. But larger questions remain unanswered. Who were the beneficiaries and losers in the ethnic conflict? Or more specifically, how did the ethnic conflict affect the life chances and social mobility prospects of the affected youth belonging both to the tribal Kandha and Dalit Pano castes?

**Literature Review:** Ethnicity is defined as “the sense of collective belonging to a named community of common myths or origin and shared memories, associated with an historic homeland” (Smith, 1999: 262). Ethnicity also refers to some form of group identity related to a group of persons who accept and define themselves by a consciousness of common descent or origin, shared historical memories and connections (Chazan, Mortimer, Ravenhall and Rothchild, 1988: 35). Ethnicity can be classified into two groups - instrumental ethnicity which emanates from material deprivation – and symbolic ethnicity based on one’s anxiety to preserve one’s cultural identity (Noyoo, 2000: 57). The book "Ethnic Groups in Conflict" by Donald L. Horowitz 1985 laid the fundamentals for analyzing ethnic conflict in many respects and is still considered as landmark in the literature on conflict. Samuel Huntington (1993) gave further support for studies of ethnic conflict. This hypothesis proposed by Huntington states that “conflicts of the future will occur along the cultural fault lines separating civilizations.” He points out the importance of religion as the primary force that motivates people, rather than political ideology or economic interest. It is believed that the increased ease of global communication will facilitate interactions between people of different cultures, thus intensifying civilization consciousness. This increased civilization consciousness makes the differences between civilizations more apparent and will invigorate animosities leading to conflict (Huntington 1993). Similarly, Marta Reynal-Querol (2002) has found religious polarization and animist diversity in societies to be a cause of ethnic civil war. She believes that religious polarization is more important than ethno-linguistic differences as a social divide that can develop into social conflict.

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In their paper, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War” (2003), James D. Fearon and David Laitin investigate the claim that higher levels of ethnic diversity will increase the incidence of civil war along with several other hypotheses. They refer to the ethnic diversity variable as ethnic or religious fractionalization and ipso facto, the larger the number of ethnic groups in a society, the higher the level of fractionalization. There is also a substantial literature on ethnic riots including those in India (Brass 1997; Varshney, 2002 and 2008; Wilkinson, 2005; van Klinken, 2007; Davidson, 2008).

Like ethnic conflict, social inequality and exclusion reflect the failure of integrative institutions in society. Writing at the turn of the 20th century, Emile Durkheim was concerned with the necessity to maintain social order and stability through social inclusion and the imperative need to counter growing inequality and exclusion. At the turn of 21st century, the deadly cocktail of ethnicity and inequality poses a serious threat to social cohesion and integration. A number of studies were carried out on the causes and consequences of the ethnic conflict in Kandhamal (see Chatterji, 2009; Kanungo, 2008, 2014; Mohapatra and Bhattacharya, 1996; Padel, 2011). But the available literature remains silent on the implications of inequality for violent ethnic conflict in general and for the prospects of youth life chances in Kandhamal in particular. The present study seeks to bridge this gap by looking at the repercussions of violent ethnic conflict for employment, income and educational opportunities of the affected youth in Kandhamal.

Also sociological studies on the youth in India remain largely mired in the tradition of attitude and opinion surveys. The early youth studies focused on subjects like the study on the value system of educated Indian youth in the context of cultural integration in the country (Singh 1964), sociological study on inter-generational conflict over values involving the youth and adults (Gangrade 1970), the attitudes of college educated Indian youth to English language (Ross and Bandyopadhyay 1974), caste prejudices among Indian youth (Singh and Prasad 1976), study on attitudes of college going youth (both male and female) towards sex roles, marriage, age of marital partner, wife’s education and career aspirations (Kazi and Ghadially 1979) and political beliefs of the youth (Iyengar 1980).

The studies carried out after 1980s broadly seemed to have maintained this pattern (Abraham 2002; Hindin and Hindin 2009; Chandra et al. 2003). After the 1990s, sociological studies in the field seemed to have paid considerable attention to the myriad implications of globalization for Indian youth (Lukose 2005, Gill 2012, Thapan 2009, deSouza, Kumar and Shastri 2009).
Another strand of youth research in India is focused on studies of delinquency, crime, drug abuse and youth (student) unrest (Banerjee 1963, Chitnis 1974, Mohan 1977, Dube 1972, Verma et al. 1977, Unnithan et al. 1980, Hartjen 1982; Malakondaiah and Murty 2007). Most of the studies of this genre typically focus on young men rather than women. With some exceptions, studies on tribal youth remain scarce.

Not only academic literature but also policy literature emanating from both national and international organizations remains silent on the implications of ethnic conflict for intra-generational mobility prospects of youth in India. The National Youth Policies of 1988, 2003 and 2014 don’t make any reference to it (Govt. of India 1988, 2003, 2014). Similarly the Odisha State Youth Policy of 2013, which was formulated with technical support from the United Nations Population Fund, also remains silent on this dimension (Govt. of Odisha 2013). The policy research studies carried out by both Govt. of India and Govt. of Odisha also remain silent on it (Govt. of India 2009, 2011, 2015, 2017; Govt. of Odisha 2017). Studies by multilateral agencies also follow a similar line of inquiry by ignoring this key aspect (UNFPA 2013; UNDP & Govt. of India 2017). To that extent, this study assumes significance as it seeks to address this long-felt need in the literature.

**Unravelling the Kandhamal Dynamics:** Ethnic conflict is complex and multi-layered. The extant stand alone approaches (see Varsheny 2002) i.e., primordialists, constructivism, institutional and instrumental are inadequate in giving a holistic interpretation to the intricate scenario of Kandhamal (see Figure.1). In the context of Kandhamal, where social inequality and ethnicity reinforced each other in many ways, a synthetic approach deriving strength from each of the four frameworks appears more germane.

The following illustration presents the different interpretations of ethnic conflict.
Derived from ‘ancient hatred’ and ‘natural ties’

Ethnic conflict as a product of historical processes over time that result in divergent ethnic identities

Institutions either facilitate or obstruct inter-group conflict

Based on modernization, economic factors and elite ambitions

Ethno-Religious Violence in Kandhamal
Factors contributing to Conflict in Kandhamal

- Identity: Language, Religion (as a part of culture)
- Political-economy: Land, Education, Livelihood, Jobs, Political Power
- Conflict between two socially and economically underprivileged groups
- Competitive Proselytisation

Result

Violence in terms of:
- Force, coercive power, intentions, antecedents and consequences,
- violation of corporal integrity, violation of territorial or spatial integrity, violation of moral and legal integrity,
- violation of rules and expectations, violation of self-esteem, dignity, autonomy

Each ethnic conflict has its own unique characteristics and, in different contexts, some of these elements will be more prominent than the others, but all of them are the “common denominators” necessary for ethnic conflict to occur. The primordialist approach (Geertz, 1973) helps explain the role of ‘ancient hatred’ and ‘natural ties’ that lead to ethnic violence. Primordialists suggest that ethnic violence results from antipathies and antagonisms that are enduring properties of ethnic groups. Primordialists suggest that ethnic violence results from antipathies and antagonisms that are enduring properties of ethnic groups. Constructivism argues that ethnicity is a product of human action and speech over time that results in divergent ethnic identities and hostility between the conflicting groups. The institutional and instrumentalist approaches explain how the interaction of institutional and political factors with ethnic emotions leads to ethnic intolerance, competition, and eventually – violent conflict.

The notion of Primordialism and its relation to ethnic conflict largely originates from the writings of Clifford Geertz. If one applies this theory to the context of Kandhamal, it seems a viable albeit too simplistic a lens through which to view the complex situation in the region.
which gave rise to ethnic conflict. By assuming that divisions between two different groups of people are ‘natural’ and socially and culturally constructed, it points to the fact that conflict is hence expected because that is the only available commonsensical explanation to it. It plays on the primeval, basic, fundamental, involuntary, primal need of man to form an attachment to one’s “own people” and view the other group as simply “others”, and this in turn gives rise to inevitable conflict. It completely eliminates the role of specific perpetrators, identity based politics, economy, government and non-governmental institutions and (specifically in the case of Kandhamal) the role of Hindutva assertion and Christian missionaries while romanticizing the idea of emotions, heroism, victimization, and antiquity of origins.

The second widely held view is that ethnic identity is a social construct, in the sense that it results from social discourses that end up conditioning individuals to identify with particular groups. In the context of Kandhamal, constructivism makes two important claims that are relevant to the current study. First, it teaches that individuals possess multiple ethnic identities whose salience depends on the context in which the individuals find themselves. Second, the constructivist literature shows that ethnic groups are products of political and historical processes. Constructivist approaches do not, as is often assumed, dismiss primordialist interpretations of ethnic identities – they problematize them. If ethnic identities are in fact constructed, then under what conditions do primordial interpretations of these identities arise and take root (Suny 1999, 2001)? Why are primordialist beliefs more closely associated with some ethnic categories rather than others?

A famous application is in Anderson (1983) and his notion of ‘imagined communities’ which refers to a hypothetical belongingness to a certain community. Benedict Anderson famously described the nation as an "imagined community" but he is also quick to point out that such imagining is strictly delimited. This delimitation describes the boundaries of the nation- who is in, who is out- but in doing so it also signals a limitation of what the nation as imagined community can contain. So the nation operates through a process of exclusion, not only of those who are outside it, but also of those aspects of its members that cannot be readily encompassed by description in terms of national identity. However, Anderson's definition of the nation and community is always vulnerable to Partha Chatterjee's question, "whose imagined community?"
The Institutional approach to studying ethnic conflict deals with the core idea that the design of political institutions explains why some multiethnic societies are violent in nature while others are peaceful. Institution plays a major role in regulating social actions of ethnic groups. This means the inability of institutions to function right may affect other social structures and social behavior. Crawford notes that institutions “both constrain behavior and provide incentives for cooperation and compliance in norms, rules, and procedures for allocation, participation, representation, and accountability.” According to her, whether or not identity politics turns into violent conflict depends on the functioning of state institutions: “Where identity politics is practiced, states can channel it in peaceful political competition as long as they can make credible commitments to shape and uphold agreements made among culturally defined political actors”. In sum, “Countries whose political institutions politicize cultural [ethnic] identity are more vulnerable to cultural [ethnic] conflict than countries whose political institutions promote social integration of diverse cultural groups.”

If the Institutional approach is analysed in the perspective of Kandhamal, it goes on to disapprove its very essence. The approach starts with the premise that large ethnic groups tend to dominate the smaller ethnic groups because of institutional malfunctioning. Also, where institutions which are supposed to ensure free and equal treatment of citizens tend to operate along ethnic lines may cause ethnic divisions and hence ethnic violence. Crawford (1998) further explained that countries whose political institutions politicises cultural and ethnic identity are more prone to cultural and ethnic violence than countries whose political institutions promotes social integration of diverse cultural groups. In the context of India, there are various constitutional provisions in place for the protection of minorities. The Indian Constitution ensures “justice, social, economic and political” to all citizens. The Indian Constitution has adopted measures for the protection of the rights of the religious and ethnic minorities and of the socially and economically disadvantaged classes such as scheduled tribes and castes. India is a secular state and no particular religion or the religion of the overwhelming majority, has been made the religion of the state.

Article 25 of the Indian constitution guarantees freedom of religion to every individual. Article 16 guarantees that in matters of public employment, no discrimination shall be made on grounds of race, religion, caste or language etc. Article 29 give the religious and linguistic minorities right to establish and manage educational institutions of
their own. Minorities have been given the unrestricted rights to promote and preserve their own culture. Article 30 is vital to the protection and preservation of rights of the minorities.

Hence, to attribute the outbreak of violence in the state of Odisha to a malfunctioning of the state institutions is not entirely a justifiable claim because the state’s administrative structures and legal institutions do not distribute resources based on ethnicity.

The theory of Instrumentalism has two elements. Firstly, Instrumentalism argues that ethnic conflict often emerges out of a desire for economic and political gain. Secondly, Instrumentalism argues that ethnic conflict emerges from deliberate manipulation by elites based on their rational decision to encourage or incite ethnic conflict. Instrumental theory explains the main sources of the ethnic conflict through modernization, globalisation, politico-economic factors and elite ambitions.

Globalisation sharpens the awareness of differences between members of ethnic groups and makes it obvious. The analysis of the violence in Kandhamal, Odisha, underlines the long standing disputes and feuds between two ethnic communities living interdependently in Kandhamal. Conflicting interests in ownership of land and in seeking jobs, even in pouncing upon another’s identity had simmered for a long time. Globalisation, particularly enhanced exposure to information communication technology (ICT) and mass media, played a key role in inciting already simmering tensions between the two hostile groups. The Kandhas had repeatedly felt defeated, cheated and outwitted by the Panos. The Panos, they believed, had taken undue advantage of the support of Christian missionaries in education and consequently in modern occupation and politics. This had made the Panos more assertive in Kandhamal society, politics and economy. Being disadvantaged or discriminated against create ethnic grievances among the group members, and increases the possibility of the ethnic conflict. The Kandhas, who thought of themselves as the original inhabitants of the land and owners of the region’s resources, felt short-changed at the hands of Christian Panos. Combined with the instrumental approach, it argues that competition among the ethnic groups in the society and a sense of relative deprivation, contribute to ethnic conflict. The historical sense of superiority of Kandhas as original inhabitants of Kandhamal was extended to social-cultural and politico-economy spheres as well. However, the historical changes initiated by colonial intervention were exacerbated by forces of modernization in independent India and after 1990s by globalisation. The perceived threat to the material and political fortunes of Kandhas
at the expense of Panos, the erstwhile servants of the former, led to heightened antagonism between the two communities. Thus, for the Kandhas, the Panos became their immediate exploiters and land snatchers. Consequently, class differences and politico-economic cleavages and competition between Kandhas and Panos were given ethnic colours.

**Research Context and Methodology:** In this context, the present paper seeks to explore the implications of ethnic conflict for the opportunity structures and life chances of affected Kandha and Pana youth in Kandhamal. The study seeks to answer the following questions.

How did the ethnic conflict shape the intra-generational mobility prospects and life chances of the affected tribal and Dalit youth in Kandhamal?

How did the complex interplay of inequality and ethnicity colour both the causes and consequences of violent conflict in Kandhamal?

The study was both exploratory and descriptive in nature. Fieldwork for the study was conducted during July to December 2017. Both primary and secondary data were used in the study. Primary data were collected through a semi-structured interview schedule i.e., the Youth Schedule. The Youth Schedule was used for collection of information from a carefully selected sample of youth population of the area about a host of identified issues. The data collected through the schedules were supplemented with information gathered from field observations and focus group discussions.

The study was based on a carefully selected sample of 180 Kandha and Pana youth respondents, (in 15-35 age group) from nine Panchayats in three out of twelve blocks of Kandhamal i.e., Raikia, G.Udayagiri and Phiringia. Apart from youth respondents, interviews were also held with other stakeholders including officials, civil society members and politicians. Secondary data were collected from government and non-government sources.

Blocks and villages (Panchayats) were selected through a multi-stage sampling process. Out of the 12 blocks in Kandhamal, three blocks i.e., one most affected in the ethno-communal violence, one moderately affected and one least affected were selected, based primarily on the criterion of number of deaths in the conflict. The three selected blocks were Raikia (moderately affected), G.Udayagiri (worst affected) and Phiringia (least affected). As per
state government data, twelve deaths took place in G. Udayagiri, followed by five deaths in Raikia and two deaths in Phiringia. From each block, three Gram Panchayats (GPs) each based on the same criterion were selected, taking the total number of GPs to nine. The selected Panchayats in Phiringia block were - Ratang GP, Kelapada GP and Bhurngijodi GP. In G.Udyagiri block, Ratingia GP, Katingia GP and Lingagada GP were selected. Similarly, in Raikia block, Petapanga GP, Mandakia GP and Manikeswar GP were selected. From each GP, 20 youth (including male and female) were randomly selected for the study, taking the total number of youth respondents to 180. The number of ST (Kandha) and SC (Pano) were roughly in proportion to their population in the area.

**Sample Distribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of Districts</th>
<th>No of Blocks</th>
<th>No of GPs</th>
<th>No of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One (1) District</td>
<td>Three(3) Blocks</td>
<td>Nine(9) @ 3 GPs per Block</td>
<td>180 @ 20 Respondents from each GP</td>
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**Socio-economic Background of Respondents:** All the villages and GPs covered in the study belonged either to tribal sub-plan (TSP) (99.4%) or modified area development approach (MADA) areas (0.6%). This highlights not only the concentration of significant tribal population in the study areas but also the relative backwardness of the areas. Males and females constituted 62.8 percent and 36.7 percent of the respondents. While Hindus, comprising tribal Kandhas constituted 59.4 percent of the respondents, Christians, comprising Dalit Panas, constituted the rest (40.6%). The vast majority of respondent (84.7%) were below the official poverty line (BPL). Socio-economic background shows that the respondents belonged to marginalized sections of Kandhamal society.

Considering that this is a study focused on the youth, the age range of respondents varied from 15 to 35. 21.1 percent of respondents belonged to the 15-19 age range, 36.7 percent of respondents were from 20-24 age group, 22.2 percent of respondents were from 25-29 range and 20 percent were from 30-35 age group. The majority of the respondents (51.7%) were unmarried. The percentages of married and divorced were 45.6 and 2.8 percent respectively.
Majority of respondents had studied up-to the higher secondary level (32.8%), while the number of those having masters’ and higher levels of education were absolutely less (0.6%). The percentages of graduates and those studied up-to secondary levels were almost the same i.e., 25.6 percent and 25 percent respectively.

Considering rural location of the study, it was found that majority of respondents belonged to joint families (74.4%), while the rest were from nuclear families (25.6%).

**Major Findings:** It was found that agricultural and non-agricultural labour (about 59%), followed by agriculture (about 37%) constituted the primary occupational base of the sample youth. The proportion of those in organized sector (government and non-government services) was absolutely minimal (less than 2%). Even the number of those engaged in business and self-employment was also very less (less than 1%). It was no wonder that the majority of respondents (more than 69%) found the employment opportunities for youth to be bad or very bad in the area. A little more than half of the respondents (51%) earned a monthly income less than Rs.2000. 43.8 percent of the respondents earned a monthly income ranging between Rs.2000 to Rs.4200. The proportion of those earning a monthly income of more than Rs.4200 but less than Rs.8000 was absolutely minimal at just 5.3 percent.

Lack of education and skills was cited as the primary reason for unemployment by the surveyed youth (52.4%). The other reasons for youth unemployment included economic barrier (28.6%), physical disability (6%), caste, ethnicity and religious factors (4.8%). Also gender (8.3%) emerged as a factor of considerable importance for youth unemployment.

A large majority of respondents (83.4%) did not have access to bank loans. Only a small proportion (16.6%) of the respondents took loans from banks.

Distribution of forest land to tribals and other traditional forest dwelling communities under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) was officially presented as a major policy initiative. It was found that the majority of youth respondents (80.0%) did not receive any land distributed under the FRA.

It was found that 59.4 percent of the surveyed youth had membership in different village-level organizations. Among those who had membership in village-level organizations, the maximum number (78.5%) had membership in ANTARANG youth clubs and worked as Bharat Nirman Volunteers (BNVs), followed by membership in SHGs (10.3%). SHG membership was found to be confined only to female respondents. Membership in village
panchayats, caste/tribal associations was found to be very low. It was found that the majority of respondents (about 54%) were involved in sporting activities.

The awareness levels of the respondents on a number of key issues remained low. 79.4 percent and 76.1 percent of respondents respectively had no knowledge about National Youth Policy and State Youth Policy. 77.2 percent had no knowledge on how “youth” was defined officially. About 73 percent were not aware about any government programmes for youth development. But about 69 percent were aware about ANTARANG, a youth-centric reconstruction programme. 55.4 percent of respondents found the relationship between government and youth of the area to be unsatisfactory.

As can be seen, the majority (60.4%) were not at all satisfied with their current livelihood pursuits, while 31.3% were just satisfied with their work.

It was found that the majority of youth respondents (87.8%) were not involved in radical activities in the past. Only a small proportion (12.3%) indicated some involvement in radical activities in the past in the forms of involvement in communal conflicts and Naxal activities.

In response to a question as to why did the youth get involved in radical activities, about 69% cited political ideology or caste/ethnicity/religion as the reasons and about 29% cited poverty and unemployment as the reasons.

Vast majority of the youth respondents (about 96%) belonging to both the warring communities agreed that ethnic conflict did indeed have a negative impact on their lives, life chances and intra-generational mobility prospects. The majority of the youth respondents (65.3%) were of the opinion that education sector was adversely affected by the ethnic conflict, followed by employment opportunities (56.6%), safety and security aspects (37.9%), social networks and friendships (28.4%) and religious life (36.8%).

Redistribution of resources constitutes one of the key post-conflict reconstruction initiatives. It was found that more than half (65.1%) of the youth respondents said that no efforts were made to redistribute resources like land and job after the conflict.

While 38.3% of the respondents said that after the conflict, no efforts had been made to improve public governance in the area. It was found that about 65 percent of the youth were not satisfied with the effectiveness of reconstruction measures undertaken after the conflict.

About 68 percent of the respondents said that no efforts had been made to recognize the demands of affected groups after the conflict.

65 percent of the respondents said that no steps had been taken for representation of affected groups in politics and administration.
The majority of respondents (about 63%) expressed their dissatisfaction with the over-all implementation of post-conflict reconstruction measures.

The majority of the respondents (64%) were of the opinion that conflict had led to reduced income generation for the youth and post-conflict reconstruction did not help the situation. The majority of the respondents (about 63%) opined that conflict resulted in deterioration of business opportunities for them.

A little more than half of the youth respondents (53.2%) said that youth engagement in violence declined after the conflict, while rest (46.8%) said that it remained the same as it was before the conflict. While 36.6 percent said that religious freedom had deteriorated after the conflict, the majority (about 38%) said that it improved due to the post-conflict reconstruction initiatives. 54.4 percent of the youth said that freedom of movement deteriorated after the conflict, notwithstanding the post-conflict reconstruction efforts. The over-whelming majority (96%) of the respondents agreed that the conflict had resulted in societal division and decline in educational, economic activities and employment opportunities for the youth in the area.

**Conclusion:** The causes and consequences of ethnic conflict in Kandhamal and its dialectical interface with social mobility of the affected youth have been explored in the paper. The causes of conflict had both temporal and politico-economic dimensions and both the dimensions are inextricably intertwined. Broadly, the dynamic interaction between Kandhas and Panos has evolved in three phases i.e., colonial, post-colonial (1947-1990) and post-globalisation (after 1990s). It was only after 1990s that the regulated competition between the two communities broke down leading to virulent and violent conflict in multiple doses. Post-globalisation economic contraction enhanced the intensity of competition between these two communities for up-ward mobility and control over limited and ever increasingly scarce resources including government jobs, land, credit, educational facilities etc. The perception that the historically disadvantaged Panos were getting an upper hand over the Kandhas in matters of up-ward social mobility and the perceived uneven exposure of Kandhas to modernisation and globalisation, further aggravated the situation. The corresponding perceived threat to the power balance and political control by Kandhas was instigated by the arrival of Hindu right wing on the political scene of the state in the post-globalisation phase. The spadework for this has been going on for long particularly with an aim to counter the proselytisation of Dalit Panos into Christianity by missionaries in Kandhamal. As an apparently politically threatened group, Kandhas violently mobilized against the Panos in an
effort to restore the status quo. Thus a deadly cocktail of a real or perceived shift in both socio-economic and political opportunity structures for social mobility for their community members, particularly the youth, led to a violent response from the majority and dominant Kandhas against the minority Christian Pano population’s attempts for up-ward social mobility.

The conflict had adversely affected up-ward mobility and socio-economic advancement prospects of all the youth, irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds. As far as the youth of the area were concerned, there were no winners but only losers in the ethnic conflict. The study findings revealed that both Kandha and Pana youth were locked out of development process due to the violent ethnic conflict. Intra-generational mobility of the affected Kandha and Pana youth including key factors associated with it like educational and employment opportunities, skill development, business prospects, political participation, physical mobility etc were all affected by the violent ethnic conflict. The field findings highlighted how ethnic conflict denied the marginalised youth of Kandhamal their agency and stymied their quest for social mobility and advancement.
References:


