

CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN A BORDERLAND AREA: A STUDY OF KHEMKARAN TOWN

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Abstract - Borderland societies occupy a unique position where geography, politics, culture, and identity intersect to create distinctive notions of justice. This study focuses on Khem Karan town, located on the Indo-Pak border in Punjab, to examine how justice is perceived, negotiated, and practiced in a borderland context. In such regions, state law often coexists with informal mechanisms, local traditions, and community-based practices that together shape the lived realities of justice. The paper explores how issues of security, displacement, citizenship, livelihood, and cross-border interactions influence justice in Khem Karan. It further investigates the impact of militarization, migration, and recurring crises such as wars and economic disruptions on everyday life and social order. By analyzing the interplay of legal pluralism, state policies, and local perceptions, the study highlights the complex dynamics of justice beyond the formal legal system. Khem Karan serves as a microcosm to understand broader questions of rights, identity, fairness, and resilience in borderland societies, offering insights into how communities reconstruct justice in spaces marked by both conflict and coexistence. The study concludes that concepts of justice in a border town like Khem Karan are not static but keep evolving with changing economic opportunities, political policies and social interactions. This analysis can be helpful in understanding the special socio-economic structure of border societies and in policy-making to ensure justice there.

Key words: - KhemKaran, justice, Border Society, social

I. INTRODUCTION

Borderland towns like Khem Karan, situated in the sensitive frontier zones of India, have always occupied a peculiar space in the historical, political, and social landscape of the subcontinent. Their geographical position close to the international boundary makes them unique yet vulnerable. Khem Karan in particular, lying in Punjab near the Indo-Pak border, has repeatedly found itself in the eye of storms whenever wars or crises erupt between the two nations. The fate of such towns is closely tied not only to questions of national security but also to the lived experiences of local communities who endure the trauma of displacement, economic breakdown, uncertainty, and cultural disruption. An exploration of the problems faced by Khem Karan during wars and crises allows us to understand the deeper dynamics of borderland vulnerability and

resilience.

The location of Khem Karan defines its destiny. It lies adjacent to the Radcliffe Line, which after Partition in 1947 became a permanent international boundary. For a town that was once part of a larger cultural and economic continuum of Punjab, the border brought division and restriction. Families were divided, agricultural lands cut off, and centuries-old trade routes disrupted. In peacetime, these challenges were already difficult to manage, but in times of war they became magnified to unbearable proportions. The wars of 1965 and 1971 between India and Pakistan made Khem Karan a battlefield, altering the course of daily life in ways unimaginable to towns situated safely in the hinterland. During the 1965 war, Khem Karan became famous as the site of the Battle of Asal Uttar, where Indian forces halted Pakistani advances. Yet behind the stories of valor and victory lie the accounts of ordinary villagers forced to flee their homes, abandon their fields, and watch as their livelihoods were turned into wastelands under shelling and tank fire¹.

One of the most immediate problems border towns like Khem Karan face during Wartime is mass displacement. Civilians are often evacuated from frontline villages in anticipation of attacks or as part of military strategies. In 1965, families were asked to leave everything behind as military operations intensified. The trauma of leaving ancestral homes with little more than what one could carry is a recurring memory for many. Shelters provided in safer zones were often makeshift, lacking basic facilities, and the displaced people faced uncertainty about the fate of their homes. When they returned after ceasefires, they often found ruins—fields torn apart by tank tracks, homes riddled with bullet

¹Kumar, A., & Dar, M. A. TRANSFORMATION AND DYNAMICS: A SOCIAL HISTORY OF KHEM KARAN TOWN-A STUDY AFTER 1965 INDO-PAK WAR.

holes, and infrastructure reduced to rubble. This cyclical experience of displacement and return has created a constant sense of insecurity for border residents, making them perpetual refugees in their own homeland.

Economic disruption is another severe consequence for towns like KhemKaran. Being primarily agrarian, their prosperity depends on the cultivation of fertile lands. However, wars bring devastation to agriculture. Fields are left uncultivated, irrigation channels are destroyed, and unexploded shells render land dangerous for tilling. During crises, farming communities face the twin burdens of physical insecurity and economic collapse. In addition, the border itself restricts the natural flow of agricultural trade. After Partition, farmers on both sides were cut off from markets they had depended on for generations. In times of war, even subsistence cultivation becomes impossible. Thus, the people of KhemKaran face long-term economic vulnerability, constantly rebuilding their lives after each episode of conflict while grappling with poverty in the intervening years.

Psychological trauma plays a subtle but pervasive role in the lives of borderland communities. The constant anticipation of conflict, the sound of sirens, the fear of shelling, and the uncertainty of survival leave deep scars on individuals and collective consciousness. Children growing up in KhemKaran and similar border areas experience disrupted education during wars, as schools are closed or converted into shelters. Many witness violence or displacement at an impressionable age, which shapes their worldview. Women, in particular, face heightened vulnerabilities, as crises bring increased insecurity, threats of exploitation, and difficulties in managing households without male members who may be engaged in defense duties or forced labor during emergencies. The memory of wars is transmitted across generations, reinforcing a sense of marginality and fragility among the local population.

Another layer of problem arises from militarization. Borderland towns like KhemKaran become zones of heavy troop deployment during crises. On one

hand, military presence provides a sense of protection, but on the other, it transforms civilian spaces into militarized zones. Roads and fields are occupied for defence purposes, movements of locals are restricted, and surveillance becomes an everyday reality. The civilian population lives under curfews, checkpoints, and constant monitoring. This militarization not only affects daily life but also shapes the identity of the borderland community, making them feel like they are perpetually living in a war zone even in times of relative peace. While national narratives celebrate the strategic importance of places like KhemKaran in defending the country, the residents often feel that their own lives and aspirations are side-lined in the larger calculus of security.

Border towns also face the cultural and social burden of living on the edge of two nations. Communities like those in KhemKaran often share linguistic, cultural, and even familial ties with people across the border. In times of crises, these ties are abruptly severed, leaving individuals with a sense of incompleteness. Festivals, marriages, and social interactions once extended across borders, but wars and hostile relations have reduced them to memories. During wartime, anyone with connections across the border is looked upon with suspicion, creating an atmosphere of mistrust. Thus, the crises not only break economic life but also corrode the social fabric of communities that once thrived on cross-border cultural exchanges.

Infrastructure destruction is another recurring theme in the problems faced by towns like KhemKaran. Wars and crises lead to the destruction of roads, bridges, houses, schools, and hospitals. Rebuilding takes years, and often resources are inadequate. Even basic amenities like electricity and water supply are disrupted. In crises like the 1971 war, hospitals were overwhelmed, unable to cope with the influx of wounded soldiers and civilians. Civilian casualties and the lack of proper medical support added to the tragedy. For the people of KhemKaran, development is always a step behind, as each war pulls them back to a

starting point of survival, preventing sustained growth and modernization².

A further dimension is the neglect faced by borderland towns in national development policies. Since these areas are viewed as vulnerable to enemy attack, long-term investments in industries, infrastructure, and education are often discouraged. Governments hesitate to set up major industries in regions that could turn into battlefields. As a result, KhemKaran and similar towns remain underdeveloped compared to hinterland cities. During crises, this underdevelopment becomes glaring, as there are fewer resources to fall back on. Relief and rehabilitation measures are slow, and recovery takes longer. Thus, border towns carry the double burden of underdevelopment in peacetime and devastation in wartime.

A significant part of the Indian Republic is the border region, where questions of security, citizenship, development and social justice are constantly present. The lives of people in the border region are more difficult, unstable and vulnerable than elsewhere. Social justice, which is generally associated with equality, availability of opportunities and protection of rights, is tested amidst multifaceted challenges in the border region. KhemKaran town is a small but historically important area in Punjab. The experience of this town along the India-Pakistan border helps us understand how the ideals of social justice work, fail and under what conditions they need to be reconstructed in border societies.

Social justice is a central principle of modern political, social and moral thought. It is not just a part of the judicial system, but an attempt to establish equality, opportunity, freedom and human dignity in the structure of society. The basic objective of any democratic system is not just to run the government, but to ensure equal opportunity and dignity of life for all sections of society. For this reason, the concept of social justice developed in the long history of

philosophical, religious and political thought.

In a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual country like India, the question of social justice becomes even more important. Due to inequalities based on caste, class, gender, region and religion, social justice is both a constitutional and social necessity.

II. SHORTHISTORY OF KHEMKARAN

Khem Karan had a populace of 13,446. Males represent 55% of the populace and girls 45%. Khem Karan has a common literacy price of 61.55%, decrease than the kingdom common of 75.84%: male literacy is 67%, and girl literacy is 54.85%. In Khem Karan 12.14% of the populace is below 6 years of age. After the partition between India and Pakistan, the U. S. A. confronted many communal riots, humans are scared to understand these incidents even after 70 years of independence. Then we talk about small towns like KhemKaran which are right on the border between India and Pakistan. After independence, KhemKaran used to come under Amritsar district, but at present it, comes under Tarn Taran district, which kilometer exactly 8 kilometers before the Pakistan border. Whatever towns are on the border, their situation is very serious anyway. KhemKaran town has faced many terrorist activities after independence. KhemKaran also faced two very destructive wars after independence, Indo-Pakistani War and 1965 and Gulf War 1991.

When wars are in progress, the people's life in the areas around the battle site gets disturbed. The food security is disturbed electricity, water, for everything, man has to suffer, the life that he spends in the past, sees it coming to an end in a moment. And it takes a lot of time to start the same life again. The crops in the field is also suffering from the war.

If we trace the history of Khem Karan town, we can find such a difficult phase of life, which has been watching its social and professional dynamics build and grow since independence. Almost everything needed is available in the ordinary KhemKaran Township, there is also a

²Kumar, A., & Sharma, D. M. (2022). Impact of Terrorism on Khem Karan Town (Majha Region) of Punjab (1980-1993). *Journal of Multidisciplinary Cases (JMC)* ISSN, 2799-0990.

state-of-the-art system of farming, but despite its difficult environment, this town is still struggling to get its role³.

A. COMPONENTS AND ROLE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN KHEMKARAN TOWN

Khem Karan town, located on the India-Pakistan border in Tarn Taran district of Punjab, has special importance from social, economic and political point of view due to its geographical location and historical background. Here the concept of social justice is not just a theoretical idea, but is deeply connected to the practical aspect of life. Being a border area, Khem Karan has been facing many challenges-such as displacement, impact of war, economic instability, unemployment, cross-border smuggling and security concerns. In these circumstances, the meaning of social justice is not limited to equality of rights or providing equal opportunity before the law, but it is related to establishing a balance between every section of the society and protecting their dignity.

Talking about the components of social justice, it includes aspects like equal opportunity, social security, education, health, gender equality, ethnic-community harmony and economic equality. All these aspects are seen in a special context in Khem Karan town. The people here, especially the peasant and working class, have suffered economic insecurity due to frequent wars and conflicts. The Khem Karan region suffered heavy losses in the Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971, affecting land, agriculture and livelihoods. Under these circumstances, the first component of social justice-economic security-becomes most important. Compensation, rehabilitation schemes, and special facilities from the government are needed to help people rebuild their lives.

The importance of education is also vital for social justice here. Education facilities in border areas are often inadequate. The lack of quality education

for the children and youth of Khem Karan affects their future. The second component of social justice is education, which ensures equality of opportunity. If adequate schools, higher education institutions and vocational training centers are established here, the local youth can not only become economically self-reliant but also play an active role in society.

The question of health facilities is also an important part of social justice here. Access to hospitals and health services is generally limited in border towns. Primary health centers and emergency facilities can be life-saving for people in towns like Khem Karan. Mental health is also an important issue in war and stressful situations, which is often overlooked. Social justice is possible only when physical and mental health facilities are equally available to everyone.

Gender equality is another important aspect of social life in Khem Karan town. Women in border areas face dual challenges—on the one hand they have to shoulder the responsibility of domestic and agricultural work, while on the other hand they also have to deal with social stereotypes and security problems. Ensuring education, employment and participation of women in the decision-making process is an essential part of social justice. Only when women are self-reliant, the overall progress of society will be possible.

Racial and religious harmony is also an important part of social justice. In towns like Khem Karan, people from different castes and communities live, and it is very important to maintain an environment of mutual cooperation and respect among them. The role of social justice is seen here in maintaining this harmony and eliminating any kind of discrimination. Apart from all this, another important aspect of social justice is related to political participation. In border areas like Khem Karan, people are often deprived of their rights and policy decisions. Therefore, it is necessary that the citizens here actively participate in panchayats, local bodies and other political

³Kumar, A., & Kumar, S. Borderland and Occupational Mobility: Exploring the Khem Karan Town of Punjab, 1961 to 2011. *European Journal of Molecular & Clinical Medicine*, 7(07), 2020.

processes and strengthen their voice⁴. Finally, it can be said that the components of social justice in Khem Karan town-equal opportunity, socio-economic security, education, health, gender equality, community harmony and political participation-are deeply interconnected with each other. Their role is not merely theoretical or legal, but it is directly related to everyday life. Given the challenges of the border area, social justice becomes the most important means to protect the dignity and equality of the people here. It is not just an effort to get rights, but a step taken towards providing every person in the society an opportunity to live a better life.

B. PROBLEMS IN BORDER AREAS DURING WAR AND RIOTS

In a country with a vast land area like India, border areas are extremely sensitive not only geographically but also socially, culturally and politically. The border is not just a line drawn on a map, but it is a part of the lives of millions of people who live directly on or around the border. When war or riots occur in these areas, the suffering, insecurity and displacement of the people there is most visible.

(i) Problems during wartime conditions

Border areas are the first to bear the direct impact of war. War does not only mean a fight between two nations with weapons, but it is also associated with the sufferings and complications of countless innocent people who live around the border.

(ii) Physical security crisis –

During war, artillery, bombing and firing have a direct impact on border villages and towns. People leave their homes and run to safer places to save their lives. Khem Karan in Punjab, Longewala in Rajasthan, border villages in Jammu and Kashmir or areas in Assam-all have been witnesses to this suffering.

(iii) Displacement and migration –

People from border settlements are displaced on a large scale during wartime. The government

sometimes evacuates villages for security reasons. This forced migration badly affects people's livelihood, education and social life.

(iv) Economic crisis

The economy of border areas is mainly dependent on agriculture and small businesses. During wartime, fields are destroyed, crops are ruined and markets come to a standstill. As a result, local people face problems of employment and income.

(v) Impact on education and health services –

Schools and colleges remain closed for long periods in war situations. Health services are also affected as hospitals are used for military needs and resources fall short for ordinary citizens.

(vi) Psychological pressure

For people living on the border, the constant threat of war and insecurity have a profound impact on mental health. Children grow up with fear and trauma, while adults continue to have anxiety, stress and instability in their lives⁵.

(vii) Special difficulties of women and children –

In war situations, women have to face additional problems such as sexual violence, insecurity and family maintenance. Children are deprived of education and a safe environment.

C. PROBLEMS OF BORDER AREAS DURING RIOTS

Border areas become extremely sensitive not only during war, but also during riots and communal conflicts. Since these areas are often the center of multi-religious, multi-cultural and mixed societies, riots and violence cause deep damage here.

(i) Communal distrust –

During riots, the social fabric is affected first. The trust built over years between Hindu-Muslim-Sikh and other communities breaks down in one stroke.

(ii) Economic loss –

Shops, houses and crops are burnt in riots. In

⁴Meshram, L. (2022). Gender Equality and Sustainable Development. *Sustainable Development for Society, Industrial*.

⁵Mitchell, S. M. (2024). Cross-border troubles? Interstate river conflicts and intrastate violence. *Political geography*, 111, 103109.

border areas where economic opportunities are already limited, riots create more crisis.

(iii) *Displacement and refugee problem* – Riots force people to leave their homes and take shelter in temporary camps. This situation pushes them towards long-term insecurity and poverty.

(iv) *Impact on education and social life* – Schools and colleges are closed during riots. Social programs, religious festivals and cultural activities come to a halt. A feeling of fear and distrust remains in the society for generations.

(v) *Political and administrative crisis* – Riots are not only a local problem; they are also the result of administrative failure and political interference. The impact of riots in border areas reaches international relations, as neighboring countries try to take advantage of this situation.

D. COMBINED EFFECTS OF WAR AND RIOTS

When both war and riots occur in a border area, the situation becomes even more complicated. The people there have to face a double blow external aggression on the one hand, internal division on the other. It is not easy to overcome this double challenge.

(i) *Tension between nation and locality* – People living on the border constantly make sacrifices for the security of the nation, but their local problems often remain unheard. Riots and war together raise questions on the identity of the border people. Their loyalty, religion and nationality are constantly doubted. Due to repeated war and riots, border areas are cut off from the mainstream of development. Education, health, industry and employment facilities are left far behind there.

(ii) *Direction of solution*
A permanent solution to the problems of border areas cannot be found only by the presence of security forces. For this, it is necessary to give priority to policies of social justice and development.

(iii) *Balance of security and development* – Along with the army and security forces, there should be special investment on education, health and infrastructure.

III. OTHER FACTORS AFFECTING SOCIAL JUSTICE

(1) NATURE OF SOCIETY

Although there are as many types of societies as there are, broadly they are divided into two classes, closed society and open society. In a closed society, those societies go which are often based on caste and religion. And they do not want to deviate from the traditions that fall in them, so it is also called a traditional society. There is very little social mobility in these societies. Just like the people of the untouchable class in the village, even after reaching high positions, are not able to get equal respect from the upper castes; there is no difference in their social status. Open societies are those societies that are free from the shackles of caste, religion, tradition, etc., in which no person is considered high or low by birth. Social mobility is very high in these societies. The lesser the bonds of caste, religion, and traditions, the more social mobility is found in the society⁶.

(2) ECONOMIC SYSTEM OF THE SOCIETY-

There are three types of the economic system from the point of view of means of earning income agricultural, commercial and industrial. It is a well-known fact that social mobility is less in a society with an agrarian economy. In terms of economic structure, there are three types of the economic system - capitalist, socialist and mixed. It is also a well-known fact that social mobility is lowest in the capitalist economy, highest in mixed, and highest in socialist. In a capitalist economy, capital remains in a handful of hands. The rest of the people are exploited, and they do not get free and equal opportunities to raise their social status. On the contrary, in the socialist economy, the nation has the right over the entire property of the nation, in which all the people get the opportunity to achieve according to their ability and ability, Pranam: Yoga people move forward and the unworthy are left behind. A mixed economy is an economy between them, so social mobility is also moderate in it.

⁶Bodea, C., &Elbadawi, I. (2007). Riots, coups and civil war: Revisiting the greed and grievance debate. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*, (4397).

(3) AMBITION –

No matter how many opportunities are available to achieve high positions in society and to do business with some social prestige, if one does not have the ambition to move forward in the individual and social group, then there is no social mobility in it. Thus ambition is a key component of social mobility.

(4) EDUCATION-

Education is the main factor of social mobility. In societies where education is available, the more it is accessible, the greater is the social mobility in those societies. If seen more closely, all other components of social mobility also depend on education. Education paves the way for different professions.

(5) ACHIEVEMENT OF POSITIONS AND OCCUPATION-

Social mobility in which society also depends on how many opportunities are there to get high positions or business in government and the non-government sector in that society. If there is more demand for doctors, engineers, technicians, administrators, etc., in a society, then people in the society get more opportunities to change their social status. Similarly, if the person or group in the society gets more opportunities to do business from one business to another, then there will be more social mobility.

(6) RULES FOR SOCIAL SECURITY IN BORDER AREAS

Borderland law in India also intersects with land rights and property regimes. Large stretches of border areas are declared restricted or protected zones under various regulations. Civilians require special permits to reside, cultivate, or even visit certain border villages. The Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, for instance, is governed by restrictions that limit free civilian settlement and movement. In areas bordering Pakistan, such as in Rajasthan or Punjab, security fences have cut off villagers from their farmlands located near the zero line. Farmers must obtain special passes from the Border Security Force to access their own fields,

and their activities are subject to strict surveillance. Similarly, in the Northeast, laws governing tribal land intersect with border security concerns, creating unique legal dilemmas. The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution grants autonomy to tribal councils in states like Mizoram and Meghalaya, yet their jurisdiction is constrained by national security imperatives along the international boundary. This legal pluralism-where customary law, constitutional law, and security regulations overlap-creates confusion and sometimes conflict in borderland governance.

The question of citizenship is another vital dimension of borderland law in India. Border areas, particularly along the Indo-Bangladesh frontier, have witnessed large-scale migration and refugee influx. To address these challenges, India has enacted several citizenship-related laws. The Foreigners Act, 1946, empowers authorities to detect and deport illegal migrants. The Citizenship Act, 1955, defines modes of acquiring and losing citizenship. Amendments such as those introducing the concept of Overseas Citizens of India, or the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, have special resonance in border regions. In Assam, the National Register of Citizens (NRC) process was undertaken to identify illegal migrants, largely from Bangladesh. This legal exercise has profound implications for borderland residents, many of whom struggle to produce documentary proof of ancestry due to the disrupted histories of migration, displacement, and landlessness. Thus, in borderlands, questions of citizenship and belonging are legally contested in ways that rarely affect interior populations⁷.

In addition to citizenship, refugee law forms a crucial part of borderland governance. India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, but it has hosted millions of refugees over the decades, many of whom entered through borderlands. Tibetan refugees entered through Himalayan frontiers after the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959. Chakma and Hajong refugees crossed into

⁷Bilczak, W., & Bilczak, M. (2016). Social security of population as a basis for stable growth of border regions. *Olsztyn Economic Journal*, 11(4), 331-342.

Arunachal Pradesh. Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka landed in coastal Tamil Nadu. Each of these groups has been governed by ad hoc legal and administrative measures rather than a codified refugee law. In border areas, this creates legal ambiguities: refugees often live without citizenship rights, sometimes without proper documentation, vulnerable to exploitation. At the same time, their presence alters the demographic and security dynamics of Border States, prompting legal and political debates about their status. Thus, the absence of a comprehensive refugee law makes borderland governance highly discretionary, dependent on shifting political priorities rather than stable legal principles.

National security legislation more broadly also impacts borderlands disproportionately. Laws such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, and the National Security Act, 1980, are often invoked in border regions to tackle insurgency, terrorism, and cross-border crimes. Preventive detention powers are exercised more frequently in these regions, leading to criticism of rights violations. The Supreme Court has repeatedly stressed the need to balance security with liberty, but in practice the scales tilt heavily toward security in borderlands. Surveillance measures, fencing, check posts, and restricted zones create a legal environment that treats borderland residents as both citizens and suspects. The paradox of borderland law is that while it aims to protect the nation, it often marginalizes the very communities who live closest to the border and bear the greatest burden of defending it. Customary law and traditional practices also play a role in India's borderlands. In the Northeast, tribal communities regulate land ownership and dispute resolution through customary institutions. These practices are recognized under the Constitution but are sometimes in tension with national security concerns. For instance, in Nagaland and Mizoram, village councils exercise authority over land, but military deployment under AFSPA can override these structures. Similarly, along the Indo-Nepal border, cross-border marriages and kinship ties are regulated by customary norms that often clash with official restrictions on movement. In Ladakh and

Arunachal Pradesh, pastoral communities who traditionally moved across trans-Himalayan routes find their mobility curtailed by the militarized border, raising legal questions about the preservation of customary rights. Thus, borderland law in India is not only about formal statutes but also about how customary and state laws intersect in frontier governance.

An often overlooked dimension of borderland law is environmental regulation. Border areas are ecologically sensitive, housing forests, rivers, and wildlife corridors. The construction of fences, roads, and military infrastructure has significant environmental impacts. Laws such as the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, and the Environment Protection Act, 1986, formally apply to these areas, but in practice, security imperatives often override environmental safeguards. In the Northeast, military activities in border forests have led to deforestation and habitat disruption. In the Himalayas, infrastructure projects aimed at securing borders with China have triggered landslides and ecological degradation. This tension between environmental law and border security law reflects the larger theme of exceptionalism that characterizes frontier governance: ordinary legal regimes are frequently suspended or diluted in the name of national defence⁸.

The judiciary has played a complex role in shaping borderland law. On one hand, courts have upheld the constitutionality of extraordinary powers such as AFSPA, emphasizing the need for security in vulnerable regions. On the other, they have sought to impose limits by demanding proportionality and accountability. Public interest litigations have been filed challenging human rights violations in border areas, leading to judicial pronouncements that reaffirm the rights of residents. For instance, the Supreme Court has intervened to regulate the use of lethal force under AFSPA and to ensure compensation for victims of unlawful killings. High courts in Border States have also addressed issues

⁸Bilczak, W., & Bilczak, M. (2016). Social security of population as a basis for stable growth of border regions. *Olsztyn Economic Journal*, 11(4), 340-342.

related to refugee rights, land acquisition for security purposes, and the balance between BSF powers and civilian autonomy. Thus, judicial engagement reflects an ongoing attempt to harmonize security with constitutionalism, though in practice the balance often favours the former.

Borderland law in India is also shaped by international law. Treaties, bilateral agreements, and international norms influence how India manages its frontiers. The Indus Waters Treaty, for example, governs the use of rivers flowing across the India-Pakistan border. Border management agreements with Bangladesh address issues of enclaves, migration, and fencing. The Line of Actual Control with China is governed by agreements on peace and tranquility, though these have often been violated in practice. Refugee protection, though not formally codified in Indian law, is influenced by India's adherence to certain human rights treaties. International humanitarian law becomes relevant in conflict situations, where India must balance military objectives with obligations to protect civilians. Thus, borderland law in India is not purely domestic but embedded in a larger web of international legal commitments.

In recent years, technological developments have added new dimensions to borderland law. The use of drones, surveillance cameras, and electronic fencing raises questions about privacy and civil liberties. The Aadhaar system and other biometric measures are increasingly used to identify residents in sensitive border areas, sparking debates about data protection and consent. Cybersecurity laws also extend into border governance, as digital connectivity makes even remote frontiers vulnerable to cross-border hacking and propaganda. The legal framework for regulating such technologies is still evolving, and its implications for borderland residents remain uncertain. At the same time, technology is being used to provide services and development in border areas, blurring the line between control and welfare. Thus, borderland law must adapt to new realities that go beyond traditional security concerns.

Ultimately, borderland law in India is a domain of exception, where the normal balance between rights and security is skewed toward the latter. Residents

of these areas live under overlapping regimes of constitutional law, extraordinary legislation, customary practices, and international obligations. They are citizens entitled to rights, yet their rights are routinely curtailed in the name of national defence. They are communities with deep cultural and historical ties across borders, yet those ties are legally criminalized. They are regions of ecological richness, yet environmental protections are overridden by military imperatives. This paradox defines the essence of borderland law in India: a framework that secures the nation but marginalizes its frontier citizens.

The way forward requires a rethinking of borderland governance. Security is undeniably important, but it must not come at the cost of justice, development, and dignity for borderland communities. Laws like AFSPA need to be reviewed with a stronger emphasis on accountability. Citizenship and refugee policies must be grounded in fairness rather than political expediency. Land rights of border farmers should be safeguarded with mechanisms that reconcile security with livelihood. Environmental laws must not be suspended but integrated into border planning. The judiciary must continue to assert constitutional principles, ensuring that exceptional laws do not become permanent regimes. Above all, the voices of borderland residents must be incorporated into policymaking, recognizing them not merely as subjects of security but as citizens of equal worth.

In conclusion, borderland law in India is a mosaic of constitutional duties, extraordinary powers, security legislations, citizenship and refugee policies, customary norms, environmental regulations, and international obligations. It reflects the dilemmas of a state striving to secure its sovereignty while grappling with the aspirations of frontier communities. The challenges of managing such vast and diverse border regions are immense, but they must not justify permanent legal exceptionalism. A democratic republic must aim to ensure that its borderland citizens enjoy the same rights, protections, and opportunities as those in the heartland. Only then can the legal framework of

India's borderlands truly embody the constitutional promise of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity.

(IV) CONCLUSION

The study of social justice in a borderland society such as Khem Karan town reveals how geography, history, and politics converge to shape people lived realities. Unlike other regions, where social justice can be analysed primarily through economic, educational, or cultural parameters, in Khem Karan it acquires a multidimensional character, deeply intertwined with border insecurities, recurring conflict, and the fragility of livelihoods. The people of this town embody resilience, yet they consistently demand equitable access to resources, protection of rights, and recognition of their unique circumstances.

Social justice in Khem Karan thus cannot be confined to the normative ideals of equality and fairness alone. It must be viewed through the prism of borderland experiences—displacement during wars, destruction of agricultural land, migration, and heightened militarization—that fundamentally alter the community's socio-economic fabric. In this context, the principles of distributive justice, equal opportunity, and protection of marginalized groups acquire an even more pressing significance. Education, healthcare, gender equality, and local governance mechanisms form the backbone of justice here, but their accessibility is often constrained by structural limitations.

This study highlights that social justice in a borderland is not static but constantly negotiated between the state, community, and individuals. It calls for special policy frameworks and targeted welfare measures that address the vulnerabilities of border populations, ensuring that their sacrifices for national security are met with corresponding dignity and socio-economic safeguards.

Ultimately, the case of Khem Karan town underscores a broader truth—that social justice in border regions is both a challenge and an opportunity. It is a challenge because of the structural inequalities and persistent insecurities that border people face, but it is also an opportunity to reimagine justice in a way that integrates security

with welfare, sovereignty with dignity, and national interests with local aspirations. By foregrounding the voices and struggles of borderland societies, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of justice as a lived and evolving concept, one that is essential for the integrity of both democracy and humanity.

Border areas are the most affected in situations of war and riots. The people there not only face external aggression but also suffer from internal social divisions and displacement. The problems arising from war and riots are not just immediate crises, but they affect social, economic and mental life for generations. If the security of the nation and the strengthening of democracy are to be ensured, then solutions have to be found by giving priority to the problems of the people of border areas. It will not be enough to consider the citizens there as just border guards; it is equally important to give them justice, opportunity and respect.

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