

Yoga 'Walmart' in the Himalayas: A Case of Wellness Centres in Dharamshala

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Abstract

This article explores the proliferating small-scale wellness centres such as Yoga, meditation, reiki, spas, and healing and rejuvenation therapies in a small town, Dharamshala. The expansion of such spaces has its interlinkages with the liberalization of the Indian market, expansion in consumer choices, shift in the nature of employment and retrenchment of everyday security in the post-reform period. These centres have become a source of employment for the unemployed youth in this small town, especially the pastoral tribe of Gaddis. Through an ethnographic study, the article establishes that deteriorating state support and retrenchment of security have not only induced these service providers to manoeuvre, improvise, employ jugaad to run their Yoga business but also engage themselves in multiple avenues, thereby keeping a 'back-up', in case the other avenues/ventures fail to earn a living. The article coins the term 'back-up economy' to provide a name to the processes, practices and strategies adopted by the service providers who in the scenario of shrinking state support and government services, as well as evolving forms of Yoga realize that 'doing Yoga is not enough' to survive in the market. The back-up economy would resonate with situation of youth struggling with the evolving state-market practices and shrinking state support and collectively defines such practices, processes that though informally, contributes to the employment situation in post-reform India.

Keywords: Dharamshala, Back-up economy, Jugaad, wellness, Yoga.

With a population of around 55000 Dharamshala is not a big city but has become a popular tourist station with a vibrant cultural economy. It is highly popular among those seeking wellness tourism owing to its large number of Yoga, meditation, rejuvenation and wellness centres; though it is undeniable that the town came to limelight with the presence of the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama who settled here in 1960. Dharamshala is considered “one of the most cross-cultural towns” (Shekhawat 1995) owing to the varieties of nationalities and ethnic groups. The rise of cultural cosmopolitanism in Dharamshala is indistinguishable from the evolving counterculture movement in the west in 1970’s also known as the “Hippies” (Bloch 40). In 1989, Dalai Lama was conferred the Nobel Peace prize, projecting Dharamshala as the focal point of Buddhist meditation studies, practices as well as tourism. These sequence of events along with the State's imagination to make Dharamshala a cultural hub and tourist destination helped scale the economy and attract investments (TCP 2018). Dharamshala has been projected as the global cultural cluster in the western Himalayas.

In between 1970’s-1990’s, the presence of three transnational¹ Yoga and meditation centres provided a perfect space for Yoga and meditation practices centres in this quaint hill town. The transnational Yoga centres were visited by their own disciples/initiates and served as an exclusive space. After the liberalization of the Indian market and with the improved mode of transportation and communication networks around 2010, several small-scale wellness centres have emerged not only in Dharamshala but also in other hill stations (see, ME van der Zee 2017). This article focuses on the small-scale wellness centres that have mushroomed in recent years. The locals attributed the increasing inflow of tourists to the newly constructed Cricket stadium in lower Dharamshala. The picturesque stadium flaunting the Dhauladhar in the backdrop was broadcasted to the entire world during cricket matches. Soon after, the built environment of Dharamshala witnessed rapid construction of hotels, homestays, cafes, restaurants, lodges, dhabas. In the meantime, State projections to project Dharamshala as a world-class tourist destination and Smart city, market forces, location and presence of Tibetan cultural institute together provided a conducive atmosphere for the growth of many small wellness centres. A new range of small-scale Yoga and wellness centres can be spotted not only in Dharamshala but several such centres run parallel to the Dhauladhar mountain range (e.g. Palampur, Kullu, Manali, Banjar, Kaza, Shimla) and the techniques of wellness such as spa and rejuvenation, reiki and massage centres, cultural artefacts stores facilitated by market forces. Such contexts and developments allow employing ethnographic methods to study the wellness centres that have become a point of inspection to document the various processes

¹ Between 1970-mid 1990’s, a few wellness centres were established: Tushita meditation; Goenka’s Vipassana; Iyengar Yoga (established in 1972; 1985 and 1994 respectively).

rapidly evolving in wellness market. The data has been collected in the years 2018-2019 and 2022 using focused interviews (of owners/service providers, customers), observations, walking in the city and secondary sources of websites, feedbacks, flyer walls, pamphlets and so on.

This article explores the small-scale wellness centres to capture the expansiveness of the growing cultural market. It draws attention to the landscape of wellness centres, and the methods and strategies adopted by the service providers in the post-reform period. The mushrooming wellness centres with an increasing inflow of both foreign and domestic tourists around the commodification of Yoga (Jain 2014; Bowers and Cheer 2017) and meditation in Dharamshala requires scholarly exploration to provide a larger picture of how culture and spaces are made marketable. The booming wellness centres become new intangible materiality in the Himalayas and need an exploration to draw a trajectory of: why are these wellness centre on the rise? Why has a small town like Dharamshala witnessed such a shift? What is the topography of these wellness centres and who are the people running these centres? Such questions require ethnographic exploration and critical intervention to understand the various processes that not only change the built environment of Himalayan towns but reckon it as the upcoming 'Walmart of Yoga'². The ethnographic exploration of small-scale wellness centres in Dharamshala focuses on the activities and practices of service providers that resonate with the ideas of 'back-up economy'. In post-liberalization era, the shrinking State support and people relying on *jugaad* (Mankekar 2013; Jauregui 2014; Kaur 2016) in the absence of resources and to ensure a sense of *security* has been dealt with in academia. However, the ongoing processes in Dharamshala extends on the credo of *jugaad* realizing that 'doing Yoga is not enough'. The service providers engage in various ventures, other than Yoga to ensure security of livelihood and dignified income. The article coins the term 'back-up economy' to collectively understand the prevalent yet unrecognized practices and strategies employed by a large population of educated unemployed youth that is not just restricted to Dharamshala. The ethnographic exploration of the young enterprising service providers in Dharamshala interlinks the growing insecurity to the discourse of neoliberal, self-responsible and enterprising individuals.

In doing so, the article first discusses the topography of the wellness centres that have proliferated in recent years to understand the interconnectedness of the wellness centres with improvised, local solutions and neoliberal economic systems. The article fills the gap in the existing scholarship which has understood wellness centres in a restricted manner. Wellness centres are imagined as plush, well-sanitized spaces, however, the article asserts that the way these centres are functioning and proliferating in western Himalayas does not resonate with the preconceived notions of such spaces. Second, the article establishes that the growing wellness centres are purely a means to earn a

² Personal communication with Ram Bhardwaj, June 13, 2022 at McLeodGanj

living for the service providers and must be examined in relation to the retrenchment of security in post-reform India.

Mapping the unmapped: Landscape of wellness shops in Dharamshala

Dharamshala, a colonial hill station, the second home of the Dalai Lama and inhabited by the pastoral tribal community, has been exposed to varied cultures for centuries. The Tibetans, Gurkhas, foreign nationals from various ethnicities, people from various states in India such as Kashmir, Punjab, Bihar, Rajasthan and so on present it as a fluid and “cosmopolitan community” (Bloch 37). The migrants from various parts of India and abroad came to Dharamshala in search of employment opportunities or entrepreneurial engagements. They opened small pit shops to cater to the tourists by leasing land from the Gaddis. ‘The Gaddis did not engage in the evolving tourism market in the 1990’s as much, given their absence of skills to do business. They utilized their land as capital to rent it to the traders and businessmen’³. Kapila (2011) in her work “The terms of trade” explains that traditionally the Gaddis trade in wool, meat and milk with the outside world had been prevalent for generations (“The terms of trade” 199), though this trade did not culminate into a market as the older generation of Gaddi traders went to Kumaon region in eastern Himalayas and the younger generations found a market in Amritsar, Panipat and Bikaner (“The terms of trade” 201). With liberalization of market, unable to face competition in the wool market, Kapila (2008) states that the economic conditions of Gaddis declined as the Government removed subsidies on the purchase price of wool (“The measure of a tribe” 128). Alongside, the younger generation looked at pastoralism as being “backward” (“The measure of a tribe” 128) and refused living *ghomtu* (pastoral) lives. Development of a market or a *bazaar* in Dharamshala is a recent phenomenon. In recent years, Dharamshala and its surrounding has emerged as a lively cultural market. Liberalization of market and shift in the nature of work required skills which were absent in the local population (Gaddis). However, the prospect of a growing market particularly helped Gaddis in upward mobility by utilizing land as capital (Singh et al. 2022). Over the last decade, the Gaddis have either opened (Yoga and meditation, trekking and adventure, hotels, lodges, cafes, dhabas, grocery, and medical shops) or have rented/ leased spaces for business to outsiders. A large number of Youth from other states in India have also settled in Dharamshala and started their wellness centres that provide services in Yoga and meditation, spas and rejuvenation, Reiki and healing, sound therapies, Yoga retreats, Yoga vacations, Yoga teacher training courses and so on.

The demand for wellness agencies and services that have catapulted under the neoliberal system, wherein, those working in the neoliberal economic enclaves take recourse in market practices that commodify and medicalize bodies have been largely dealt within the discourse of neoliberalism (Lau 2000; Ziguras 2004; Carrette

³ Personal communication with Sagar, July 3, 2022 at McLeodGanj (Dharamshala)

and King 2005; Nayar 2009; Lavrence and Lozanski 2014). However, scholarship neglects the bottom-up approach and conditions of the youth that provide services to the consuming class to understand the precarity that they have been exposed to with the restructuring of the market. In doing so, it explores the upheavals of neoliberalism and how service providers are managing it. How do service providers bank on the vulnerabilities of the clients and create an avenue for employment opportunities for themselves? In mapping the landscape of the wellness shops in Dharamshala, the precarious situation of the young service providers is entangled with the “unknown unknowns” (Standing 6-7). The wellness shop and the service providers harness and optimize the opportunities to expand in the cultural market and turn entrepreneurs. These enterprising selves in new economy resonate with discourse of neoliberal, self-responsible, enterprising individuals (Gooptu 2013; Binkley 2014; Deuchar and Dyson 2020). The emerging entrepreneurs lack in skills, marketing strategies and funding from State and global circuits, which pose a question on how discourse of neoliberal work in small towns.

In Dharamshala Yoga and meditation centres cater to a broad income range of customers: from budget Yoga centres to premium Yoga centres. The image that comes to mind when one thinks of Yoga studios is that of spacious, neat and sanitized space with an ambience that is infused with well taken care of aesthetics (Photo 1). However, barring a few; Yoga and meditation centres in Bhagsunag and Dharamkot come across as basic wherein infrastructural investments have been kept minimal (Photo 2).



Photo 1 and 2: A high end budget Yoga studio in Dharamshala. Source: Authors.

Several centres are located in isolated localities and one can only reach them on foot (Photo 3 and 4). The ambience in these centres is particularly not grand/ taken care of like the Yoga studios in big cities. Majority of them function by investing less in infrastructure. They work on the idea of ‘*minimum investment, maximum returns*’. Most of these centres have one big room/hall or terrace which is minimally equipped with Yoga mats, Yoga props and accessories, wall art and covered with dupattas, Mandala tapestry or wall hanging. The service providers do not have enough capital to invest in creating an ambience that is ‘well suited’/‘desired’ to meditate

and do Yoga. Most of these centres/ terrace spaces have been taken on rent from local Gaddis and therefore any structural changes in infrastructure is neither feasible nor allowed. Service providers explained that the nature of their *business* is erratic, and they are small players who do not know the scope of their business in the next tourist season, they do not invest in infrastructure⁴. Dilapidated buildings dim lit small rooms used as Yoga halls, improper ventilation, unhygienic makeshift arrangements, temporary roofing on terraces using plastic sheets, tarpaulin cloth can be easily spotted in the upper Bhagsunag and Dharamkot areas.



Photo 3: A Yoga centre (Vishu Yoga) functioning on a terrace in Dharamkot. Photo 4: A Yoga centre in upper Bhagsunag. Source: Authors.

The strategies adopted by people need to be seen through the discourse of '*jugaad*' which is an inherent part of the neoliberal systems. '*Jugaad*' a vernacular term used to explain the innovation, quick-fix solution, that allows everyday life to somehow function in the absence of concrete solutions (Kaur 2). The way wellness centres are proliferating in absence of State support "*jugaad* as a vehicle of mobility, here, becomes instructive in the ways in which the neoliberal state turns the discourse of lacks, absences and adversity on its head" (Kaur 11). *Jugaad* in the context of India becomes a choice particularly informal, disorganized and extralegal business (Rai 7). With the retrenchment of the market and shift in strategies of people, wellness centres are not only limited to mental and physical well-being, but as stated it becomes a source of income and employment. With the advancement in communication and transport networks, one can locate a new range of wellness centres emerging in isolated locations and contributing to a new kind of materiality—makeshift, temporary spaces to accommodate the consumers, which establishes *Jugaad* as a strategy "by skirting convention, defying received ideas, and getting the job done" (Mankekar 38). As Mahi succinctly puts it:

⁴ Personal communication with Shiva, July 2, 2022 at upper Bhagsunag

Most of the centres here do not follow a standard in terms of provisioning of services, basic philosophy behind Yoga, provision of trained teachers and spaces for Yoga sessions. Many centres do not even have a proper hall with required props to teach Yoga. Just spreading your legs apart is not Yoga⁵.

This is not the case of one wellness centre, but many in Dharamshala and in several small hill towns in the western Himalayas such as Manali, Kaza, Shimla, Kullu, Palampur and Banjar. The structures and ambience of such wellness centres are purely dependent on strategies of *jugaad* for networking and proper functioning. Such a system is influenced by the values system (neoliberal) that ultimately contributes to the haphazard growth of culture shops in western Himalayas. Alongside, the mechanism and agencies of neoliberalism provide opportunities to the youth of marginal sections of society. The case of Vishu (name changed) Yoga (Photo 3), a local Gaddi (received formal education till fifth standard) youth in the business of Yoga teaching is interesting. Vishu was self-tutored and had learnt everything on his own; and speaks English. He initially would run errands for the locals, later started working as a waiter at Hotel Mclo in McLeodGanj. Soon after, he befriended a foreigner and was introduced to Yoga. Being a Gaddi, he was exposed to physical hardships such as trekking on arduous paths on an everyday basis, carrying heavy loads and therefore learning Yoga or building a career in it was not difficult because the entry barrier in Yoga is physical fitness. He teaches at a well-known Yoga centre in Dharamkot as a Yoga instructor in the morning and soon after conducts his own classes at a rented terrace space in Dharamkot. His investments in the terrace venue are minimal and any income generated counts as profit. He also offers individual home Yoga classes. He has constructed a house of his own in McLeodGanj and would soon be moving to Tokyo with his wife who is a citizen of Japan. The Yoga teaching business has been a blessing for several Vishu's here, who would otherwise have remained unemployed. Vishu's case resonates with Plant's (1992) explanation '... individuals have to have enterprising attitudes if markets are to work, and there has to be a cultural climate that favors enterprise for them to work effectively' (85-86) and the adaptability towards the market practices and processes make them new entrepreneurs (Jha and Singh 2022). Studies like ours run the risk of being read as counterintuitive to the neoliberal image of fragility and risk created by neoliberal systems (O'Malley 2004; Sulkunen 2009). Though we do not negate the stand of scholarship, cases like those of Vishu definitely ask us to revise the way we have been thinking about neoliberalism (Upadhyay and Jha 2023). It brings to fore the mechanisms that are in place in the cultural market wherein the youth in the absence of support from the state has imbibed the conduct of enterprising individuals and take the onus upon themselves for their survival. The wellness centres are an unmapped segment of the wider cultural economy interconnected with the restructuring of the global market. Discussions and pictures in this section shed light on how local solutions are employed utilizing the credo of *jugaad* to survive in the market and achieve never-

⁵ Personal communication with Mahi, July 30, 2022 at upper Bhagsunag.

ending aspirations. Such strategies and solutions together create a milieu which is peculiar to neoliberal framings.

Back-up economy: 'Doing Yoga is not enough'

The ongoing market practices, methods and strategies adopted by the service providers by employing *jugaad* is illuminating. The article alludes that the methods and practices of the service providers are an extended form of *jugaad* wherein they not only manoeuvre and improvise but also engage themselves in multiple avenues, thereby keeping a back-up, in case the other avenues/ ventures fail to earn a living. We employ the idea of 'back-up economy' to assemble the practices and methods employed by the young service providers to deal with retrenchment of security and unemployment. The article theorizes the term 'back-up economy' to provide a name to the processes, practices and strategies adopted by the service providers who in the scenario of shrinking state support and government services, as well as evolving forms of Yoga realize that 'doing Yoga is not enough' to survive in the market.

The philosophy of Yoga is to connect mind, body and spirit. However, in recent times, the commodification of Yoga denigrated its foundations with the erosion of traditional methods of immersion and the *guru shishya parampara*. Yoga as a tradition has been tweaked to suit the new market demands of the clients working under the neoliberal systems who are hard-pressed for time. One of the respondents lucidly explained "off late the tourists demand a piece of everything in a small trip that they undertake. The focus is not on mastering an art but having an experience of everything. They are the bucket-list travelers. With these evolving demands of tourists, the Yoga and meditation market has adapted itself to tailor-made Yoga and meditation programs, retreats and teacher training courses. For instance, most of the Yoga classes start after 8 am in the morning, which is rather late to perform asanas but since, the tourists do not prefer waking up say at 4 am, we have to adjust to their demands"⁶. Customers emphasize on attaining a beautiful body, healthy mind and dealing with a stressful life through Yoga as exercise rather than posture-based asanas. Brosius (2010) succinctly explain the recent surge in wellness as:

Wellness-gurus have combined the idea of the body as a temple with that as a signifier of affluent, beautiful lifestyle and happiness. The need to appear well-groomed and physically attractive has assumed greater importance in the last decade, not just for women, but for men as well . . . A beautiful body is a happy body (Brosius 308).

⁶ Personal communication with k. Neharia July 29, 2022 at upper Bhagsunag.

A large proportion of the clients/customers look at Yoga and meditation as a way to recharge and rejuvenate their senses, and thus their association with Yoga is short-lived and service-oriented in the cultural economies. The service providers/entrepreneurs who are on the lookout to find new, innovative ways to earn money count on the vulnerabilities of their clients and customize their programs according to the market demands. With such development in Dharamshala and many other places, Yoga has increasingly been associated with tourism (Dillette et al. 2019) and emerged as a driving force in the cultural economy.

Several wellness centres in Dharamshala where Yoga classes are run, do not have an idea of the basic philosophy behind the ancient art of Yoga. One of the respondents, Yavna shares his journey from being an educated unemployed youth out of college to be the owner of a holistic Yoga centre in upper Bhagsu Nag. He explains “I left for Arambol when I was 21 years old. I had no knowledge of Yoga nor an inclination towards Yoga, all I knew was that a lot of youngsters from my village went to different states in India to earn a living, and some of them went to Goa to learn Yoga or work as waiters. I started a small restaurant (on lease) in Arambol and gradually learnt Yoga and meditation practices from *here and there*. After spending seven years in Arambol and having collected enough money to start my own holistic Yoga centre, I came back to Dharamshala”⁷. The case of Yavna resonates with several other massage centre owners, tour and travel guides, spa and rejuvenation service providers who also shared similar stories wherein in the absence of job opportunities after completing their graduation, youth from Dharamshala have migrated to various locations in search of employment. They have spent some years there, collected some money to come back and start a venture of their own. This is precisely because with their existing educational qualification, jobs in the formal sector would be out of bounds and thus turning towards the informal sector to earn a living seems plausible. Exposure to the outside world and the varied cultures have made the service providers receptive to the outside cultures. Their attitude to adapt and the bricolage of their talents have helped them acquire entrepreneurial skills.

Yoga tourism is a purely transactional activity as well as a relationship between the customer and the service provider. Efforts have been made to explore Yoga (Aggarwal et al. 2008; Gupta 2008; Maddox 2015) and tourism (Lieberman, 2004; Jammu 2016; Telej and Gamble 2019). With the commodification of Yoga, the traditional methods of immersion through the *Guru-shishya parampara* have eroded. The small-scale cultural shop owners cannot meet their financial needs with the erratic pattern of business and thus almost each of them invests in ancillary business or ventures to serve as an additional source of income. Swaraj explained that he ‘runs a voice-based domestic call centre which has its regional centre in Jammu wherein they work in data solutions, data mining, and develop customized software solutions. He does not believe that Yogis need to detach from the world they live in’. Another service

⁷ Personal communication with Yavna July 24, 2022 at upper Bhagsunag.

provider deals in making bamboo furniture during the lean season and also earns some extra money through network marketing/multi-level marketing. Others have their own homestays with in-house cafes, and kitchens to provide lodging and catering services which are also open to the general public for stay. Some own *dhabas*, *cafes* and some are involved in brokerage services (informally) with the hotel, lodge owners or locals who wish to rent their properties to tourists. In an illustrative case, Tribhuvan is an ideal example of a self-made entrepreneur who has made a 'business' in Yoga. Tribhuvan hails from Muzaffarpur in Bihar. He is 10th pass and claims to be a self-tutored and self-made man. He explained:

I was interested in learning about polymers, I studied it myself and set up a plasticware factory in Delhi. My wife is from Bhagsunag and we had land here but did not know what use to put to. Initially, we grew mushrooms here for years. Currently, we are in the wholesale business of garlic. In addition, we have started hydroponics farming wherein we are growing lettuce, coriander, tomatoes, gourd and other leafy vegetables. My aim is to open a salad bar in McLeod Ganj in the near future because there is a huge demand for it among the health-conscious crowd that visits.

Amidst all this, needs to be remembered that Tribhuvan is a Yoga teacher who before the Covid-19 pandemic had a full-fledged infrastructure established to run the teacher training courses and Yoga classes. After the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been difficult for him (and many others) to restart his Yoga business and thus, his inclination towards opening a salad bar. The discussion around Tribhuvan brings to fore the silver lining in the neoliberal systems wherein unskilled, less educated men like Tribhuvan have made a career in Yoga and meditation services utilizing the expanding forms of the cultural market. However, given the erratic nature of the Yoga business, they often have to involve themselves in other businesses to earn a decent living. During November-February, owing to harsh winters the tourist inflow decreases. This lean period of four months can greatly impact the Yoga and meditation business and to deal with this, majority of service providers relocate to sites such as Arambol in Goa and Rishikesh in Uttarakhand which are thronged by tourists during the winters. The well-to-do, better-established service providers from McLeod Ganj have established centres in Arambol, Rishikesh and Ubud in Bali and are fully functional from November to February (personal communication with several service providers) and travel to various parts of the world such as Cape Town, Argentina during this time to conduct Yoga and meditation programs. Those who do not have much capital to invest in another location, relocate and teach for these months. At the micro level, the erratic nature of the business of wellness centres illustrates a temporal horizon. The temporality in the context of wellness centres is linked with the socio-economic background of service providers, changing nature of market and geography of Dharamshala wherein Yoga and meditation is a 'seasonal' business. The growing networks of wellness centres lead to the fundamental

transformation of everyday life, urban landscape and economic activities in Himalayan towns. Nemeškal et al. (2020) argues that temporality gets shaped by residential and commercial suburbanization and in Dharamshala with the rise of wellness centres.

Conclusion

The cultural market in Dharamshala is summed up as '*Yog udyog hai*' (Yoga is a business)⁸. The commodification of Yoga is a rather recent phenomena and Gupta (2008) calls it soft 'power' that can be harnessed to attract global capital to India. The cultural market in Dharamshala is influenced by the global demands and forces, though the solutions are local and frugal. The young service providers in navigating through the recent shifts in the economy, rather than involve in "timepass" (Jeffrey 2010) turn into enterprising individuals participating in the market to earn a living. The enterprising individual "focus neither on resistance to discourses of entrepreneurialism nor on absorption of neoliberal ideas but, rather, on the creative reproduction and extension of notions of enterprise (Jeffrey and Young 185). The soft power of Yoga is well utilized by the unemployed youth to harness the opportunities provided by the market. The wellness centres are in contrast with the neoliberal economic enclaves that emphasizes on skills and educational qualifications to get a job. Working hard is not enough in order to surge ahead and the service providers move beyond the traditional methods of depending only on educational degrees to become successful (Mankekar 2013). The emerging market of wellness shops in the Himalayas provides an alternative to youth, which is largely linked with global aspirations, flexible market adaptability and localized solutions. The article has described the processes that contributed to the rise of wellness shops, mapping their function and alternative nature of business. The term 'back-up' economy has been coined to explain the entrepreneurial landscape of the wellness centres. It reverberates with the sites, ideas and practices of the service providers who are not only involved in the business of Yoga but also alternate means of making money. The young service providers not only take into account the seasonal nature of this business but also the uncertainty as well as the opportunity that is involved in the market. The service providers in light of shrinking government services and State support improvise however, due to retrenchment of security, they realize that 'Doing Yoga is not enough'. The article attempts to account, define and theorize these practices which are not confined to those in the geographical location of Dharamshala or Gaddis but the situation of many struggling with the evolving state-market practices and shrinking state support in post-reform India. We are always on the lookout for security and when that does not come through the state or opportunities in government services, the work in back-up economies become a source of income and employment. The back-up economy would resonate with larger ongoing phenomena in the country wherein such practices have been prevalent; but has become pronounced now. The methods and practices employed by the young entrepreneurs in Dharamshala

⁸ Personal communication with Mahi, August 10, 2022 at upper Bhagsunag.

contribute towards the literature on “everyday responses to neoliberal economic change” (Jeffrey and Young 184). It sheds light on the larger literature on youth and employment scenario which has been explored through the tropes of enterprise in post-reform India. Though the enterprise culture is what guides the individual to be self-dependent, self-responsible, the back-up economy would be helpful to understand the everyday practices and processes of survival in post-reform India.

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