

E-SWARA

The Unheard Voice of Mental Health

Structural Violence and its impact on Mental Health on the Marginalized Community



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EDITORIAL WRITING

E-Swara, The Unheard Voice of Mental Health, offers a platform for discussions, sharing experiences and opinions, and raising awareness. This edition focuses on “**Structural Violence and its Impact on Mental Health on the Marginalized Community**” and aims to break down the stigma surrounding mental health. E-Swara provides a space for individuals to share their experiences, seek support, and connect with others facing similar challenges. By fostering a sense of community and understanding, this magazine encourages people to speak up, seek help, and begin journeys toward better mental well-being.

In a diverse country where various cultures, living standards, religious beliefs, norms, and customs intersect, a range of violence, both visible (direct) and invisible (indirect), has persisted since the colonial era. Structural violence, a concept referring to institutions and social structures that harm individuals or groups by obstructing their access to basic needs, emphasizes this reality. Such violence is rooted in unequal distributions of power and resources ingrained within societal frameworks. This violence emerges as an unequal distribution of power and resources or, in other words, it is said to be built into the structure. The factors that come under structural violence include poverty, homelessness, and intersectional oppression. As People's Forum is working for the marginalized community, it is crucial to go in-depth to look at the world around them and the problems they are facing being in a social hierarchy.

In India, there is a taboo associated with mental health concerns where people do not prefer to have straight or direct conversations regarding such illnesses or disabilities at the community level, nor does any individual get any support from society and institutions when they are diagnosed with mental health conditions. Persons with mental illness or severe disorders often face such community-level challenges as discrimination in medical institutions, inclusivity in employment, lack of community participation, restrictions in educational institutions, and oppression within family or community.

In addition to this, marginalization and stigmatization of PwDs make it more difficult and affect their daily living. The reason for this is the lack of awareness and knowledge, and stigma which contribute to keeping mental illness hidden, resulting in discrimination and disempowerment that prevents people with mental disorders from demanding fair access to resources.

The primary objective of this topic is to examine how mental health differs for marginalized communities, as they confront numerous issues and obstacles in accessing basic facilities, which is impacting their mental health.



STORIES FROM THE GROUND

A STORY FROM 'MISSION ASHRA (REHABILITATION & SHELTER HOME FOR DESTITUTE WOMEN WITH MENTAL ILLNESS)' – KURUMAYEE'S JOURNEY: A TALE OF RESILIENCE & REUNION

SONALI NAYAK (COUNSELOR)

Kurumayee, a 52-year-old woman, was rescued from Khordha on May 22, 2018. Diagnosed with schizophrenia, she appeared helpless at the time of her rescue. She sat in a corner with her bare hands folded, fragile, disabled, and untidy, as described by the counselor of Ashra. Her body was barely covered with ripped clothes, and she seemed heartbroken. Her motor activities did not reflect the insight of her beautiful mind, and we received her soul with great care.

The next morning, the story began to unfold, revealing the partial truth of her present condition, which was hidden under disorganized and low speech. Slowly and steadily, through active engagement, we began to understand her experiences: the harsh realities of street life, vulnerability, being underprivileged, a disrupted life, brutality and exploitation, unacceptance, and abandonment. It was an awful story, as the counselor shared.

When the counseling sessions began, Kurumayee was partially cooperative. Communication was challenging as she didn't respond properly to questions. Her speech was disorganized, often irrelevant, and she spoke in a very low voice. She avoided eye contact and maintained an abnormal posture during sessions. She did not talk to anyone and was diagnosed with schizophrenia.

At Mission Ashra, her treatment began with consultations with psychiatrists, and she was given proper medication. The counselor provided her with therapy and counseling sessions. Initially, she did not take proper care of her grooming and hygiene. However, after continuous counseling sessions, she gradually started taking care of herself and participated in various activities, although her age limited her active participation. Despite efforts, she could not remember or talk about her home address and family.

In 2023, an Aadhaar camp was conducted at Mission Ashra. She was enrolled, but her Aadhaar showed as a duplicate. After consultations with the Aadhaar manager and the Hyderabad Aadhaar regional office, her Aadhaar was updated. Her updated Aadhaar card was sent to her home address by post. Her son found it and called the number mentioned on the card. After communicating with Mission Ashra, her children came and met their mother after six years. The reunion was filled with happiness and tears. Initially, Kurumayee did not recognize her children, but after some time, she recognized them and talked a little.



Her children shared their address and family background. They are from Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh. Kurumayee has four children: two sons and two daughters, all married. After the birth of her younger son, she faced domestic violence. Her in-laws and husband continuously tortured her, leading to her mental disturbance. She did not stay at home and roamed around in an unconscious state. Eventually, she left home. Her family searched everywhere but could not find her and eventually filed a missing person report at the police station. After not finding her for years, they assumed she was dead.

After so many years, she was reunited with her family. However, Kurumayee expressed her desire to stay at Mission Ashra. Her children also agreed, stating that their father had grown old, and they were busy with their jobs, leaving no one to take proper care of her. For her safety and well-being, they decided it was best for her to stay at Mission Ashra, promising to visit her every month.

JOURNEY TO SUCCESS

SHRISTIPRIYA BORA (PROGRAM ASSOCIATE)
PEOPLE'S FORUM

Abuse refers to any behavior or action that causes harm, distress, or injury to another person. It can be physical, emotional, sexual, or psychological in nature and often involves a misuse of power or control over another individual. It's a serious violation of human rights and can have long-lasting effects on the victim's and victim's family's mental and physical well-being. So, this is a case study of a schoolgirl.

AaroHi (name changed) is a 12-year-old girl. She belongs to a middle-class family; her father works as a daily laborer, her mother is a housewife, and she has a younger brother as well. She lived with her family in Khordha district. When she was in seventh standard, she used to take tuition classes. One evening, when the private teacher was out of the room after giving her some work, the brother of the tutor came into the room and sexually abused her. Following the abuse, he threatened her not to share this with anyone else or he would kill her family along with her.

After a few days, AaroHi suffered from a stomachache, so her family decided to go through an Ultra-sonographic (USG) scan of her, and they came to know that she was pregnant. After asking her many times, she said about all the things that had happened to her. Then, her parents filed a case against the person at Khordha Police Station. They then forwarded the case to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) for further action. Then, Khordha CWC sent her to VJSS (Viswa Jeevan Seva Sangh), an open shelter. But near this open shelter, there was no facility of a hospital to give her first treatment and care for AaroHi. So, again, the Khordha collector forwarded her to





Jagruti-1 Home, run by People's Forum, for Aaroahi's care, protection, health, rehabilitation, and overall development. When Aaroahi came to Jagruti-1 Home, she was very shy, had low self-confidence, and sometimes she got panic attacks. But Jagruti-1 Home's staff made her comfortable and gave her all the treatment and care. The counselor of Jagruti-1 Home gave her counseling, and after that, she felt confident. This was a very special case for Jagruti-1 Home. Aaroahi normally delivered a baby girl. Then the day arrived to detach Aaroahi from her daughter. This was so painful for her, but during the leaving period of Aaroahi, the counselors gave her proper counseling and made her understand to build a good career and make her parents proud of her. Then Aaroahi was ready to give her child to CWC. Then the counselor successfully produced that baby to Khordha Child Welfare Committee and successfully reunited Aaroahi with her family.

This abuse happened to Aaroahi only, but her entire family suffered as a result. During this period, Aaroahi's family faced tough challenges from society and relatives. These things really affected her parents' mental health and work life and made them feel weak. But the counselors of Jagruti-1 Home provided family counseling sessions and gave them the support they needed. The parents were always in touch with Aaroahi, and through these sessions, they found strength and decided to give Aaroahi a new life, which made them strong. Finally, after nine months, their dedicated efforts worked. Aaroahi started her studies again and is trying to fulfill her life's goal.

CHOOSING YOUR CAREER CAN BE THE REASON FOR DEPRESSION

ANUSHRI WANKHADE (PROGRAM ASSOCIATE)
PEOPLE'S FORUM

How does it feel when you choose a different career option than others and just because of your lack of social capital and poor financial condition you were not able to pursue it, which causes depression? Let's hear the story of Sudhir (name changed) and how his life has changed when he couldn't complete his dream to become a dancer.

38-year-old Sudhir has dedicated his entire life to becoming a dancer. He was from the Amravati area of Maharashtra and hailed from a very low background. When he lost his parents, he was 28 years old. He has recovered from an incredible breakdown. Due to his poor health, he used to study a lot to become successful and escape poverty. He used to get involved in various hobbies while studying in college. His interest in dance began to grow. Due to his success in college, he chose to pursue a career in this area. He gradually began competing in nearby events held outside of the campus.





He was a highly talented dancer, but due to his financial situation, he was unable to pay for classes, so he educated himself by watching videos on YouTube or TV shows. He eventually began to lose interest in his studies, and he later formed a tiny dance studio where he could make money. Everyone was pleased with his choice of field. However, he was not seeing growth in pursuing his passion. He decided to pursue a degree in that subject, but as he grew older, family members and society began to inquire, "What about your job and career? You should stop dancing and concentrate on your career now."

Sudhir had a strong sense of self-assurance that he would do something different in his career. He heard people say, "Ghar ki roji roti ke liye kam nhi kar raha hai nachne jata hai," which means, "He is not settling down with a proper job or work; instead, he is wasting his time in dance." Gradually, though, he began to feel too low because nobody was there to encourage him. He was experiencing stress because of his lack of social capital and his career's decline. Stress eventually gave way to sadness and depression, and people began gossiping about him and making fun of him.

He used to act very differently; he would dance while standing in the street. He occasionally lost control over his emotions and would laugh, cry, or become irate. People were making fun of him and shouting things like, "Dance kar kar ke pagal ho gaya hai," instead of trying to help him. He was very broken to hear those remarks. His relatives decided to seek mental help for him as his condition deteriorated. He completed his session; he was taking medicine.

It has been about 4 years, and he is still in poor health. Nobody is available to look after him. He still wants to be a well-known professional dancer in the future. Because of his poor mental health and lack of acceptance, he was unable to find employment. He somehow manages his small dance class and is still taking medication. He began drinking alcohol because he was going through a difficult time in his life, and this was impacting his physical condition too. He was unable to fulfil his dream due to poverty and a lack of social capital, which led to mental health problems. The likelihood of someone from a low-income background having a huge dream is extremely low. The barriers they face are huge to achieve any dream.



ARTICLES

TOPIC: HOW DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS ONE OF THE REASONS FOR IMPACTING WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH. RESEARCH STUDY ON SITUATION OF THE MARGINALISED WOMEN DURING PANDEMIC.

MAYUR TANGALE
PROJECT COORDINATOR AT LEADERSHIP FOR EQUALITY

Introduction: During the pandemic, maintaining mental well-being has become crucial in daily life. Mental health is an important aspect of the medical sector, but according to societal norms, it remains a taboo and complex topic that requires a deeper understanding of various social and economic factors. Gender is a key component of mental well-being, particularly for women, who often serve as unpaid workers within their families. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the livelihoods of poor and marginalized people globally. Those with stable incomes or jobs have faced fewer challenges compared to those without income security. The rapid spread of COVID-19 caused numerous deaths, leaving many families helpless. As a result, domestic violence has increased. It is essential for women to have a stress-free mindset, as this is a crucial factor leading to positive development.

Violence against women is not only a violation of human rights but also a manifestation of patriarchal power imposed on women in India. During the pandemic, violence against women rapidly increased, both domestically and in public spaces. Historically, women, particularly those from marginalized communities, had limited access to education in the 19th and 20th centuries, leaving them vulnerable and often unable to stand up for themselves against various forms of violence.

The pandemic exacerbated the incidence of domestic violence, directly impacting women's mental health. Gender differences in physical, physiological, and psychological attributes, influenced by cultural factors, further complicate this issue. Globally, studies indicate that 46% of women reported experiencing or knowing someone who experienced violence since COVID-19 began. In India, more than 50% of such cases went unreported due to limited accessibility during the pandemic and societal and family pressure.

The increase in domestic violence can be attributed to factors such as job loss, increased alcohol consumption, the overburden of housework, unequal distribution of income, and livelihood challenges. These issues often result in depression, anxiety, and psychological distress. Disasters and crises typically hit the most vulnerable first, and in India, women from poor backgrounds are disproportionately affected. This stigmatized issue often leads to severe long-term mental health problems.



Self Help Groups (SHGs), which provide economic and social support to vulnerable women, saw decreased participation during the pandemic due to increased domestic responsibilities. According to a United Nations report, around two-thirds of married women in India were victims of domestic violence, with sexual coercion being a significant concern. Women often face sexual violence from their husbands, intimate partners, or authority figures in their communities, leading to severe mental health issues.

Gender-based violence results in lifelong emotional distress, mental health disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder, poor reproductive health, depression, anxiety, insomnia, and alcohol use disorders. The societal determinants of these issues, including poverty and mental stress, play a significant role in provoking family violence.

In conclusion, numerous organizations in India focus on women's empowerment, addressing livelihood, education, and sexual harassment. However, it is crucial to prioritize women's mental well-being for any organization to achieve successful development. Ignoring the mental health struggles women faced during the pandemic undermines overall development efforts. To foster positive development, we must address the gaps and struggles faced by marginalized and vulnerable communities, ensuring that development benefits all members of society.

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DEMENTIA AND CARE

DR. DEBASHREE BORA
PSYCHIATRIC SOCIAL WORKER
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND NEUROSCIENCES (NIMHANS)
BANGALORE, KARNATAKA

Is there anyone who does not forget? Why do you think we tend to forget things? There might be many reasons behind 'forgetfulness.' Sometimes we forget because we are not attentive, or we may have multiple thoughts that make it difficult to remember a





particular one. As we age, our memory may also decline. Have you seen anyone who has constant memory issues that worsen over time? This is especially common in the elderly population. If forgetfulness is continuous and progressive, it may be 'Dementia,' a neurological disorder that results in a decline in memory, thinking, and reasoning.

As we age, our physical and mental capacities gradually deteriorate, resulting in cognitive declines such as memory and orientation issues. Almost 40% of people experience some form of memory loss after 65 years of age. Multiple factors can cause this condition, such as age, genetics, and lifestyle choices (smoking, drinking). Other physical illnesses, such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes, can also contribute to the development of dementia. Once someone develops dementia, cognitive functions and daily activities are affected, and social interactions deteriorate, compromising the quality of life as the condition worsens over time.

Symptoms of dementia mainly include memory-related issues, such as forgetfulness, difficulty with orientation to time, place, and person, confusion, difficulty with language and communication, and changes in mood and behavior such as frequent mood swings, high irritability, and lack of interest in previously pleasurable hobbies. There can also be fluctuations in alertness and attention, motor problems, and sometimes visual hallucinations. Once these problems occur, daily activities such as communicating, self-care, cooking, and managing one's finances become challenging.

Types of Dementia

Alzheimer's disease and vascular issues in the brain cause dementia in 60–80% of cases. Alzheimer's is characterized by the accumulation of plaques and tangles in the brain, leading to a progressive decline in cognitive functions such as memory, thought, and logical thinking. Vascular dementia, accounting for 10–20% of cases, occurs due to reduced blood flow to the brain, often caused by small strokes or other damage to blood vessels. Lewy body dementia is another type, characterized by abnormal protein deposits in the brain.

Impact

Dementia's impact is profound, as affected individuals gradually lose their mental capacity and become increasingly dependent on caregivers for basic tasks. This often leads to caregiver burnout, reducing the quality of life for both the patient and the caregiver. At advanced stages, individuals may forget their own identity and fail to





recognize loved ones. Emotional changes in dementia, such as frustration, confusion, depression, and isolation, further strain caregivers, who may experience extreme stress, guilt, and grief.

Treatment

A timely diagnosis allows healthcare professionals to determine the most effective treatment to manage symptoms, improve the quality of life, and enhance support for patients and caregivers. Early detection and regular treatments can delay illness progression, but there is currently no cure for dementia. Pharmacological treatments manage symptoms, while non-pharmacological interventions, like cognitive stimulation therapy, occupational therapy, and lifestyle modifications, aim to improve quality of life and promote independence. Mental health professionals provide caregiver education, supportive psychotherapy, and group therapy to reduce burnout and enhance coping and social support. Government resources, such as financial schemes and insurance coverage, should also be considered.

Creating a supportive environment is crucial for managing dementia. This includes ensuring the living space is safe and easy to navigate, establishing a structured routine for daily activities, and using behavioral techniques like positive reinforcement. Engaging activities, such as puzzles, chess, reading, and music, along with physical exercise, can positively impact cognitive function and mood. Maintaining meaningful relationships provides emotional support, helping individuals with dementia cope with daily challenges.

Conclusion

Healthcare professionals play a key role in integrating community and healthcare services to address dementia. Community awareness and educational programs can promote early detection, reduce stigma, and ensure holistic care for individuals with dementia. Geriatric clinics and psychiatry units can offer comprehensive assessments and treatment plans, while increased funding for research, education, and training programs will equip healthcare professionals with the skills needed to provide holistic care. By prioritizing awareness and reducing stigma, we can create a more inclusive society for individuals living with dementia.



PERIODS OF HELL IN BHAMRAGAD

IN MAHARASHTRA'S GADCHIROLI DISTRICT, MENSTRUAL STIGMA FORCES WOMEN OF THE MADIA COMMUNITY INTO EXILE. STAYING ISOLATED IN CRUMBLING AND UNSANITARY 'KURMAGHAR' SEVERELY AFFECTS THEIR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

JYOTI SHINOLI / PARI
EDITOR: VINUTHAMALLYA

[Article](#)
[People's Archive of Rural India](#)

Saru looks gloomy sitting under the mango tree outside her home. In her lap, her infant son is restless and babbling. 'My periods will come any day now,' she says, 'I will have to go to the kurmaghar then.' Literally 'period hut', the kurmaghar is where she'll stay for 4-5 days when she menstruates.

The imminent event is troubling Saru (not her real name). 'It is suffocating in the kurmaghar, and I can't sleep at all, away from my children,' she says, trying to calm her nine-month-old son. She has a daughter too, Komal (not her real name), who is three-and-a-half years old and attends nursery school. 'Her pali [menstrual cycle] will start someday; it frightens me,' says Saru, 30, anxious that her daughter would have to endure the traditional practice of their Madia tribe.

There are four kurma huts in Saru's village – one less than 100 metres from her home. They are currently used by the 27 adolescent girls and women of menstruating age in the village. 'I have grown up seeing my mother and her mother going to the kurmaghar. Now I am using it. I don't want Komal to suffer this system,' says Saru. The Madia, an Adivasi tribe, consider menstruating women to be impure and untouchable, and send them away when they get their period.

'I have been going to the kurmaghar since I was 13,' says Saru. She was at her parents' home then, in a village about 50 kilometres from her current home in the eastern part of Gadchiroli district, Maharashtra.

In the last 18 years, Saru has spent close to 1,000 days of her life – about five days every month – in a hut with no bathroom, no running water, no electricity, and no bed or a fan. 'It is dark inside, and the nights are scary. I feel as if the darkness will eat me up,' she says. 'I feel like running fast towards my house and holding my kids tight, close to my chest...but I can't.



(Photo – Jyoti Shinoli)

Saru tries to calm her restless son (under the yellow cloth) outside their home in east Gadchiroli, while she worries about having to go to the kurmaghar soon



Inside the kurmaghar – which is used by other women in her village too – Saru longs for a clean room, a soft bed to rest her aching body, and a blanket radiating the warmth of loved ones. But the dilapidated hut, made of mud walls and clay-tiled roofs supported by bamboo, is a depressing space. Even the floor – on which she must sleep – is uneven. “I sleep on a bedsheet they [husband or mother-in-law] send. I suffer from backache, headache and cramps. Sleeping on a thin sheet is not at all comfortable,” she says.

For Saru, the discomfort and pain are compounded by isolation and distress of being away from her children. “It hurts that even my close ones don’t understand my anguish,” she says.

An increase in psychological symptoms such as anxiety, stress and depression is consistent with pre-menstrual and menstrual phases in women, says Dr. Swati Deepak, a psychotherapist from Mumbai. “The severity differs from woman to woman. They could get worse without proper care,” she adds. It is important that women receive affection and care from their family at that time, says Dr. Deepak, as discrimination and isolation can be traumatic.

The Madia women are not even allowed to store their period cloth pads at home. “All of us leave them in the hut,” says Saru. Plastic bags filled with cloth pieces made out of used petticoats are left in the kurmaghar – stuffed in the wall cracks or hung from the bamboo beam. “There are lizards and mice roaming around, and they sit on these pads.” The contaminated pads cause irritation and infection.



(Photo – Jyoti Shinoli)



(Photo – Jyoti Shinoli)

Left: The kurmaghar in Saru’s village where she spends her period days every month. Right: Saru and the others who use the hut leave their cloth pads there as they are not allowed to store those at home





There is no window in the hut, and the lack of ventilation makes the cloth pads smell. “It gets worse in the rains,” Saru says. “I use [sanitary] pads during monsoon because cloth doesn’t dry properly,” she adds. Saru spends Rs. 90 on a pack of 20 pads, which lasts her two months.

The kurmaghar that she goes to is at least 20 years old. But it isn’t looked after by anyone. The bamboo frame of the roof is splitting, and the mud walls are cracking. So you can imagine how old this hut must be. No man is willing to repair this because it is contaminated by menstruating women, says Saru. Any repairs would need to be done by the women themselves.



(Photo – Jyoti Shinoli)



(Photo – Jyoti Shinoli)

Left: A bag at the kurmaghar containing a woman’s cloth pads, to be used during her next stay there.
Right: The hut in this village is over 20 years old and in a state of disrepair. It has no running water or a toilet

Saru is not spared from menstrual segregation even though she has been a public health worker – an Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) – for the last four years. “I am an ASHA worker, but over the years, even I couldn’t change the mindsets of women and men here,” she says. Superstition about menstruation is the primary reason people believe in the practice, Saru explains. “The older people say that menstruating women at home will make the Grama Devi angry, and the whole village would suffer under our god’s curse.” Her husband is a college graduate, “but even he supports the kurma system.”

The penalty for failing to practice kurma is a chicken or a goat, which is sacrificed to the village deity. Depending on the size, a goat could cost anywhere between Rs. 4,000–5,000, says Saru.





Ironically, though she can't live at home when she has her period, Saru is expected to work on the family farm and graze the livestock during those days. The family owns two acres of rainfed farmland, where they cultivate paddy, the main crop of the district. "It isn't as if I get rest. I work outside the home; it hurts," she says. She calls it hypocrisy, "but what can be done to stop it? I don't know."

Through her ASHA work, Saru earns Rs. 2,000–2,500 per month. But, just like many other ASHA workers in the country, she does not receive her payment on time. Read: [Caring for villages, in sickness and in health](#) . "I get the money in my bank account after 3–4 months," she says.

The practice is taxing for Saru and others. The age-old kurma system is followed in most villages of Gadchiroli, one of the most underdeveloped districts in the country. Adivasi communities, including the Madia, make up 39 percent of its population. Nearly 76 percent of its land is covered by forest, and in administrative terms, the district is categorized as 'backward'. Security forces heavily patrol the hilly region as the cadres of banned Maoist groups are active here.



(Photo – Jyoti Shinoli)



(Photo – Jyoti Shinoli)

Left: In blistering summer heat, Saru carries lunch to her parents-in-law and husband working at the family farm. When she has her period, she is required to continue with her other tasks such as grazing the livestock. Right: A meeting organised by NGO Samajbandh in a village in Bhamragad talukato create awareness about menstruation and hygiene care among the men and women

No available study of Gadchiroli documents the number of villages that practice the kurma system in the district. "We have been able to cover 20 villages where it is followed," says Sachin Asha Subhash, founder of Samajbandh, a non-profit from Pune that has been working in Gadchiroli's Bhamragad taluka since 2016. Samajbandh's volunteers have been trying to create awareness among Adivasi women about the science of menstruation, hygiene care, and educating older men and women about the risks to women's health from the kurma huts.





It has been challenging, Sachin admits. Their awareness drives and workshops have faced strong opposition. "It is not easy to tell them to stop the kurma system suddenly. They say it is a part of their culture and outsiders shouldn't interfere." The team has been warned and threatened by influential men in the villages, such as the bhumiya and the perma, the headman and head priest. "We try to sensitize them because women have no say in any decision," explains Sachin.

Over time, Sachin and his fellow volunteers convinced some bhumiyas to provide electricity, water, table fans, and beds in the kurma huts. They also obtained their consent for the women to store their cloth pads at home in sealed trunks. "Some bhumiya agreed to these in writing. But it will be a long time before they agree not to isolate women who don't want to go to the kurmaghar," he says.

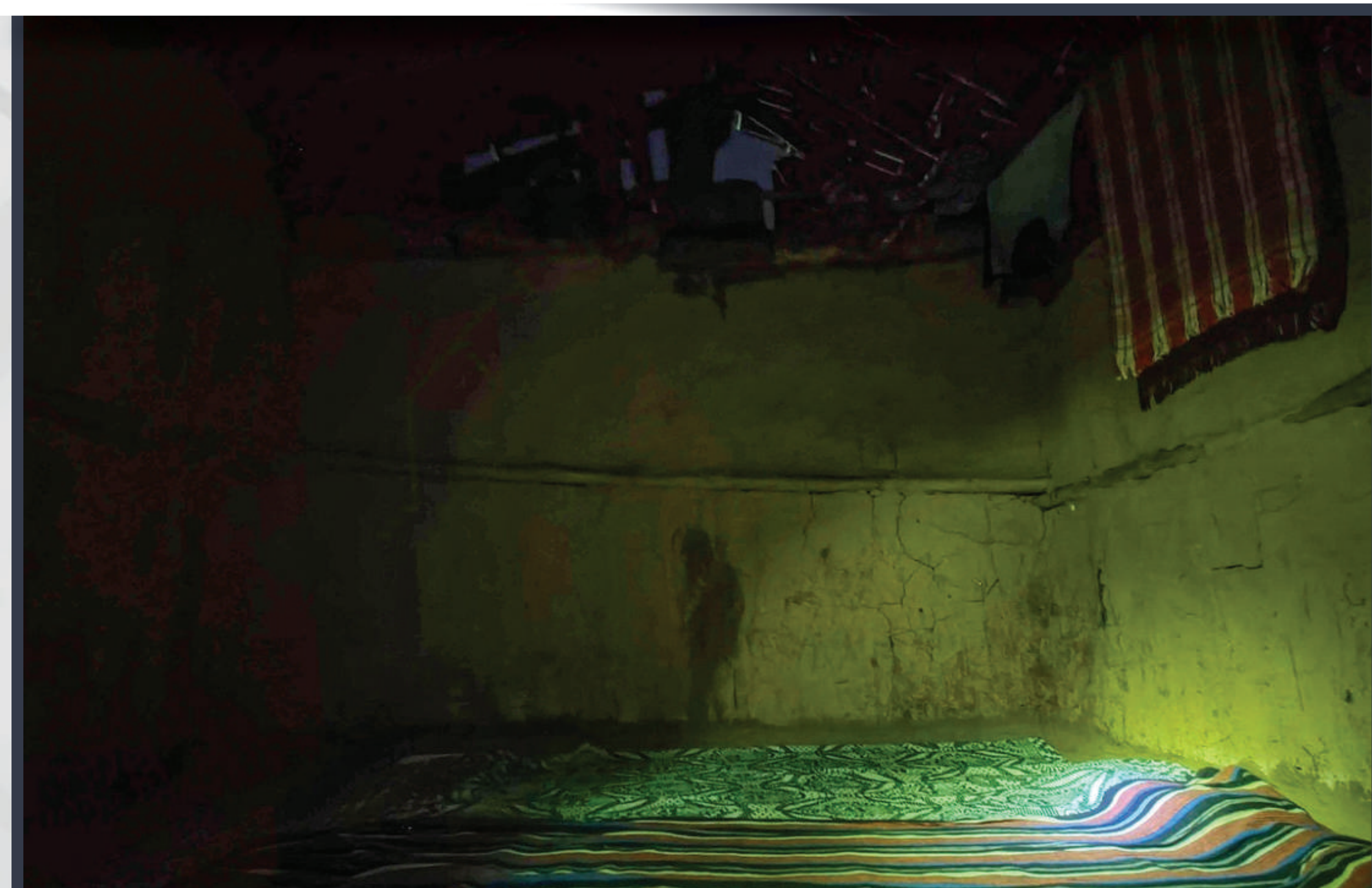
In Bejur, Parvati is preparing her bed in a 10x10 foot kurma hut. "I don't like staying here," the 17-year-old says nervously. With 35 households and a little less than 200 people, Bejur is a small village in Bhamragad taluka. However, according to the women there, the village has nine period huts.

At night, a dim shaft of moonlight pouring in through a crack in the wall is Parvati's only comfort when she stays in the kurmaghar. "I wake up suddenly in the middle of the night. Animal sounds from the forest scare me," she says.

Her home, a well-built single-storey structure with running electricity, is less than 200 meters from the hut. "I feel safe in my house, not here. But my parents are afraid of taboo," says Parvati, taking a long sigh. "There is no option. The men of the village are strict about these rules," she says.

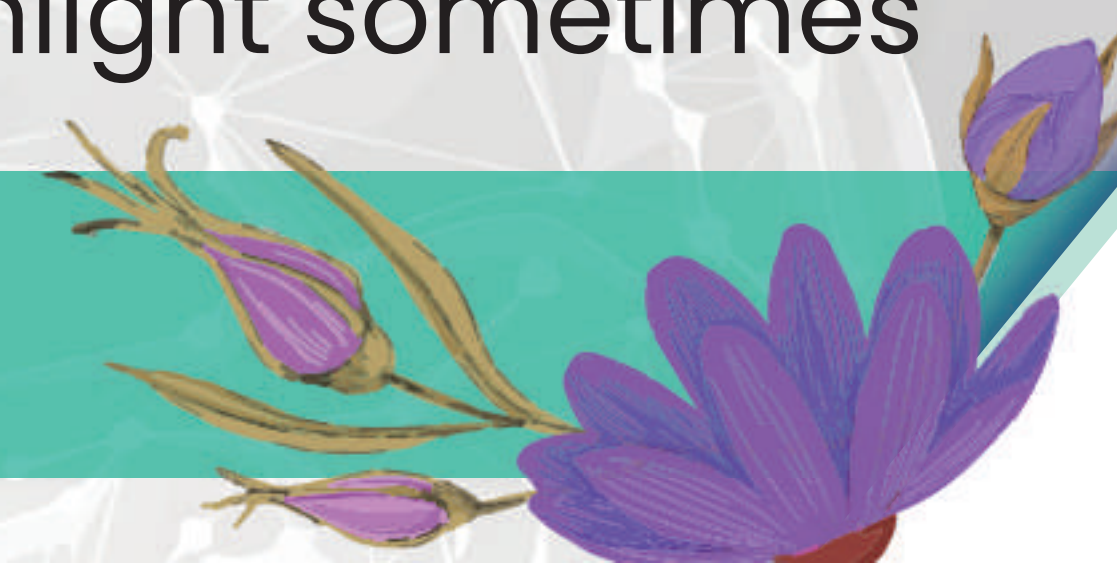


(Photo - Jyoti Shinoli)



(Photo - Jyoti Shinoli)

Left: The kurmaghar in Bejur village where Parvati spends her period days feels spooky at night.
Right: The 10 x 10 foot hut, which has no electricity, is only lit by a beam of moonlight sometimes





Parvati is a Class 11 student at Bhagwantrao Arts and Science College in Etapalli taluka of Gadchiroli, 50 kilometers from Bejur. She stays in a hostel there and comes home on holidays. "I don't feel like coming back home," she says. "It is extremely hot in the summer, and I sweat all night in this small hut."

Among the difficulties women face in the kurmaghar, the absence of toilets and lack of water are the toughest. Parvati has to go into the bushes behind the hut to relieve herself. "It is completely dark at night, and going alone doesn't feel safe. During the day, we need to keep a watch on passers-by," she says. Someone from Parvati's home drops off a bucket of water for cleaning and washing, and drinking water is kept in a steel kalshi (pitcher). "But I can't bathe," she says.

She cooks her meals on a chulha (earthen stove) outside the hut. It isn't easy to cook in the dark, she says. "At home, we mostly eat rice flavored with red chili powder and salt, or goat meat, chicken, river fish..." Parvati lists the staple menu, which is the same during her periods – only, she has to cook it herself. "Separate utensils sent from home are used during those days," says Parvati.

Communicating or interacting with friends, neighbors, or family members is not permitted when in the kurmaghar. "I can't step out of the hut during the daytime, move around the village, or talk to anyone," Parvati says, narrating the list of restrictions.

The practice of treating menstruating women as impure and secluding them has led to accidents and deaths in Bhamragad. "In the last five years, four women have died due to snake and scorpion bites during their stay in the kurmaghar," says R.S. Chavan, Child Development Project Officer (CDPO), Bhamragad. He represents the state's Women and Child Development Department.



(Photo – Jyoti Shinoli)



(Photo – Jyoti Shinoli)

Left: A government-built period hut near Kumarguda village in Bhamragad taluka.
Right: The circular shaped building is not inhabitable for women currently





(Photo – Jyoti Shinoli)



(Photo – Jyoti Shinoli)

Left: Unlike community-built kurmaghars, the government huts are fitted with windows and ceiling fans.
Right: A half-finished government kurmaghar in Krishnar village

As an alternative to the crumbling kurma structures, in 2019 seven 'houses' were built by the district administration, says Chavan. Each hut is supposed to accommodate 10 menstruating women at a time. The circular shaped buildings have windows for ventilation; they are meant to have bathrooms and beds and running water and electricity too.

In June 2022, a [government press release](#) stated that 23 'women's rest centres', or mahila visavakendra, had been constructed in place of kurmaghars in Gadchiroli. Built with assistance from the Centre and technical support of UNICEF Maharashtra, the statement said that 400 centres were being planned by the district administration in the next two years.

But when PARI visited three government-built kurma houses in Bhamragad in May 2023 – in Krishnar, Kiyar and Kumarguda villages – they were found to be half-finished and not inhabitable. CDPO Chavan could not confirm if any of the seven kurma houses were operational, said "It is difficult to say exactly. Yes, the maintenance is poor. I have seen a couple of them in bad condition. In some places, it is incomplete because of lack of funds."

The question is, how will such an alternative help to eliminate the kurma system? "It needs to be eradicated from the root," says Samajbandh's Sachin Asha Subhash. "The government kurma house is not a solution. In a way, it is encouragement."

Menstrual segregation violates Article 17 of Indian Constitution, which forbids untouchability in any form. In its judgement in the case of Indian Young Lawyers Association vs The State Of Kerala, [the Supreme Court said](#) in 2018: "The social

स्वच्छतेच्या चांगल्या सवयी

- दिवसातून किमान एकदा अंधोळ करा.
- आतले कपडे / निकर सुती असावीत, सिंथेटिक कपडे उष्णता व ओलावा धरून ठेवतात. त्यातून जंतुसंसर्ग वाढतो.
- अंतर्वस्त्रे दररोज बदला. ती स्वच्छ धुऊन उन्हात वाळत घाला.
- जर अंतर्वस्त्रे खराब झाली असतील, त्यावर डाग पडले असतील तर ती बदलली पाहिजेत नाहीतर जंतुसंसर्ग होऊ शकतो.
- एकमेकांची अंतर्वस्त्रे वापरू नका.
- स्वतः वापरलेल्या कपड्याच्या घड्या जरी धुतल्या असतील तरी इतरांना वापरण्यास देऊ नयेत तसेच इतरांच्या वापरू नयेत.
- लघवी नंतर तसेच शौचालयाचा वापर केल्यानंतर स्वच्छ पाण्याने ती जागा धुवा.
- योनिमार्ग पुढून मागे किंवा वरून खालच्या दिशेने स्वच्छ धुवा. मागून पुढे धुतल्यास संडासच्या जागेपासून जंतुसंसर्ग योनिमार्गापर्यंत पोहोचण्यास मदत होऊ शकते.
- योनिमार्ग स्वच्छ करण्यासाठी साबण अजिबात वापरू नका.
- मांड्यामधील भाग नेहमी कोरडा ठेवावा अन्यथा तेथे पुरळ अथवा खाज येण्याची शक्यता असते. त्यासाठी पावडर किंवा खोबरेल तेलाचा वापर करावा.

नावा मेंदूल, नावा अधिकार!



(Photo - Jyoti Shinoli)

(Photo - Jyoti Shinoli)

Left: An informative poster on menstrual hygiene care.

Right: The team from Pune-based Samajbandh promoting healthy menstrual practices in Gadchiroli district

However, the discriminatory practice survives under the patriarchal order.

"This is about god. Our god wants us to follow the practice, and if we disobey, we will face the consequences," says Laxman Hoyami, the perma, hereditary head priest, of Golaguda village in Bhamragad taluka. "We will have many problems, and people will suffer losses. Diseases will increase. Our sheep and poultry will die... This is our tradition. We can't stop following it, and we can't risk being punished with drought, flood, or some other natural disaster. This tradition will always continue..." he adds firmly.



(Photo - Jyoti Shinoli)

Ashwini Velanje has been fighting the traditional discriminatory practice by refusing to go to the kurmaghar





Though many like Hoyami are adamant about continuing the kurma system, some young women are determined not to fall in step. Like Ashwini Velanje, 20, from Krishnar village. "I got married on the condition that I won't follow kurma. It should stop," says Ashwini, who completed Class 12 in 2021. In March this year, she got married to 22-year-old Ashok only after he had accepted the stipulation.

Ashwini had followed the kurma practice since she was 14 years old. "I used to argue with my parents, but they were helpless due to social pressure," she says. After her wedding, Ashwini spends her period days in the veranda of the house. She continues to fight the system, ignoring all the barbs directed at her family. "I have covered the distance from the kurmaghar to the veranda; soon I will be inside the house during my periods," says Ashwini. "I will certainly bring a change in my home."

"UNDERSTANDING THE MENTAL STATE OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES ASPIRANTS ON THE VERGE OF ACHIEVING THEIR GOALS"

RATNA KALIPA (PROGRAM ASSOCIATE)
PEOPLE'S FORUM

Unemployment is a situation where a person actively searches for a job but is unable to find work. It indicates the health of the economy, with the unemployment rate being the most frequent measure. This rate is calculated as the number of unemployed people divided by the working population or those in the labor force.

To understand why educated unemployment is a particular problem in India, we must note that unemployment primarily affects the working class, typically aged between 15 to 59 years. Individuals below 15 and above 60 years are not counted in the unemployment population. Assam, a northern Indian state situated along the Brahmaputra and Barak River valleys south of the eastern Himalayas, is known for its good literacy rate. The latest census data from 2011 shows a literacy rate of 73.18%, with 78.81% for males and 62.27% for females. This rate has significantly improved from 2001, indicating an increase in literacy over the decade.

The state's economy relies mainly on agriculture, with tea and silk being major products. Assam tea blends are famous across India, and the state has significant oil reserves in the Assam-Arakan basin. It boasts the largest economy in the northeast region, with both GDP and Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) expanding between 2011-12 and 2016-17. However, the job market in Assam faces significant challenges. A report from the Northeastern Development Finance Corporation Limited (NEDFL) in October 2017 stated that over 1.75 lakh jobs would be required annually until 2020, primarily in blue-collar roles. This projection excludes jobs in agriculture, plantations, and government offices, which would further add to the employment demand.





Currently, Assam is grappling with increasing unemployment and a growing young population, leading to a mismatch between available jobs and the skills of educated individuals. While many students pursue higher education, they often face unemployment due to the predominance of blue-collar jobs over white-collar ones. Government job vacancies are usually filled from other states or through national employment exams, leaving many Assamese unemployed despite projections made in 2017.

Sample size refers to providing information about the numbers of participation or observation in the study. The researcher takes 30 respondents in the Nagaon, Ashoka IAS Academy and on the village Borduwa Satra.

Major Finding for Government Services Aspirants

- ✦ Reason behind their to being an aspirant of Government job i.e. Prestigious in the society, job security, good salary, low work pressure, life security, well settled
- ✦ Mental Status During their period of preparation i.e. Increase Stress and anxiety, depression
- ✦ Mental Pressure of Aspirants during attempting multiple times i.e. Suicidal ideation, substance misuse to continue concentration
- ✦ Family members suffering due to their unemployment for longer period of time i.e. Family pressure regarding jobs, Comparison, worse physical and mental health, psychological and economic consequences, arrangements of the family needs, listen to negative whispers of relatives, backup plans.

Solution of the problem

Dealing with increased stress, anxiety, and depression during a period of preparation can be challenging, but there are several strategies that can help. It's important to note that while these suggestions may be helpful for some individuals, they may not be a substitute for professional help. If you're experiencing severe or persistent mental health issues, it's crucial to consult a mental health professional for personalized support. Acknowledge and accept the feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression as normal responses to a demanding period of preparation. Trying to suppress or ignore these emotions can often make them more intense. Prioritize your physical and mental well-being. Make sure to get enough sleep, eat a balanced diet, and engage in regular exercise. Engage in activities you enjoy, spend time with loved ones, and allow yourself breaks to relax and recharge. Establish a structured schedule that includes designated study or preparation time, as well as breaks for relaxation and self-care. Having a





routine can provide a sense of stability and control, reducing feelings of stress and anxiety. Break down your preparation into manageable tasks and set realistic goals. This can help you stay focused and motivated, avoiding overwhelm. Celebrate small achievements along the way to maintain a positive mindset. Reach out to friends, family, or mentors who can provide emotional support and encouragement during this period. Having someone to talk to and share your experiences with can alleviate feelings of isolation and stress. Incorporate stress-management techniques into your routine. This may include deep breathing exercises, meditation, mindfulness, or engaging in activities that promote relaxation and calmness, such as yoga or listening to soothing music. Take time to reflect on your thoughts and feelings. Journaling or engaging in mindfulness practices can help you gain insight into your emotions and identify any negative thought patterns that may be contributing to your stress or anxiety. If your stress, anxiety, or depression becomes overwhelming or persists despite your efforts, consider seeking help from a mental health professional. They can provide guidance, support, and potentially recommend therapies or treatments that may be beneficial for your specific situation. It's crucial for anyone facing mental health challenges to seek professional help. The following recommendations may be helpful: It's important to talk to someone about your feelings and struggles. Share your concerns with a trusted friend, family member, or mental health professional. They can provide emotional support and help you explore potential solutions. Consider speaking with a mental health professional, such as a therapist or counsellor, who can provide guidance and support specific to your situation. They can help you develop coping strategies, manage stress, and address any underlying mental health issues. Engage in activities that promote relaxation and well-being. Take breaks, practice deep breathing exercises, engage in physical activity, maintain a healthy diet, get enough sleep, and participate in activities you enjoy. Self-care can help alleviate stress and improve overall mental well-being. Evaluate your goals and make sure they are achievable and aligned with your capabilities. Sometimes, setting overly high expectations can lead to increased pressure and feelings of failure. Break down larger goals into smaller, manageable steps to reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed. Establishing a structured routine can provide a sense of stability and control. Create a schedule that balances study or work time with leisure activities and self-care. Stick to the routine as much as possible, as it can help reduce stress and increase productivity. Mindfulness exercises, such as meditation or deep breathing, can help you stay present and manage stress. Consider learning relaxation techniques, such as progressive muscle relaxation or guided imagery, which can assist in reducing anxiety and promoting a sense of calm. Joining support groups or online communities with individuals facing similar challenges can provide a sense of belonging and understanding. It can be helpful to share experiences, learn from others, and receive support from people who can relate to your situation. Remember, these suggestions are not a substitute for professional help. If you or someone you know is in immediate danger or experiencing a mental health crisis, please reach out to emergency services or helplines available in your country.





Dealing with family members suffering from long-term unemployment can be challenging, both for the individuals directly affected and for their immediate family. The situation can cause significant physical and mental health issues, as well as economic and psychological consequences. Here are some suggestions for addressing these challenges and supporting your family members: Encourage open and honest communication within the family. Create a safe space where family members can express their concerns, fears, and frustrations regarding unemployment. Active listening and empathy can help alleviate some of the emotional burden. Foster a supportive environment within the family. Remind your unemployed family members that they are not alone in facing this situation and that the family is there to support them. Show compassion and understanding, avoiding any comparisons or negative remarks. Unemployment can take a toll on mental health. Encourage your family members to seek professional help if needed, such as therapy or counselling. Promote self-care activities, such as exercise, meditation, or hobbies, that can help alleviate stress and improve overall well-being. Work together as a family to create a financial plan that considers the current circumstances. Prioritize expenses, cut back on non-essential items, and explore potential sources of additional income or government support programs that may be available. Encourage your unemployed family members to invest their time in developing new skills or enhancing existing ones. This could include online courses, vocational training, or volunteering in a relevant field. This can boost their confidence, increase their employability, and provide a sense of purpose.

Assist your family members in searching for suitable job opportunities. Help them with their resume, cover letter, and interview preparation. Encourage them to network, attend job fairs, and use online job platforms to expand their chances of finding employment. While seeking employment, it can be beneficial to explore alternative options or backup plans. This could involve considering entrepreneurship, freelance work, or exploring different industries or career paths that may have more job prospects. It's important to manage expectations and remind your family members that finding a job can take time, especially during challenging economic periods. Encourage them to persevere, stay positive, and remain focused on their goals. Minimize the impact of negative whispers from relatives or others who may unintentionally add to the pressure and comparisons. Remind your family members that everyone's journey is unique, and they should focus on their own progress and well-being. Encourage your family members to connect with local community organizations, support groups, or job placement services. These resources can provide additional assistance, guidance, and networking opportunities. Remember, the process of overcoming unemployment can be difficult, but with patience, perseverance, and a supportive family environment, your loved ones can navigate this challenging period and eventually find new job opportunities.





EDUCATED UNEMPLOYMENT IN ASSAM, LIKE IN MANY OTHER REGIONS, CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO A COMBINATION OF VARIOUS FACTORS. HERE ARE SOME POSSIBLE REASONS BEHIND EDUCATED UNEMPLOYMENT IN ASSAM:

Assam may not have enough job opportunities that match the skill sets and qualifications of the educated workforce. The state's industrial and service sectors may not be adequately developed to absorb the growing number of educated job seekers. There may be a mismatch between the education system and the needs of the job market. The skills and qualifications acquired by graduates may not align with the requirements of available jobs, leading to a lack of suitable employment opportunities. Limited economic growth in the state can result in fewer job creation opportunities. If the economy is not expanding at a sufficient pace, it can contribute to a lack of job openings for educated individuals. Insufficient infrastructure, including transportation, power supply, and internet connectivity, can hinder the establishment and growth of businesses in Assam. This can limit the creation of job opportunities for educated individuals. The industrial sector in Assam may not have witnessed significant growth and diversification, leading to a lack of employment options for educated individuals. The absence of industries that require skilled workers can contribute to educated unemployment. There is often a disparity between rural and urban areas in terms of job opportunities. While urban areas might have a higher concentration of industries and services, rural areas may lack employment avenues for educated individuals. Many highly educated individuals from Assam may seek better employment opportunities outside the state or even the country. Brain drain can exacerbate the problem of educated unemployment as the educated workforce migrates to regions with more promising prospects. A limited ecosystem to support entrepreneurship and self-employment can be a barrier to educated individuals starting their own businesses. The absence of financial support, mentorship, and a conducive business environment can discourage entrepreneurial endeavors.

It's important to note that these reasons are not exhaustive, and the situation may vary for different individuals and regions within Assam. Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach involving government initiatives, private sector participation, and efforts to bridge the gap between education and employment.

During data collection, some aspirants used to give some tips:

By asking to choose between jobs, but there are millions of people outside struggling to get a job. People used to say a government job is peaceful and a permanent job. You will have security for a lifetime. People take 4 - 5 years of their time to crack the government job after their graduation. Most of the people return from the battle of government jobs by wasting a few years preparing for it.





Stay motivated preparing for a government job exam requires focus, determination, and hard work. By setting a clear goal, creating a study plan, staying organized, staying focused, taking care of your health, practicing mock tests, and staying motivated, you can increase your chances of success. Remember to stay positive and never give up on your dreams.

When people decide to prepare for a government exam, they are generally pumped up with enthusiasm and hope to clear the exam in one go. They are happy to think that clearing government exams such as SBI PO, Indian Railways, SSC, UPSC, among others, is synonymous with success for life. However, since the competition is tough and the pressure is at the maximum level, some students slip into the shadows of depression. Even if they have the potential to clear the exam in one go, their mindset weighs them down. The unemployment of youths in their twenties leads to weaker mental health status, including stress, anxiety, self-identity, and lack of job preparation tendencies compared to the employed group. One suicide attempt occurs every three seconds and one death by suicide every forty seconds among our youth. The mental status of aspirants during the period of preparation can vary depending on several factors, including the individual's mindset, goal, level of preparation, and the intensity of the competition they are facing.

Here are some common mental states that aspirants may experience during this period:

Many aspirants enter the preparation phase with a strong sense of determination and motivation. They are focused on their goals and are willing to put in the necessary effort and time to achieve them. The preparation phase can be demanding and stressful, especially for competitive exams or interviews. Aspirants often experience pressure due to the high expectations they have set for themselves or external expectations from parents, peers, or society.

This stress can lead to anxiety, sleep disturbance, and difficulties in managing emotions. Aspirants may fluctuate between moments of confidence and self-doubt. They may feel confident when they perform well in practice tests or complete their study targets, but self-doubt can creep in when they face challenges or encounter setbacks. The prolonged and intense nature of exam preparation can lead to burnout,





characterized by exhaustion, decreased motivation, and a decline in performance. It's important for aspirants to prioritize self-care, take breaks, and maintain a healthy work-life balance to prevent burnout. The preparation phase often requires aspirants to face failures, setbacks, and obstacles.

Developing resilience and the ability to bounce back from failure become crucial to maintaining a positive mental state and staying motivated. It's worth noting that every individual's mental status can vary, and some aspirants may experience additional emotions and challenges specific to their personal circumstances. It's important for aspirants to seek support from mentors, friends, or professionals if they feel overwhelmed or if their mental well-being is significantly impacted. The mental pressure experienced by individuals who attempt something multiple times, such as exams or any other goal, can be significant.

It is not uncommon for aspirants to face challenges and difficulties, which can lead to increased stress and various coping mechanisms. Some aspirants may experience suicidal ideation or turn to substance misuse as a way to cope or enhance concentration. It's important to address these issues and offer support to those who may be struggling. Substance misuse is not a healthy or effective way to cope with stress or improve concentration. It can lead to a range of physical, mental, and emotional health problems. If you or someone you know is misusing substances, it is essential to seek help from a healthcare professional, counsellor, or addiction specialist. They can provide appropriate guidance, support, and treatment options to address the underlying issues and develop healthier coping mechanisms.

It's important to remember that everyone's experiences and challenges are unique. If you are attempting something multiple times and feel overwhelmed, it may be beneficial to seek support from friends, family, mentors, or professional counsellors. They can provide guidance, encouragement, and strategies to manage stress, improve resilience, and maintain mental well-being. Family members experiencing long-term unemployment can face numerous challenges and pressures that can affect their physical and mental health, as well as have psychological and economic consequences. The situation can be particularly stressful due to family pressure regarding jobs and constant comparisons with others.

Here are some of the potential impacts and considerations: Prolonged unemployment can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and depression among family members. The uncertainty and financial strain can take a toll on their overall well-being and may even manifest in physical symptoms like insomnia, headaches, and decreased energy levels. Unemployment can negatively impact an individual's self-esteem and sense of identity, leading to feelings of inadequacy, shame, and hopelessness. Additionally, the financial strain can result in difficulties in meeting basic needs, such as housing, food, and healthcare, which further exacerbates the situation.





With limited financial resources, families may struggle to meet their daily expenses and fulfill their basic needs. This can create a sense of instability and increase the burden on other family members who may need to take on additional responsibilities or find alternative means to support the family. Comparisons and negative comments from relatives or acquaintances can contribute to the emotional burden on unemployed family members. Constant comparisons to others who have successful careers can further erode their self-esteem and increase feelings of worthlessness.

It is important for unemployed family members to have backup plans and explore alternative avenues for employment. This could involve updating skills through training programs, seeking part-time or freelance work, or exploring entrepreneurship opportunities. Having a proactive approach can help alleviate some of the stress and provide a sense of control over the situation. It is crucial for family members to offer support, empathy, and encouragement to their unemployed loved ones.

By creating a supportive environment, they can help mitigate the negative impacts of long-term unemployment. Additionally, seeking professional help, such as career counselling or therapy, can provide guidance and coping strategies for dealing with the challenges. Families should research and explore social programs, government initiatives, or local community resources that can provide assistance with job searching, financial support, or access to training and education opportunities. These resources can help alleviate some of the economic burdens and provide opportunities for career advancement.

Remember, each individual's situation is unique, and it is essential to approach the challenges with empathy, understanding, and patience. Encouraging open communication, fostering a supportive environment, and exploring alternative solutions can help the family navigate through the difficulties associated with long-term unemployment.

As of my knowledge cut-off in September 2021, I can provide you with information about the situation of government employment in Assam. However, please note that the situation may have evolved since then, and it's always a good idea to refer to the latest official sources for the most up-to-date information.

Assam, a state in north-eastern India, has a significant government sector that provides employment opportunities to its residents. The government of Assam is responsible for various departments and agencies that offer job vacancies in sectors such as education, healthcare, public administration, engineering, agriculture, police, and more. The Assam Public Service Commission (APSC) is the central recruiting agency for government jobs in the state. It conducts examinations and interviews for various positions, including civil services, administrative services, and other key government posts.





Additionally, other recruitment boards and agencies at the state and district levels are responsible for filling vacancies in different government departments. In recent years, the Assam government has taken initiatives to streamline the recruitment process and ensure transparency in hiring. Online application systems and merit-based selections have been introduced to improve the efficiency of the recruitment process. The government of Assam has also implemented reservation policies to provide employment opportunities to individuals from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

These reservations are provided for scheduled castes (SC), scheduled tribes (ST), other backward classes (OBC), and economically weaker sections (EWS) of society. Moreover, the Assam government has been focusing on the creation of new jobs and improving the overall employment scenario in the state. Various development schemes and projects are being undertaken to boost employment generation across different sectors, including infrastructure development, skill development, and entrepreneurship promotion.

It's important to note that the availability of government jobs in Assam can vary based on factors such as the economic climate, government policies, and specific requirements of different departments. Therefore, it is advisable to regularly check official government websites, employment portals, and newspapers for the latest updates on government job vacancies in Assam.

Here's an example of an individual named Rahul who is preparing for a government job:

Rahul is a young and ambitious individual who has set his sights on securing a government job. He is aware of the stability, benefits, and social impact that such a position can offer. To achieve his goal, Rahul adopts a structured and disciplined approach towards his preparation. Rahul begins by researching various government job opportunities available in his desired field. He studies the eligibility criteria, syllabus, and exam patterns of different exams to understand the requirements and selection process.

Based on his interests and strengths, he decides to prepare for the Civil Services Examination. Rahul sets clear goals for each stage of the preparation process. He breaks down the vast syllabus into smaller sections and sets achievable targets for completing each topic. This helps him stay focused and motivated throughout the journey. Rahul gathers the necessary study material, including textbooks, reference books, online resources, and previous years' question papers. He also enrolls in a reputable coaching institute to get expert guidance and access to mock tests. Rahul understands the importance of efficient time management. He creates a study





schedule that includes dedicated time slots for each subject, revision, and practice tests. He ensures a balance between theory, practice, and mock tests to enhance his understanding and test-taking skills. Rahul knows that consistent practice is crucial for success.

He solves previous years' question papers and takes regular mock tests to evaluate his progress. He analyses his performance, identifies weaknesses, and works on improving them. Rahul stays updated with current affairs by reading newspapers, magazines, and online news portals. He notes down important events, government schemes, and policy changes relevant to his exam. This helps him in the general knowledge and current affairs sections of the exam. Rahul regularly revises the topics he has covered to reinforce his understanding. He keeps track of his progress by maintaining a record of topics completed, marks obtained in practice tests, and areas that require further improvement. Rahul realizes that maintaining good health is essential for effective preparation.

He takes breaks, exercises regularly, and follows a healthy diet to stay energized and focused. He also practices relaxation techniques like meditation or yoga to manage stress and anxiety. Whenever Rahul encounters difficulties or doubts, he seeks guidance from his mentors, seniors, or online communities. He actively participates in group discussions, online forums, and study groups to exchange knowledge and learn from others. As Rahul progresses in his, he adapts his strategies based on his strengths and weaknesses. He learns from his identifies areas of improvement and adjusts his study plan accordingly. Rahul's journey to prepare for a government job is challenging but rewarding. With consistent effort, determination, and a positive mindset, he increases his chances of achieving his goal and securing a government job.

Meet Priya, a recent college graduate who has set her sights on landing a government job. She aspires to work in the banking sector and aims to secure a position as a Probationary Officer (PO) in a prominent public sector bank. Here's how she goes about preparing for the exam: Priya starts by thoroughly researching the exam pattern, syllabus, and eligibility criteria for the PO exam. She gathers information from official websites, recruitment notifications, and previous year's question papers to gain a clear understanding of what to expect. Priya devises a study plan that includes a comprehensive timetable.

She breaks down the syllabus into smaller topics and allocates specific time slots for each subject, ensuring proper coverage of all sections. Priya collects relevant study materials such as books, online study materials, and video lectures specifically designed for banking exams. She also joins a reputable coaching institute to gain access to expert guidance and mock tests. Priya understands that practice is key to success in competitive exams. She solves a variety of practice questions, sample





papers, and previous year's papers to improve her speed and accuracy. She also focuses on strengthening her weak areas by revisiting concepts and practicing additional problems.

Priya takes regular mock tests to gauge her progress and identify areas that need improvement. She simulates the actual exam environment, adheres to time limits, and reviews her performance afterward. This helps her identify her strengths and weaknesses and work on them accordingly. Priya recognizes the importance of staying updated on current affairs and general awareness. She reads newspapers, follows news websites, and watches news programs to stay informed about national and international events, banking-related news, and economic developments. As the exam date approaches, Priya devotes ample time to revise all the subjects and topics. She ensures she is thorough with the concepts, formulas, and important points.

Additionally, she practices time management strategies to improve her speed during the actual exam. Priya understands that maintaining motivation and taking care of her well-being are crucial during the preparation phase. She takes breaks, engages in recreational activities, and stays connected with friends and family. She also maintains a healthy lifestyle by exercising regularly, eating nutritious meals, and getting sufficient sleep. By following these steps and staying dedicated to her preparation, Priya increases her chances of cracking the government job exam. Her consistent efforts, perseverance, and strategic approach enhance her knowledge, skills, and confidence, making her a strong contender for the desired position.

CONCLUSION

The reasons behind individuals aspiring for government jobs are often multifaceted. They may include factors such as societal prestige, job security, a good salary, low work pressure, life security, and the desire to become well-settled. These motivations stem from the perception that government jobs offer stability, social recognition, and financial benefits, making them an attractive career choice.

However, the period of preparation for government job exams can take a toll on the mental health of aspirants. The intense pressure to succeed, coupled with the anxiety and stress of the competitive environment, can lead to increased stress levels, feelings of anxiety, and even depression. The prolonged duration of preparation, often spanning several years, can exacerbate these mental health challenges. Furthermore, the mental pressure faced by aspirants who attempt the exams multiple times can be overwhelming. They may experience feelings of hopelessness, self-doubt, and even develop suicidal ideation.

In an attempt to cope with the stress and maintain concentration, some aspirants





may resort to substance misuse, which can further worsen their mental and physical health. The unemployment of aspirants for a prolonged period can have significant repercussions on their family members. Families may experience immense pressure regarding job expectations, especially when comparing their aspirant family member to others who have secured employment. This can lead to adverse effects on the physical and mental health of family members, as well as psychological and economic consequences. Families may have to make adjustments in their lifestyle, financial planning, and arrangements to meet their needs.

Additionally, they may have to endure negative comments from relatives, adding to the overall pressure and stress. To alleviate these challenges, it is important for aspirants and their families to have support systems in place. Seeking professional help for mental health concerns can provide valuable guidance and coping strategies. Families can also encourage open communication, foster a positive environment, and focus on individual growth rather than external comparisons. Additionally, having backup plans and exploring alternative career options can help reduce the pressure associated with solely pursuing government jobs.

LACK OF SUPPORT HOLDS BACK CIVIL SERVICE ASPIRANTS FROM TRIBAL MAHARASHTRA

RUSHIKESH KASABE
AZIM PREMJI UNIVERSITY, M.A. DEVELOPMENT

'Bhika Vasave, who is a migrant and tribal student, comes from the village with a dream to become an officer, but more than 4 years have passed, and he still can't tell if anything will happen. "Many times, worrying about the future you wake up suddenly, and there is no guarantee of going back to sleep," says Bhika, a 25-year-old student from the Bhil tribal community in Nandurbar.

Pune is considered the home of dreams for a young generation. We see a large number of young people coming here from the rural areas of Maharashtra with dreams. But we can observe how the dreams are more separated when the tribal youth claim a share in this dream.

Adivasi Research and Training Institute has been functioning in Maharashtra since 1962 and provides training for students who want to become officers. But according to a news report from Indian Express, in the last few days, the institute has been plagued with problems, with negligible funding, planning, and staff problems. Institutions themselves are somehow surviving. People can see this institute giving priority to entrance exams along with skill development.





A lot of tribal students, when they come back from a big city like Pune, are not only confused about the institute, guidance, and opportunities, but they also have problems with basic needs and other fundamental issues. They have to suffer a lot because of the living conditions they were unable to adjust which somehow causes their mental health. One thing which makes it more vulnerable for them is that lack of support and awareness. People from the tribal communities who left their home and shift to the city end up going in stress and social anxiety, as everything is new for them, they were not able to cope up with the situation so easily like other students who have social capital can do it.

They come from rural areas to urban areas. The state is ranked second after Madhya Pradesh in terms of tribal population. The tribal community in Maharashtra is primarily composed of Bhil, Gond, Mahadev Koli, Dhor Koli, Tokare Koli, Pawara, Thakur, Warli, and Kokani. We can see many groups in this society who do not have land, agriculture, or means of livelihood to secure their future, and because of their dependent condition, the youth migrate. Among those who are migrating, the primary concern is not just food, clothing, and shelter; they're migrating for education and job opportunities too. You could call it 'Education Induced Migration'.

Bhagwan Bhangire is a tribal youth from 'Warli, a community from a hilly area of Nashik (Peth). He is preparing for the Staff Selection Commission exam; he was one of the migrant students in 2017, and now he has an M.Com. degree. Because he has completed his degree, he cannot remain in the hostel.

In Pune, we find that employment and education are the main aspects of youth migration. In a documentary film called Prayag Tech, this daily struggle is pointed out. We see tribal students staying in hostels.

Yashwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration (or 'Yashada') says that 45% of the students are from rural areas. A tribal student who is interested in competitive exams says that since she does not have enough money to take classes or any coaching, she studies in the study hall on her own. And even to do this, such basic needs as quality books and new technology, which are important for preparation, are needed. She has to struggle.

The Indian constitution has made provisions for education and employment. However, these students do not only have to prepare for the competitive examinations they also have to prepare for their future lives. To overcome the difficulties and achieving their new dreams, it is important and necessary for these students to think deeply and take responsible actions as informed and responsible citizens.





UNVEILING THE HIDDEN STRUGGLES: STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH IN MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

DR. ANJU CHANNAPETTA
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, SNS INSTITUTION

In the intricate web of societal dynamics, structural violence lurks as a pervasive force, perpetuating inequality, injustice, and profound suffering, particularly among marginalized communities. This insidious form of violence, rooted in systemic oppression, discrimination, and socioeconomic disparities, exerts a profound toll on the mental health and well-being of those on the margins of society. Let's explore the multifaceted dimensions of structural violence and its far-reaching impact on the mental health of marginalized individuals.

Understanding Structural Violence

Structural violence encompasses the systematic ways in which social, economic, and political structures perpetuate harm and inequity, often targeting specific groups based on factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic status. From institutionalized racism and discriminatory policies to economic exploitation and lack of access to essential resources, structural violence manifests in myriad forms, shaping the lived experiences of marginalized communities and exacerbating existing vulnerabilities.

Mental Health Implications

The repercussions of structural violence on mental health are profound and far-reaching. Persistent exposure to social exclusion, discrimination, and economic deprivation can contribute to the development of chronic stress, trauma, anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders among marginalized individuals. Moreover, the lack of access to quality healthcare, mental health services, and culturally competent care further exacerbates disparities in mental health outcomes, perpetuating a cycle of suffering and marginalization.

Intersections of Oppression

It's essential to recognize that structural violence operates at the intersections of multiple axes of oppression, compounding the challenges faced by marginalized individuals. For instance, LGBTQ+ individuals of color may experience compounded discrimination and marginalization, resulting in heightened vulnerability to mental health issues. Similarly, individuals living at the intersection of poverty, disability, and minority status often face intersecting barriers to mental health care and social support, further exacerbating their struggles.





Resilience, Resistance, and Healing

Despite the formidable barriers imposed by structural violence, marginalized communities demonstrate remarkable resilience, resistance, and capacity for healing. Grassroots movements, community organizing efforts, and advocacy initiatives led by affected individuals and allies are vital catalysts for social change and empowerment. By amplifying the voices of those directly impacted by structural violence, fostering solidarity, and advocating for systemic reforms, we can begin to dismantle oppressive structures and cultivate environments that promote mental health equity and justice for all.

Conclusion

In confronting the scourge of structural violence and its detrimental impact on mental health, we are called upon to confront systemic inequities, challenge oppressive structures, and prioritize the well-being of marginalized communities. By fostering empathy, solidarity, and collective action, we can strive towards a more just, inclusive, and compassionate society—one where the inherent dignity and worth of every individual are upheld, and where mental health is recognized as a fundamental human right. Let us embark on this journey together, guided by the principles of equity, justice, and compassion, towards a future where structural violence is replaced by structures of support, healing, and flourishing for all.



(Photo- Dr. Anju Channapetta)

MATERNAL STRESS AND CESSATION OF MOTHER MILK

DR. PRASANT KUMAR SABOTH
PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF PAEDIATRICS
IMS & SUM HOSPITAL, BHUBANESWAR

Mother's milk is the best milk for the baby. WHO, UNICEF, the Government of India, and various professional bodies advocate for exclusive breastfeeding for a newborn for the first 6 months of life. There is literature and evidence to show that babies who are





exclusively breastfed grow well, adjust well, and have lower chances of diabetes, hypertension, and other diseases compared to formula-fed babies. Consequently, mothers are increasingly adopting exclusive breastfeeding.

However, there are instances of lactation failure due to various causes, and the mother may have to start giving formula feeding. This typically occurs around 3 to 4 months of age for the newborn.

A mother who is happy, healthy, and in a positive psychosocial environment can feed her baby well. She can engage in activities such as playing and singing with the baby, and in a secure environment, the baby's growth and development are optimized.

Sometimes, a mother may suddenly find that she has no milk after a stressful event, such as a big quarrel in the home. This is due to the stress hormone cortisol, which inhibits oxytocin, the hormone responsible for releasing milk. Once the stress factor is addressed immediately, lactation can be reinstated, and the mother can continue to feed her baby.

Stress experienced by the mother during labor, childbirth, and lactation is a crucial factor that negatively impacts the growth and development of the baby. It can lead to reduced or cessation of milk production, and the mother may become irritable and take out her frustration on the baby.

It is imperative for the family and the community to take care of the physical and mental health of a pregnant mother until the child is 2 years old. A baby's brain growth and cognitive development are complete by 90% within 2 years of life. Any stress experienced by the mother during this period can result in limited growth and development of the child.

Therefore, it is essential to provide mothers with a positive, stress-free environment for the benefit of society and the nation as a whole.

ENTERTAINMENT & MENTAL HEALTH

(MOVIES THAT CAN HELP YOU FOR UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH)

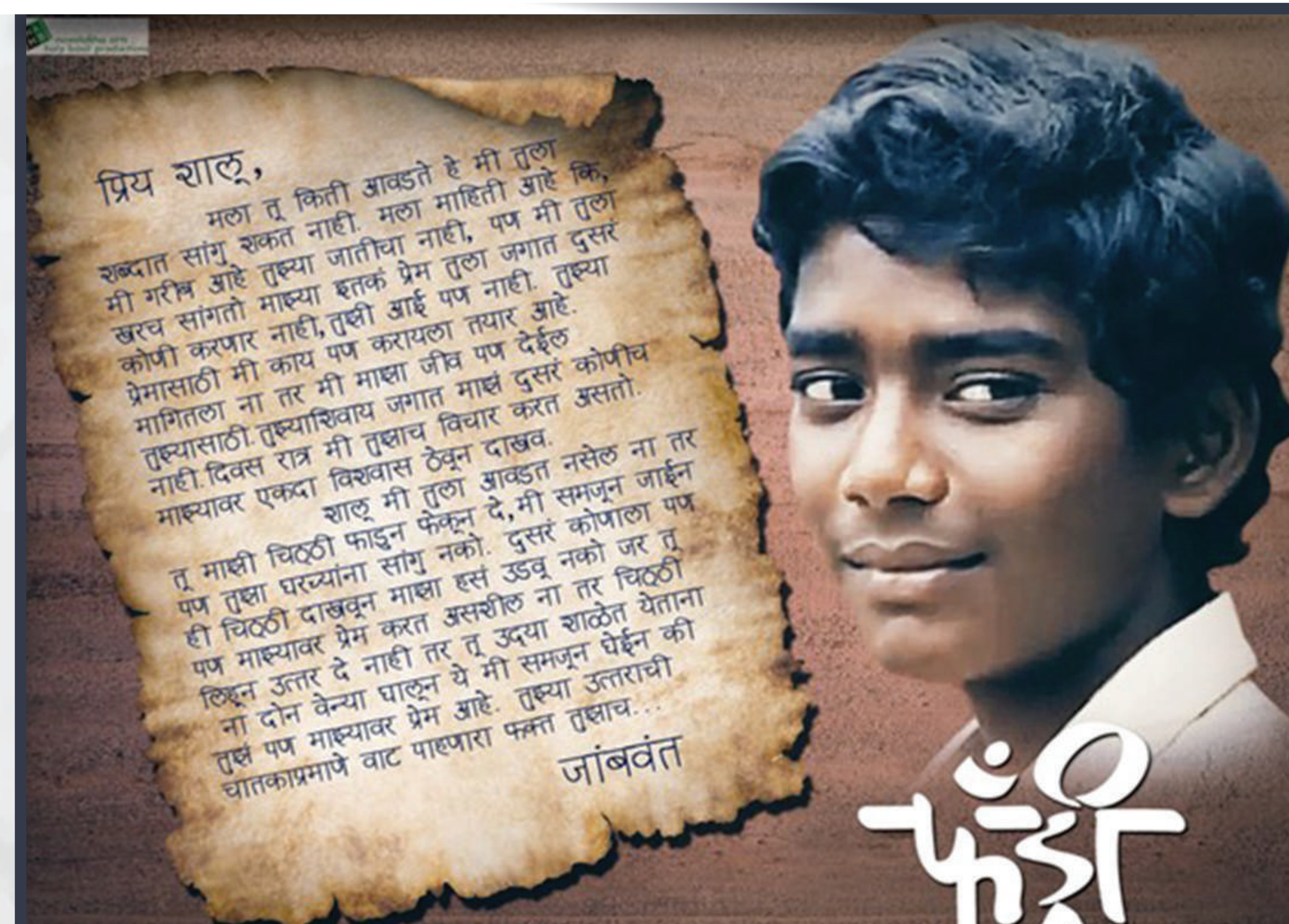
FANDRY

"Fandry" is a poignant Marathi film directed by Nagraj Manjule that explores social issues like caste discrimination and economic disparities in rural India. The movie follows the life of Jabya, a young Dalit boy, who faces various forms of discrimination and oppression due to his caste. He falls in love with an upper caste girl and does





everything in his power to tell her how he feels, but he is unable to profess his love to her due to their caste disparities. Once the several boys from higher castes knew of his emotions for her, they teased him about his caste and attempted to prove to him where he belonged in society.



"This is the letter he wrote for her but never had courage to give her. In this letter he beautifully explained his feeling by ensuring her that though our castes are different but my love for you is far than that."

In terms of mental health, "Fandry" subtly addresses the psychological impact of societal discrimination on individuals belonging to marginalized communities. Throughout the film, Jabya struggles with his identity and self-worth, constantly facing humiliation and rejection from society. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and even depression.

The movie effectively portrays the emotional turmoil experienced by Jabya and highlights the importance of addressing mental health issues within marginalized communities. By shedding light on the psychological effects of caste-based discrimination, "Fandry" contributes to the discourse on mental health awareness and the need for social change to create a more inclusive and equitable society.

PISTULYA

"Pistulya" is a Marathi short film that intricately explores the theme of mental health through the eyes of its young protagonist. The movie revolves around a young boy named Pistulya, what actual turmoil and issues exist in our lives? Just a few small





things that cause us additional anxiety, making it difficult for us to recognize the positive aspects of our lives. Everybody is categorized in some way, and there are always those who are in front of us and those who are in back of us. Pistulya, a short film, is heartbreaking because it helps you appreciate how fortunate you are. The narrative is on a young child who faces several obstacles in his life while living with his widowed mother. You are inspired by Pistulya, the young protagonist, because he is the one who doesn't give up on his desire to attend school.

The film beautifully portrays the challenges faced by individuals which affects to their mental health, as well as the stigma and discrimination they often encounter in society. Through Pistulya's character, the audience is sensitized to the struggles faced by those living with mental illness, highlighting the importance of empathy and understanding.

Moreover, "Pistulya" also sheds light on the importance of acceptance and support from family and community in managing mental health conditions. It emphasizes the need for a compassionate approach towards individuals dealing with such challenges, rather than marginalizing or isolating them.

Overall, "Pistulya" not only serves as a compelling cinematic experience but also sparks important conversations about mental health awareness and the need for inclusivity and support for those who are facing mental health challenges because of poverty.



TAMASHA

"Tamasha" offers a compelling portrayal of mental health struggles, particularly through the character of Ved, played by Ranbir Kapoor. The film explores themes of identity crisis, societal pressures, and the importance of self-expression in navigating one's mental wellbeing.

Ved's journey serves as a poignant depiction of the internal conflicts many individuals face when grappling with societal expectations versus personal desires. From a young age, Ved is conditioned to adhere to societal norms, suppressing his true self to fit in and meet the expectations imposed upon him. This suppression of his authentic





identity ultimately leads to a profound inner turmoil, manifesting as anxiety and a sense of emptiness.

As Ved meets Tara, played by Deepika Padukone, he begins to confront his inner demons and rediscover his passion for storytelling. Tara becomes his anchor, encouraging him to embrace his true self and break free from the constraints of societal conformity. Through their relationship. The film underscores the importance of genuine human connections in fostering mental well-being and providing support during times of struggle.

Furthermore, "Tamasha" sheds lights on the power of storytelling a creatively as therapeutic outlets for processing emotions and finding catharsis. Ved's journey as a storyteller mirrors his own quest for self-discovery, as he uses storytelling to explore his innermost thoughts and emotions.

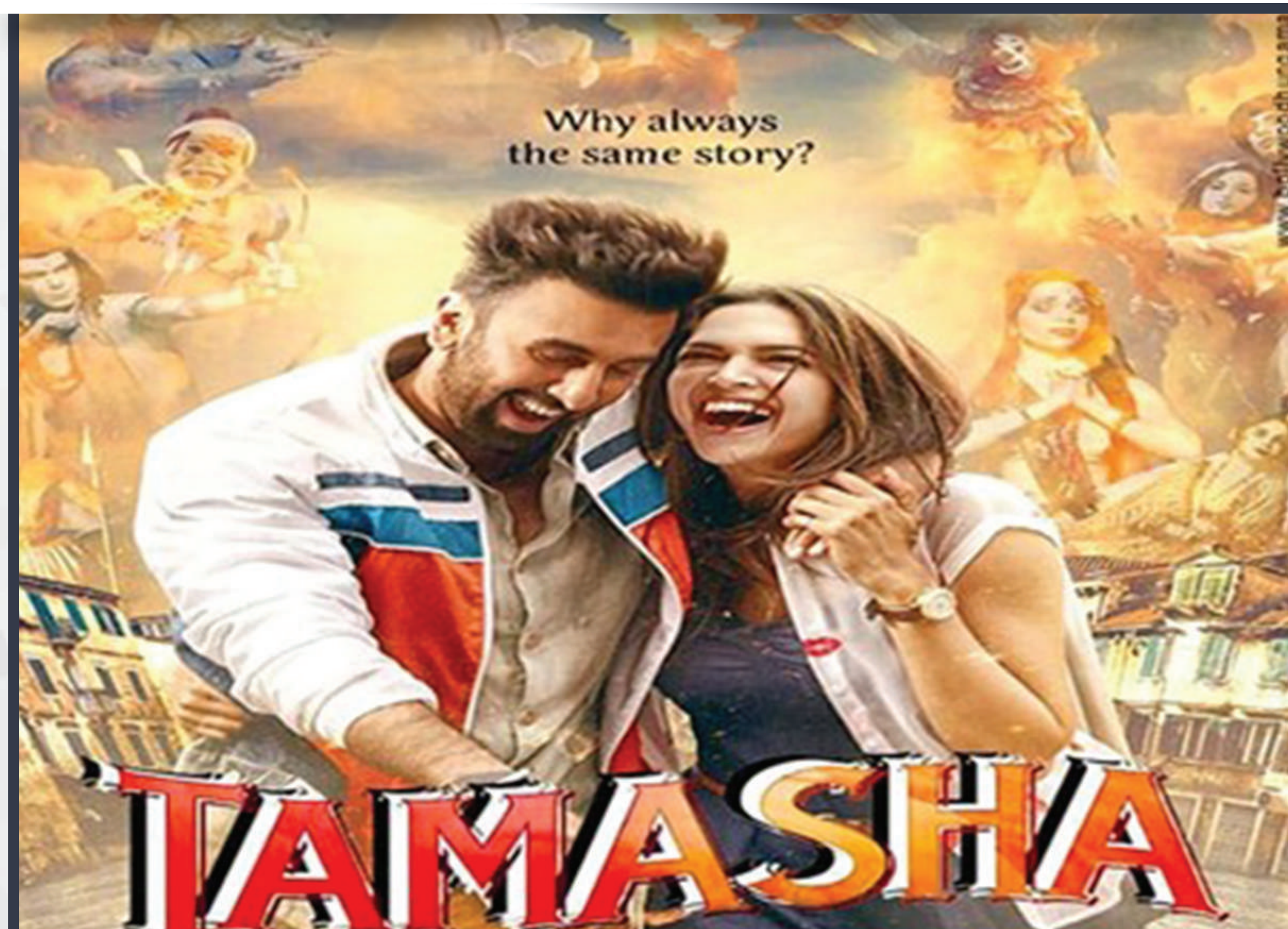
The film also touches upon the stigma surrounding mental issues, highlighting the need for greater awareness and empathy within society, Ved's journey serves as a reminder that mental health struggles are a universal experience and that seeking help and support is not a sign of weakness but of strength.

In summary, 'Tamasha' offers a poignant exploration of mental health through the lens of its protagonist's journey towards self-discovery and acceptance. By portraying the complexities of the human psyche with sensitivity and depth, the film encourages viewers to reflects on their own struggles and then importance of embracing authenticity in fostering mental well-being.

12th FAIL

"12th Fail" unfolds on the screen as a poignant biographical drama, bringing to life the real-life story of IPS Officer Manoj Kumar Sharma and IRS Officer Sradha Joshi. Directed and written by Vidhu Vinod Chopra, this film got the Best Flim Award of 2024.

This movie is based on real life story; the struggle faced by the main character showed it's a struggle story of aspirants who wants to achieve his success at any cost.





Vikrant Massey's portrayal of Manoj Kumar Sharma is a tour de force, embodying a range of emotions that leave an indelible mark. This movie shows how people from marginalized backgrounds struggle to succeed in life. It tells the story of individuals facing obstacles like lack of money, discrimination and not enough support to get a good education. Showed the emotional pain and stress these people go through as they try to do well in School and in life. It's not just about getting good grades, it's about dealing with the pressure to succeed and fear of failing, which can really be a tool on mental health.

"12th Fail" reminds us that we need to do more to help people from marginalized communities. WE need to fix the problems in the education system and give everyone the support they need to reach their full potential.



PARCHED

"Parched" is a brilliant, unconventional and powerful film directed by Leena Yadav. So "Parched" is a hard-hitting story of four Rajasthan women, who live in a tightly controlled male subjugated society, hemmed in by custom.

This movie shows forced child marriages, financial difficulties, spousal and familial rape, physical and emotional abuse by alcoholic husbands. They unrepentantly talk about love sex, their dreams and struggles in their day-to-day life. Although the director has used Rural India and its women as the premise, the story is somewhere related to all of us irrespective of which part of the country we live in. The rural society and women in the





film are mere representations of the larger whole. It tells us the stories of women deciding to put an end to the oppressions faced and change the course of their lives for better. In the man dominated culture how those women were tortured, the hardships they faced, the fight they had with themselves and how they made their way to happiness is the plot of this movie. The film showcases how intolerant we as a society are towards women without even being apologetic about how they are treated or mistreated. But the best part is that the film is talks about the incredible spirit of women even when they are at low phase in their lives. Also, this movie shows the complexities of mental stress and the arduous journey of self-discovery as they battle with depression triggered by societal pressures and personal traumas. Through their interconnected stories, the film highlights the universality of human suffering and the importance of empathy and support in overcoming life's challenges.

POEMS

THE PATHWAYS OF YOUR MIND

Our thoughts are pathways in the mind.
Well-trodden pathways are easy to continue along.
We know their way.
We know their destination.
If that is not a good place, we need to find a way off the path.
Create a crossroad in the path
Decide to take a different way.

(Julian Barkar)

THE MOUNTAINS OF LIFE

Life is like a mountain,
We all have to climb,
Sometimes we feel that we will never end it,
But it takes a bit of time.
Things are going smooth,
You will have no worries at all,
Then along comes a bumpy path,
You may have a great big fall.
You feel the world is ahead of you,
You might feel left behind,
Everything is going wrong,
The mountain is much too high.



You will have your ups and downs,
You will feel the highs and lows,
You will think the mountain you are climbing,
Is going much too slow.
By the time you have been up the whole mountain,
You are tired and out of breath,
You have seen everything life has to offer you,
And now it's time to rest.

(Nikita Thakrar)

I AM A BOY THEY TOLD ME

I am a boy they told me,
They?
Oh My family, relative and society-mention not.
I was told, I am a boy for playing more with my sisters.
I was told, I am a boy for showing more interest in art than in car toys!
Growing up I liked playing more with colours than hitting someone with a ball!
Little did I know playing with colours can question my gender!
A child who was barely aware of the gender roles assigned by the
society, who never cared what I liked.
I was forced to study mechanics when I wanted to learn more about history and art,
My long hair made my classmates uncomfortable,
How did those strands cling to my head made them uncomfortable?
I was asked to act like a man!
Act like a man?
When I was just trying to be myself, not bothering anyone around.
Oh that bothered them all.
How do I tell you I cannot ruin another life
just the way you all ruined mine.
How do I make her suffer
when all I can give her is food, cloth and shelter.
How do I tell you all I couldn't live
when you let me survive with your normative!
I am sorry for being a disappointment
But I was a God child, who loved flowers, art, nature and wanted to
breathe without being told
"Act like a man "

(Ariful, HR Professional
Bengaluru)

WHISPERED CORNERS

LET'S HEAR WHAT THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED

"My husband died because of cancer he left behind nothing for me and for my children's. My in-laws used to abuse me physically and mentally as I could not give birth to a boy. I had 5 pregnancies from which I had two miscarriages. Now I am a mother of three children and my husband left us behind. I don't live with my in-laws as they always abuse me mentally. Now, I do house chore work to fulfill my children's dream. I really don't know what mental health I really don't have time to look at it"

(A widow woman from village of Maharashtra)

"Muze Akele Rehana Pasand Hai, Logo Ke Bich Mai Jane Se Muze Ajib Lagta Hai. Bohot log Muze Pagal Hai Aise Chidhate Hai" said a girl from the small Village who could not continue her studies because of family responsibilities but she wanted to become something in her life to make everyone and herself proud. As she could not go against her parents because she came from a very poor background, and they could not afford her educational expenses.

(Unknown)

"Coming from a poor family without social capital is so hard to go for higher studies and adjust with the elite people. We often face many challenges such as discrimination, feeling of left out, problem is speaking English. I personally felt so anxious and under confident while having a conversation with the people in the university. It took me almost one year to understand the academic pedagogies and adjust in such a environment where I don't belong from. I used to get counseling from my universities peer group support"

(A student from Azim Premji University)





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Credits:

Editorial Team

Anushri Wankhade & Shristipriya Bora
Debadeepa Rath & Abirbhuta Swain

Conceptualization & Ideation

Suvrojit Choudhury

Design & Layout

Susil Kumar Jena

Overall Project Coordinator

Debashis Tripathy, Pratima Borah