



“CULTURAL EVOLUTION DURING COVID-19 – A CASE STUDY OF BUNDELKHAND REGION IN INDIA.”

Dr. Minakshi Soni^{1*}, Dr. Nadeem luqman², Mr. Atul B. Gaware³,
Dr. Harish D. Kalan⁴

Article History:

Received: 28.03.2023

Revised: 20.04.2023

Accepted: 06.05.2023

Abstract:

The study aims to provide comprehensive knowledge of the Cultural Evolution during Covid 19, specifically the Case Study of the Bundelkhand Region in India. Bundelkhand is a hilly region, divided between the states U.P. & M.P., and known for its glowing culture, great history, wonderful landscapes, and awesome architecture but affected drastically during Corona time. The research is based on primary data (Interviews & Questionnaires) and secondary data. The research reveals that the impact of Covid 19 is on different cultural factors such as Invention, Economy, Conflicts & Disasters, New Ideas, Aesthetics, Rights & Freedom, Laws & Orders, Designs & Infrastructure, Health, Education, Environment, Medical, Art, Music, & Literature, etc. Empirical research finds that virtual darshan played a significant role by binding communities as temples began to promote Live Darshan and e-Puja features on their websites and e-learning platform provided Convenience, Increased Participation, Easy Accessibility, Flexibility, and Preferred Learning Methodology to New Culture of Education System due to closure of Temples and Education Institutes. The researcher analyses that limited attendance of people and various restrictions on social & cultural events & functions which were less expensive, unpolluted, and peaceful made the cultural evolution. The study finds that the working culture was changed and people were choosing to Work from Home to prevent coronavirus infection and took advantage of time flexibility, psychological stress relief, and work-family balance. It is also observed that people started greeting with their Traditional Indian Custom “Namaste”, and also developed the habits of regular handwashing, maintaining hygiene & social distancing, housewives became chefs and were making healthy & tasty food for their family members up to great extent. The study encourages the researcher to investigate the various unexplored areas with respect to Cultural Evolution during Covid -19 in Bundelkhand Region.

Keywords: Culture Evolution, Covid 19, Rights & Freedom, working culture

^{1*}Assistant Professor, Amity University, Gurugram Email: sn.minakshi@gmail.com

²Associate Professor, Amity University, Gurugram ²Email: nluqman2307@gmail.com

^{3,4}Assistant Professor, Sandip University, Nashik ³Email: atulgaware98@yahoo.in

⁴Email: harishkalan@gmail.com, ⁴ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0174-2930>

***Corresponding Author:** Dr. Minakshi Soni

*Assistant Professor, Amity University, Gurugram Email: sn.minakshi@gmail.com

DOI: - 10.48047/ecb/2023.12.si5a.0314

Introduction:

When W.H.O. declared Covid 19 a Global Pandemic on 11 March 2020, the Country was adopting a defensive attitude by sitting on the Bank of the Ocean, and Cultural changes took place in India & all over World. The topic is very significant in itself and shows the Cultural Evolution in Bundelkhand Region during Lockdown. Research shows how aware people were, what steps the government took, and what Cultural changes people made to protect themselves from Coronavirus. The researcher also suggests the best recommendations to deal with epidemic-like situations in the future.

Bundelkhand is spread over 1.5 lakh square kilometers and includes two divisions (Seven districts) of Uttar Pradesh and three divisions (Thirteen districts) of Madhya Pradesh. The culture of Bundelkhand is very unique and different from other regions. The main Festivals are Diwali, Holi, and Raksha Bandhan & Beautiful Places are Khajuraho Temple, Maihar Maa Sharda Temple, Orchha Ram Temple, Chitrakoot Dham, and Jhansi Fort. The main tribes here are Pulind, Nishad, Sawar, Ramath, Dondi, Kaul, and Bhil, whose main favorite food is Mahua and Ber. The castes are experts in showing handicrafts, Chanderi is famous for clothes, Zari work, making Gau cloth, and Datia, Orchha, Panna, and Chhatarpur are famous for pottery and woodwork. The culture is based on emotions and inspired by the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and it is said that for the all-round development of man in culture, along with the progress of body and soul, Physical happiness and spiritual satisfaction are also necessary.

The culture here includes folk music, folk dances, folk tales, festivals, fast worship, rituals, folk deities, fairs, etc. and in the field of art sculptures, handicrafts, tattoos, costumes, etc. are visible. Routine, food, cuisine, folk sports, ethos, trick and enterprise business, etc come under civilization. People express their joy and sorrow through folk songs. These songs are sung on specific tunes from Yamuna to Narmada River and from Chambal to Tons River almost on the same tune. This area is the area of faith and devotion.

Maa Durga, Sharada is also the presiding deity of this place, and during the Kartik Snan festival women come out in herds in the morning and sing songs of Ram Krishna. The culture here includes public dance, a family dance, and ethnic folk dance, and Ganeshji, swastika, Kalash, lotus, conch, lamp, sun, moon, etc. are made from rice, cow dung, and others. Women wear dhoti, arrows, and Ghagra, Men - safa, Bandi, kurta dhoti, Women wear silver

claws on their feet, Sutiya around their neck, child-chhuda, paijania, loom, kada, kathula. In ethos, there is more faith in sagun, asagun, totka chhadphook and Ramlila, Raslila, Nautanki are organized in the theatre.

Research Methodology:

The research is based on both primary and secondary data. The secondary data was gathered from e-newspapers, publications, articles, and websites, while primary data was assembled through structured questionnaires and telephonic interviews with the prominent people of that area. The Random & Purposive sampling methods were used in the selection and the questionnaire included 30 unique questions. The research is based on 50 Interviews with the people of seven districts (Chitrakut, Banda, Jhansi, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Mahoba and Lalitpur) of U.P. and 50 Interviews with the people of six districts (Chhatarpur, Tikamgarh, Damoh, Sagar, Datia, & Panna) of M.P. 55 % of respondents are Male and 45 % are female.

Objectives-

1. To identify Cultural Evolution in Bundelkhand Region during Covid 19.
2. To identify the strategies taken in the Bundelkhand Region to deal with various challenges caused by Covid-19.
3. To suggest the best practices to overcome the Pandemic situation in the future.

Findings:

Cultural Evolution in Bundelkhand Region during Covid-19.

There was a lot of change in the behavior of the people during the Corona period. While on the one hand religious places, sports activities, entertainment centers, and other institutions were closed by banning social and cultural programs, on the other hand, these programs were being promoted online. In various religious places of the country, live darshan and e-puja features were made available to their devotees, and virtual reality in darshan gradually became a real reality. The priests webcasted the Aarti and uploaded daily prayers on Facebook and other Social Media. People started contributing by donating online. There are various such apps like Live Darshan, and Ashta, by clicking on which a view of daily rituals is presented. But hardly 30% of the people of Bundelkhand took advantage of this facility. Websites of holy temples of the region like Khajuraho's scenic spots and temples, Kundalpur's Jain temple, Maihar's Sharda Mata temple, have started using technology to benefit their devotees.

However, this facility was available only in a few temples. The importance of cleanliness in religious places had increased a lot. Started organizing community langar in Gurudwaras with social distancing. Washbasins and soap were available at the entrance of religious places, and employees started using masks and gloves.

During the Corona period, people virtually watched pictures and videos of historical buildings like the Red Fort, Taj Mahal, and Qutub Minar on YouTube and websites sitting at home. But hardly 40% of people took advantage of this facility and travelled the whole world sitting at home during the Corona period. State governments put pictures of snowfall in hill stations on their websites, which people enjoyed sitting at home. The Ministry of Tourism started a webinar show named "Apna Desh Mantralaya" in which virtual tours of different cities of the countries were conducted. This was also a good option for the people sitting at home to visit virtually at the time of lockdown but hardly 30% of people took advantage of all these.

Online classes were started in the village of Bundelkhand when the schools were closed, but only 10% of the students could take advantage of it. Provided a new culture to the education system by providing e-learning platforms in schools, colleges, and universities in urban areas. Compared to earlier, more variety of programs and courses have been offered to the students. Whose cost was less but were more convenient and flexible. Along with providing a more comfortable learning environment and maximum participation, online education has invited a variety of collaborative, and social opportunities and people have studied along with the job.

Respondents say that the people of small villages are involved in Agriculture, Trade, and Marginal Activities like Labouring Information, Non-Farm Activities, Handicrafts, Labour in Neighbouring Villages, and Stitching, Knitting, and Embroidering. 30 people lost their jobs but 70 percent of people continued to work in the fields and from home and also survived from Corona.

Strategies taken in the Bundelkhand Region to deal with various challenges caused by Covid-19.

Awareness and Information Dissemination: Government authorities, health departments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had focused on creating awareness about COVID-19, its symptoms, prevention measures, and the importance of vaccination. This included public health campaigns, distribution of informational

pamphlets, and leveraging various media channels to reach the local population.

Testing and Contact Tracing: Expanding testing capacity and contact tracing efforts had been crucial in identifying COVID-19 cases, isolating infected individuals, and quarantining their close contacts to prevent further transmission. This included setting up testing centers, and mobile testing vans, and training healthcare workers in contact tracing techniques.

Healthcare Infrastructure Strengthening: To cope with the increased demand for healthcare services, efforts were made to enhance healthcare infrastructure in the region. This included setting up dedicated COVID-19 hospitals and isolation centers, ensuring an adequate supply of medical equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE), and training healthcare professionals to manage COVID-19 cases effectively.

Vaccination Drives: The vaccination campaign was a key strategy to control the spread of COVID-19. Governments organized vaccination drives to administer vaccines to eligible individuals, following the national vaccination guidelines. This involved setting up vaccination centers, mobilizing healthcare staff, and promoting vaccine acceptance among the population.

Socioeconomic Support: Many regions had implemented various socio-economic support measures to assist vulnerable communities affected by the pandemic. These included distributing food rations, providing financial aid or direct transfers to low-income households, and facilitating employment opportunities for those who had lost their jobs.

Educational Initiatives: With the closure of schools and colleges, efforts had been made to continue education through online platforms, televised classes, or take-home study materials. Educational institutions had been encouraged to adapt to remote learning methods to minimize the disruption caused to students' education.

Localized Restrictions and Lockdowns: Depending on the severity of the outbreak, local authorities implemented restrictions on movement, imposed lockdowns, or enforced containment zones to contain the spread of the virus. These measures aimed to minimize social contact and prevent the overwhelming of healthcare systems.

Best practices to overcome a pandemic situation in the future:

It's important to consider the lessons learned from past experiences and the advice of public health experts. Here are some key practices to consider:

1. Early detection and surveillance: Establish robust systems for early detection and monitoring of infectious diseases.

This includes enhancing global cooperation, investing in research and development, and strengthening healthcare infrastructure.

2. Rapid response and coordination: Develop efficient and coordinated response mechanisms at local, and national levels.

This involves clear communication channels, effective data sharing, and collaborative decision-making among healthcare organizations, governments, and international agencies.

3. Public health awareness and education: Implement comprehensive public health education campaigns to raise awareness about infectious diseases, their transmission routes, and preventive measures. Encourage individuals to adopt responsible behaviors such as hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and timely vaccination.

4. Vaccination programs: Prioritize the development, production, and equitable distribution of effective vaccines. Promote vaccination campaigns to reach high vaccination coverage across all communities. Ensure transparency in vaccine distribution and address vaccine hesitancy through targeted communication and addressing concerns.

5. Robust healthcare systems: Invest in resilient healthcare systems that can handle the surge in demand during a pandemic. This includes expanding healthcare infrastructure, ensuring an adequate supply of medical equipment and essential medicines, and training healthcare professionals to respond effectively.

6. Contact tracing and surveillance: Implement widespread and efficient contact tracing programs using digital tools where feasible. This helps identify and isolate infected individuals, breaking the chain of transmission.

7. International cooperation: Foster global collaboration and information-sharing among nations, research institutions, and international organizations. Strengthen the role of global health bodies such as the World Health Organization

(WHO) to coordinate responses, share data, and provide guidance during pandemics.

8. Preparedness and resilience: Develop robust pandemic preparedness plans at all levels, including national, regional, and local. Conduct regular drills and simulations to test the readiness of healthcare systems, emergency response capabilities, and communication networks.

9. Targeted interventions: Tailor interventions based on the specific characteristics of the pandemic, including its severity, transmission routes, and affected populations. Adjust strategies based on evolving scientific evidence and epidemiological data.

10. Psychological support and mental health services: Prioritize mental health services to address the psychological impact of a pandemic. Provide resources and support systems for individuals and communities experiencing stress, anxiety, and trauma

Conclusion:

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on various aspects of life, including cultural evolution in India. Here are some key areas where cultural evolution has been observed during the pandemic:

Digital Transformation: The pandemic accelerated the digital transformation of various sectors in the Bundelkhand Region. People quickly adapted to online platforms for work, education, entertainment, and socializing. Digital communication tools such as video conferencing, online collaboration platforms, and social media became integral parts of daily life. This shift fostered new cultural practices and norms related to virtual interactions.

Work Culture: Remote work became prevalent during the pandemic, leading to changes in work culture. Employees and employers embraced flexible work arrangements and virtual collaboration tools. This shift brought about changes in work-life balance, communication patterns, and the concept of office spaces. Companies and individuals had to adapt to new ways of working, resulting in a re-evaluation of traditional work practices.

Education: With the closure of schools and educational institutions, online learning became the primary mode of education. Students, teachers, and parents had to adapt to digital platforms and e-learning methods. This shift impacted the dynamics

of classroom interactions, teaching methodologies, and the importance of technology in education.

Entertainment and Media Consumption: Due to restrictions on outdoor activities and cinema halls, people turned to digital platforms for entertainment. Streaming services, online gaming, and social media witnessed increased engagement.

Health and Hygiene Practices: The pandemic brought about significant changes in health and hygiene practices. Wearing masks, using sanitizers, and practicing social distancing became cultural norms. People became more conscious of personal hygiene and cleanliness, leading to changes in daily routines and social interactions.

Community Support and Solidarity: The pandemic also highlighted the spirit of community support and solidarity in the Region. People came together to help those in need through initiatives like food distribution drives, setting up makeshift hospitals, and providing support to migrant workers. This collective response showcased the resilience and compassion of the society.

Religious Practices: Religious gatherings and ceremonies were significantly impacted by the pandemic. Many religious festivals and events were either canceled or conducted with restrictions. People turned to online platforms to participate in virtual religious services and connect with their faith communities.

It's important to note that these changes in cultural evolution are not universal or experienced uniformly across all sections of society. Different regions, communities, and individuals may have had varying experiences and adaptations during the pandemic based on factors such as socioeconomic status, digital infrastructure, and access to resources.

Reference-

1. <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/culture-shock-covid-19-and-the-cultural-and-creative-sectors-08da9e0e/>
2. <https://www.wipo.int/meetings/en/2022/info-session-impact-covid-19-copyright-ecosystems.html>
3. file:///C:/Users/HP/Downloads/COVID-Outlook-Week-of-1.4.2021-revised%20(1).pdf
4. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>
5. <https://www.jagran.com/news>
6. <https://www.amarujala.com>
7. <https://rural.nic.in>
8. <https://ignca.gov.in>
9. <https://www.culturemp.in>
10. <https://dindori.nic.in>
11. <https://www.jagran.com/news/>
12. <https://www.mapsofindia.com>
13. <https://mp.gov.in/culture>
14. <https://www.ritirivaz.com/>
15. <https://www.holidify.com/>
16. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>
17. Alghamdi A. Abdulelah. (2021). Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Social and Educational Aspects of Saudi university students' Lives. Plos. Journals.
18. Arora, Saurabh & Sanditov Bulat. (2015). Cultures of Caste and Rural Development in the Social Network of a South Indian Village. Sage Journals.
19. Bedi Saniya & Khan Waheeda. (2020). Psycho-social impact of covid-19 in India. Indian Journal of Health Sciences and Care. ISSN: 2394-2363.
20. Bhattacharya, Ananta, Reddy M., Suryanarayana, Ravishankar & Kamatha, T. B. (2021). How Did the Village Community Perceive and Draw Strategies Against the COVID-19 Pandemic? A Qualitative Exploration. Cureus Journal of Medical Science.
21. Gupta Deepankar. (2005). Whither the Indian Village?: Culture and Agriculture in 'Rural' India. Sage Journals, Vol 10, Issue 5.
22. Kachroo, Varsha.(2020).Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in India: Current Scenario. International Journal of Research and Review. Volume: 7. Issue: 3 Pages: 435-447.
23. Khan Nasheem Ahmed & Rasheed Arif. (2016). A Case Study of Socio-Cultural Analysis of a Village in Western Uttar Pradesh. Journal of Art Science and Commerce. Vol. VII Issue-1.
24. Narmadha V. & Anuradha A., (2021) Socioeconomic, cultural and environmental impact of covid-19 on tourism in India, Journal of Management Information and Decision Sciences, Volume 24, Issue 4,
25. Sekh Rahim Mondal, M. (2020). Impact of covid-19 pandemic on society in India: An anthropological appraisal. Serials Publications, 100 (3-4) pp,195-208.
26. Sneh Bhiwaniwala (2022), Impact Analysis of Work Culture and Transformation during COVID-19. Journal of Computer Mechanical & Management. Vol (1) No 1.
27. Subhro Basu, Arijit Karmakar & Vanshika Vidhan (2020), Impact of lockdown due to covid 19 outbreak: Lifestyle changes and

public health concerns in India. International
Journal of Indian Psychology, vol (8).