



## Preface/Introductory Letter

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The concept for the current special issue is primarily crafted at the intersection of social ecology, human well-being, and sustainability. “Social ecology” mirrors humans’ role in shaping society, building human civilization, and its associated human-nature interface. The concepts of “human well-being” and “sustainability” are outcomes that are aimed at attaining a well-off future for the global population. Society is the key component of the proposed issue as it is the foundational aspect of human civilization and the surrounding ecology they exist in. This special issue is timely and will certainly highlight challenges, strategies, and solutions needed to help vulnerable communities. We hope it also provides a well-timed synthesis of a rapidly growing and important field of study that will bring forward new and innovative ideas shaping future work for social scientists and other researchers working in this domain. In this special issue is a collection and compilation of eight (8) research papers that cover and magnify on the current state, challenges, and sustainable management for the vulnerable communities.

The paper entitled “Governance of Urban Infrastructure in India: Exploring the Approaches, Attributes, and Opportunities towards Sustainability” has identified the existing modalities of urban infrastructure governance in India. An in-depth analysis of the key concerns and the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders has been recognized. Drawing extracts of success models from different parts of the world, this research work emphasizes the participation of non-state stakeholders. The importance of partnership building and involvement of local communities is accentuated, therefore. Moreover, this research has suggested reforms to administrative functionalities.

In the paper entitled “Intimate Partner Violence in (Un)-Romantic Relations: Its Spatial Dimensions in the Indian Context,” the research article based on NFHS-5,

2019–2021 report, explores spatial variation of how married women in India are victimized of emotional, physical, and sexual atrocities by their spouses within their nuptial life worlds which is supposed to be “intimate romantic space.” This essentially questions the security and well-being offered by intimate space for women. Despite such atrocities, how women negotiate with such sites and spaces of violence has also been discussed. Both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used to explore the various aspects of intimate partner violence.

The paper entitled “Spatial Inequality of Social Development—A case study in Paschim Medinipur District, West Bengal, India” exploring the geographical disparities in human development and asking whether modes of development are influenced by regionally dependent elements—space being one of the factors influencing human development—contributes to the case study. At the district level, it assesses human development indexes and studies spatial clustering. The state still has alarming disparities despite the fact that its degree of human development has greatly increased over the previous 20 years. The total intra-regional disparity grew dramatically, as shown by the ordinary least square (OLS) linear regression result, which also showed a strong spatial link between larger percentages of schools, drinking water, electricity, and literacy levels. The study’s findings contribute to micro-level reductions in spatial inequality, which is crucial for reducing inequality in all of its manifestations and dimensions and achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

The research paper on “Prevalence and Determinants of Anaemia Among Under-Five Children in West Bengal: An Insight from the National Family Health Survey 2015–2016” outlined the prevalence of anemia among under-five children belonging to different districts, and different socio-demographic groups of West Bengal, and identified the significant determinants of anemia employing the National Family Health Survey-4 (2015–2016) dataset. The study significantly identified a higher prevalence of any kind of anemia among the children in the early age group, living with 20–29-year-old, thin, anemic mothers, belonging to urban

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areas, lower economic groups, and living in the northern part of West Bengal. Besides, it also described a higher chance of moderate or severe anemia among smaller births, and the children belonged to the Scheduled Tribe community. The findings of the study may help policymakers build up proper strategies for improving child health (SDG 03) and reducing inequality (SDG 10) in the prevalence of childhood anemia across various socio-demographic groups and districts in West Bengal.

The paper entitled “Unpacking Urban Environmental Visions and Contestations of street vendors in Kolkata, West Bengal” explores a discursive frame of urban environmental justice, positioning street vendors as steady actors within the informal economies of a city. Street vendors, more popularly known as “hawkers” in South Asia, constitute an essential part of the urban landscape in India and often settle down for sale in public spaces like city streets, sidewalks, and overpasses. Street vending spaces in the city, however, come into conflict with the “environmental” visions of the middle-class citizens who desire to live in a world-class city, that is spectacular, hygienic, and cantered around bourgeois aesthetics. As a result, hawkers are routinely targeted, dispossessed, and evicted through crackdowns and clean-up drives. This work proposes the idea of the “political making” of public spaces like city streets as part of the urban environment whereby we broadly trace a route to investigate urban environments as a sociopolitical rather than a linearly ecological category. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Kolkata, we reveal how street vendors have been able to contest class-animated visions of the city through innovative political strategies, effective mobilization, and negotiation with a diverse range of state and non-state actors who participate in regimes of governmentality to control these spaces at the micro-level.

The paper entitled “Gender Parity in Urbanizing City: A Case Study of Barasat City, India” focuses on gender disparity, or gender inequality, and encompasses the unequal treatment of males and females. This inequality stems from perceived differences, whether biological, psychological, or cultural, resulting in attitudes and behaviors that assign distinct gender roles. The present study delves into five key dimensions of gender parity, employment, education, health, social freedom, and empowerment, as well as an overarching assessment of overall gender parity. The research takes place in Barasat, a city undergoing urbanization. The study reveals a concentration of high parity wards at the city center, while women at the periphery face deprivation. This spatial pattern underscores the strong connection between gender parity and the varying degrees of urban development. Notably, the city’s incomplete urbanization translates to unequal opportunities and restricted access for its female population. This research also underscores that educational parity exerts the most significant influence on enhancing overall gender parity.

The paper entitled “Monitoring the past and future trends of urban thermal comfort conditions through a new methodology” highlighted on the climate change which is affecting thermal comfort conditions (TCCs) negatively. Therefore, it is important to estimate their past and future trends to take accurate measures for mitigation and adaptation efforts in especially urban areas. However, it is difficult to calculate TCCs for the future since they are the combined effect of several meteorological parameters on a person outdoor together with her/his own physiological characteristics, which must be evaluated individually. This study is aimed at determining the TCC trends in the past compared to the present while estimating the future conditions using a new methodology in the case of Kayseri city in the Interior Anatolia Region of Turkey. As the result of the study, all the change trends considering temporal and spatial results show that thermal comfort conditions signal warmer and higher heat stress in the past and future trends. This means that human thermal sensation ranges (e.g., very cold) have replaced with the next warmer range, and their spatial distribution in percentage has also changed towards warmer. Increase in the prevalence of unfavorable thermal comfort conditions causes the decrease in the liveability indicators in especially urban areas, including serious economic losses based on energy consumption, health care expenses, and efficiency of activities. It is required that both past and expected future trends be considered in the planning and design works to make cities resilient and have higher adaptive capacity to climate change.

The paper entitled “Female Water Fetchers: Analyzing the Role of Women in Collecting Drinking Water in India” outlined the role and responsibility of female members of those households where the availability of drinking water is inadequate using 69th round of NSS (National Sample Survey 2012) data. It revealed that in India, over 80% of women collect water when no source is available on their household premises. It also outlined the significant influence of caste/class, the education status of the male member, the principal occupation of the households, the distance to the drinking water sources, the household head’s gender, the land ownership, and the place of residence on determining this great responsibility of women in India.

I hope that this special issue will be widely acclaimed by academia from allied disciplines including social scientist, environmentalists, policymakers, and research scholar particularly for highlighting the new emerging issues of social ecology, human well-being, and sustainability.

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