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**DIALOGUE**  
QUARTERLY

*Editor*  
**J.N. Roy**

*Associate Editor*  
**Pranav Kumar**

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Secretary, Astha Bharati

**Registered Office:**

27/201 East End Apartments,  
Mayur Vihar, Phase-I Extension,  
Delhi-110096.

**Working Office:**

19/804 East End Apartments,  
Mayur Vihar, Phase-I Extension,  
Delhi-110096.

Phone : 91-11-22712454

e-mail : [asthabharati1@gmail.com](mailto:asthabharati1@gmail.com)

web-site : [www.asthabharati.org](http://www.asthabharati.org)

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## Editorial Perspective

### **Higher Judiciary under Scrutiny**

Of late, unlike the past when usual infrastructural, organisational, piling pendency, issues of appointments of judges between the Supreme Court and the Govt. etc., were raised, but now the very role of higher judiciary in upholding the constitutional values vis-à-vis the citizens rights, of which it is the custodian, are being raised with disturbing regularity. Earlier, it is the system which had the central attention, with views for and against but the performance of the Supreme Court and higher judiciary was rarely questioned. Even the controversy over the appointment of judges of High Courts and Supreme Court (NJAC Case) and the press conference (Jan 12, 2018) of four senior most serving judges of the Supreme Court questioning, the management of the roster of cases by the Chief Justice, did not evoke the kind of scrutiny the Supreme Court and High Courts are being subjected to. It is both unprecedented and unfortunate as the Supreme Court has a crucial and critical role in upholding the rights of citizens guaranteed by the Constitution. Such public criticism and scrutiny weakens the foundations of an important institution of the Constitution and calls for restraint on part of the critics, and considering the nature of concerns, an introspection by the higher and the highest judiciary in the country. The Supreme Court (Art 32) and the High Courts (Art 226) have vast powers to protect the Fundamental Rights of citizens.

The nature of allegations pertain to an uneven approach in cases concerning the liberty of citizens, particularly in respect of stringent laws like UAPA etc. and sedition cases. Besides, judicial outreach/activism intruding in legislative and executive turfs also have been aired. There have been criticisms earlier also, but critics now allege a pattern in failures and these are not stopping which is unsettling. The Chief Justice of Supreme Court himself has regretted such allegations against the Court. Its doubly unfortunate that former Supreme Court and High Court judges and members of the bar have joined the issue.

It all started in present form with the Prashant Bhushan's (an Advocate of Supreme Court) contempt case. Later Retd. Judge of Supreme Court, Madan Lokur in his BG Verghese Lecture (Oct 2020) regretted erosion of "one of our most precious fundamental rights the right to freedom of speech and expression". He lamented that despite a Supreme Court 1962 verdict drawing a correlation between sedition and violence, the right to freedom of speech is being mauled by perverse use of Sedition cases, whose numbers have gone up since 2014 (NCRB is keeping record since 2014 only). Citing some examples, he felt that the establishment should ensure that the laws are not abused or misused to deprive the citizens of their fundamental right to liberty. The Supreme Court's decision (Nov 6, 2020) granting interim bail to journalist Arnab Goswami, when his bail application case was pending with the Sessions Court, and alleged denial of same to Siddique Kappan a journalist arrested by UP police under UAPA led to a series of write ups and comments critical of the Court.

These included, rather harsh one from Pratap Bhanu Mehta (Indian Express Nov 18, 2020) alleging partisanship and 'judicial barbarism'. He took particular exception to the Chief Justice's observation that the Supreme Court was trying to discourage use of Article 32. Justice A.P. Shah's (Retd. Chief Justice of Delhi High Court) in his article (Hindu Nov 19, 2020), while lauding the zeal of Supreme Court to protect personal liberty of citizen's in Arnab Goswami's, case, was critical of its uneven approach in practise and regretted deterioration in past few years in its role as chief protector of personal freedoms of citizens. Citing a number of cases of arrests under the UAPA, he drew attention to the Supreme Court's April 2019 decision which has created a new doctrine, making bail in UAPA cases nearly impossible. He also alleged abuse by the authorities of this loophole and that a pattern has emerged depriving citizens of access to judicial remedy. The next notable event was the contempt notice by the Supreme Court to the standup comedian Kunal Kamra over his alleged "disrespectful" tweets over the grant of interim bail to Arnab Goswami.

A number of other write ups, comments and editorials have followed both for and against. But the nub of the matter is that ever since the press conference by the four serving senior most Supreme Court judges (Jan 2018), uncharacteristically the Supreme Court and higher judiciary have been in the limelight. The present phase is rather unpleasant with imputations of even acting under the govt. influence. Judiciary ought to be judged by its absence from lime light and for its judicial work.

Some of the matters which require the attention of both the judiciary and the government are allegations of the misuse of the stringent laws like sedition cases and invoking of NSA, UAPA and PSA provisions rather casually affecting the citizen's freedoms. There is increasing tendency to invoke sedition charges which is manifest in rise of sedition cases as reported by the NCRB (it is keeping record only since 2014) e.g. – 2014- 47 cases; 2018-70 cases and 2019-96 cases. The Govt. disclosed in Rajya Sabha (Feb 10, 2021) that 5992 people were arrested under the UAPA between 2016 and 2019 (1948 in 2019) with 132 convictions during the period. Out of 96 arrested under sedition law in 2019 two were convicted and twenty-nine were acquitted. The Supreme Court as the chief protector of these rights under Article 32, in immediate terms can do the following to allay the apprehensions and restore balance between the needs of nation's security and the rights of the citizens:

- (I) The Supreme Court should reiterate its 1962 judgement that clearly said that the sedition charges cannot be used to curb the right to freedom of speech unless it incites violence of such a degree as to bring it within the preview of public disorder. The executive must step back and ponder the gravity of the charges before invoking it against a citizen, including young students in some cases.
- (II) Similarly it is noticed that the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), with stringent bail conditions is being invoked increasingly and in some cases rather casually. The establishment has felt encouraged to do so due to the position, the Courts have taken in bail matters concerning the UAPA. In its April 2019 judgement in the case of the Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali the Supreme Court, according to ret'd, justice A.P. Shah (The Hindu Nov 19, 2020) "The Court essentially created a doctrine that an accused must remain in custody throughout the period of trial" even if the evidence against him is proven inadmissible. The Supreme Court said that in considering bail applications in UAPA cases, the courts must presume every allegation made in the FIR to be correct and burden of proving it wrong rests with the accused. "This has had an adverse impact on rights of liberty of citizens and many are in jail for years as they have no means to prove allegations wrong." It is imperative that the Supreme Court must revisit this judgement to reiterate the principle of bail being the right and jail an

exception. The gravity of offences under the UAPA are needed to protect the country but should not be used to shift the burden of proof to an accused. The Courts must ensure that the gravity of these laws are not invoked lightly and that the Courts must closely scrutinise each case that its correctly invoked,

- (III) It is seen that the harsh laws like, sedition, UAPA, NSA and PSA are being invoked in a number of FIR's denying normal right of bail. Since it affects the liberty of a citizen the present trend of these provisions finding place in FIR itself should be discouraged, These should invoked after due investigation, Thus ensuring due balance between the needs of personal liberty and national security. It must be understood that the frivolous use of such provisions only detracts from the gravity of such important legislations. The issue here is not the necessity of these provisions to defend the nation and its security but its alleged capricious misuse. Thus the principle of invocation of these provisions after due investigation, except in exceptional cases, where the accused is likely to abscond or cause serious harm, should be the norm.

Allegations of judicial overreach or activism have been made in the past also particularly after the Supreme Court and High Courts started entertain PILs in 1970's in matters of public importance. In a sense this narrative has the usual turf war implications. The executive always resents intrusions in its jurisdiction, even in important public matters. The present Union law Minister himself has drawn attention to the matter on more than one occasion. The issue is important and cannot be brushed aside as it has public interest on one hand and constitutional division of powers and impartiality and aloofness of judiciary on the other. A correct balance and mutual respect for various constitutional entities is needed. It is not merely a question of constitutionality of Court's action but mainly of propriety. While the serious public interest must override other considerations the delicate constitutional balance and appropriateness are also equally relevant. While the Court has pronounced on occasions its reluctance to entertain frivolous PIL's; it tends to ignore its own dictum, rather too easily. Its interventions in matters of public order, functions and facilities are rather problematic and need reconsideration. These not only waste judicial time, these are nuanced issues and may affect Court's standing. For example its interventions in matters of Covid management and

ICU beds; etc; movement of migrant labour during the lockdown, law & order arrangements during farmer's Jan. 26, 2021, Tractor March etc. are purely executive functions with political implications. Also its efforts to resolve the Farmer's agitation by forming a Committee etc.; temporarily staying the implementation Farm Acts, in which the govt. and farmer's groups are in conflict, amounts to an arbitration in a tricky matter. The Court's only remit in the matter is to adjudge the constitutionality of the three Farm Laws and nothing more. Many such examples can be cited for asking the executive to respond to purely administrative and law & order matters which may later become issues of litigation creating a situation of conflict of interest for judiciary if not propriety. While the Court has jurisdiction but its use has to be discerning. Best option is that with the experience of over last forty-years, the Supreme Court should lay down reasonable norms for entertaining the PIL's with the rule being that the litigant must exhaust all executive/legislative options before approaching the Courts. Exceptions should be rare and plausible.

Thus, the recent critical references to the High Courts, and the Supreme Court are rather unfortunate but remediable. If one looks objectively it is the inconsistency of approach towards laid down precedents and reluctance to act strictly in respect of cases affecting liberty of citizens particularly in respect of stringent laws like the UAPA, NSA, PSA, and sedition cases, are at the root of concerns. It is not that these stringent laws are not needed to protect the national security and interest, it is its alleged capricious use and Court's reluctance to intervene in favour of the citizen where serious national security issues are not involved, is the heart of the matter. Such laws viz. TADA/POTA etc. have been subject to misuse in the past also. The two cases of Arnab Goswami and Munawar Faruqui are pertinent. Both had been denied bail upto respective High Court's, but the Supreme Court granted bail quickly and tended to lay down norms. These and Dr Kafeel Khan's case in UP, would indicate the Courts are trying to restore the balance and discourage, the notion that the Courts tend to lean in favour of state where it is a party. With so many High Courts one should not be looking for uniformity but only for consistency. In conclusion, the Supreme Court and the High Courts are and have been the only bastions to uphold the Constitutional rights of the citizens. Uncharitable and harsh criticisms of the Courts are avoidable.

—J.N. Roy

## North-East Scan

# From Mainstreaming the Northeast in 'Act East' to Mainstreaming 'Act East' through Northeast

M P Bezbaruah\* and Amiya Sarma\*\*

As the 'Look East Policy' came into existence as a natural extension of India's reform agenda unlocked in 1991, there was a lot of enthusiasm about it in Northeast India. It was perceived as a means of freeing the region from its post-independence geographical isolation through softening of India's international border with its eastern neighbors. Hundreds of academic seminars and business conferences followed and there were a few car rallies too rolling through the Northeast region and ending in the bustling economic hubs of Thailand and Singapore. But at the ground level, little really changed for at least a couple of decades. Although government is sometimes blamed for not doing enough to unleash the potential of the policy, in reality there were several exogenous constraints beyond the control of Government of India which also contributed to the lack of movement. Till Sheikh Hasina's government came to power in Bangladesh, India's relation with that country lacked the warmth and depth for constructive engagement in political-economic cooperation. Myanmar was an even more difficult proposition. The ruling military regime was not too friendly with India. On the contrary, it used to be quite close to China. Additionally, the economic system in Myanmar was anachronistic with an overvalued fixed exchange rate of its currency and other related rigidities. The system was out of sync with the system in India for engaging seamlessly in international trade and capital movements. Though border trade initiatives between India and Myanmar, as also between Bangladesh and India, were much publicized, in reality these were not meant to be game changers. It is therefore no surprise that the

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\* M.P. Bezbaruah, Professor, Department of Economics, Gauhati University, Assam.

\*\* Amiya Sarma Senior Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Gauhati University, Assam.

impact of Border Trade Agreements was at best moderate and lasted only for a few years.

After the National Democratic Alliance came to power in New Delhi in 2014, it expressed its intention to invigorate India's eastward longings by going beyond just 'looking east' to 'acting east'. The new government also vowed to mainstream India's Northeast Region in the thick of its 'act east' policy. The initiatives this government took, as far as the Northeast is concerned, has been in the forms of expansion and expeditious completion of various connectivity programs within the region and also out of the region into centres inside Southeast Asia. In the meantime, the situation within countries around the region also turned favorable for India to open up eastward through its Northeast Region. Bangladesh under Sheikh Hasina became a friendly country. Lately, the country has achieved remarkable economic progress to dispel its image of an overpopulated underdeveloped nation and emerged as a vibrant fast growing industrializing economy. A prospering friendly nation in the neighborhood means growing opportunity for trade and investment. Significant political and economic changes took place in Myanmar too. It changed over to a flexible exchange rate currency system and implemented other reforms to bring its economy in sync with the systems operating in most other countries of the world. Synchronic invigoration of India's 'act east' initiatives with positive changes in her two important eastern neighbors of Myanmar and Bangladesh raised the feasibility of mainstreaming of the Northeast in India's eastward inclination. With improvement in connectivity within the Northeast and also through Myanmar to the core of ASEAN region via the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway from Moreh to Masot, the deficit in physical connectivity for mainstreaming the Northeast in India's 'act east' is getting bridged.

Yet the fact remains that, if India's 'Act East' or 'Look East' is viewed as an engagement for broadening and deepening of economic and other ties with the East and Southeast Asia region, it can proceed, and has indeed been proceeding, even without the Northeast India in it. The maritime trading routes being more convenient and economical, India's growing trade traffic with the ASEAN region has almost entirely moved across the Bay of Bengal with little use of the continental route across Northeast India and Myanmar. But if 'act east' is also to be viewed as a strategy for countering the Chinese design of encircling India, it is necessary to mainstream the 'act east' policy through Northeast India. To resist Chinese intrusions into Myanmar, it is

necessary for India to energize its engagement in Myanmar and beyond it in Southeast Asia. If that has to happen, 'Act East' needs to be activated through the continental corridor of Bangladesh-Northeast India-Myanmar also. Expeditious completion of the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway assumes great importance in that context. But physical connectivity by itself is unlikely to be enough to get India's eastern neighbors of Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand on board with India on its mission of stopping China's advances. Perception and attitude of Indian establishment towards these key eastern neighbors may require significant changes. First of all, elements within India's political establishment, which tend to treat Bangladesh as a marginal player, should be educated and instructed to shun such attitude. If such elements and attitudes are not dealt with sternly, there can be irreparable damage to India's bilateral relations with the country which India can ill afford geopolitically. Secondly, the engagement with Myanmar need to be further intensified keeping economic priorities above other issues, such as the state of democracy in that country. Its economic system has now become more or less compatible with that of ours. So it is possible to do the trading and other economic transactions with the country without the hurdles of the yesteryears.

Another dimension crucial for making Act East work in Northeast India, which has not received enough attention in public discourse, is the fissiparous tendencies within the region. The society in the Northeast India has been ethnically fragmented and the effects of these fragmentations often spill over to economic and social life in the region. Aspiring to be integrated to a broader trans-national region outside while remaining fragmented within is an obvious contradiction. States of the region need to develop a common economic vision and find the road leading to it. The region needs to come to terms with its ethnic diversity and devise ways of dealing with institutional barriers such as inner line permits (ILP) and traditional land laws that stand in the way of economic integration of the region as they restrict mobility of factors of production. This is not to suggest that the identity issues or land rights of indigenous peoples need to be compromised. They perhaps need to be further strengthened. Conditions should be made conducive for all ethnic groups to further their respective ethno-cultural aspirations but without treading on each other's toes. This is of course not an easy job. But it is high time for making a beginning in that direction. In the long run, widely shared economic prosperity can act as the antidote for softening of ethnic tensions which has been afflicting region for long. The economic uplift of the entire region would be easier if the region

comes up as an integrated market not only to realize its own potential in various sectors such as horticulture, manufacturing and tourism but also to profit from trading with rest of India, rest of South Asia and the Southeast Asia region. Towards this end therefore, more energetic initiatives involving all the States of the region are required. We already have a structure in the form of the North Eastern Council (NEC) which has so far not attempted to address this tangle of the region. It is high time that the Union Government takes the initiative to reshape the NEC as an institution which goes beyond its traditional role of looking after inter-State infrastructure projects to emerge as a multilateral forum for the States of the region to sit together, discuss and develop action plans for making the most of the complementarities within. The diversities within will have to be viewed as a mosaic, rather than fragments, which is woven together by a unified economic vision.

Thus, mainstreaming 'Act East' through the Northeast India can be a strategy for achieving the twin goal of economically uplifting the region and securing India's political-economic interest in the eastern front. Policy initiatives are needed not only in the external and diplomatic domain but also for preparing the Northeast Region from inside to take advantage of the changed situation in its surroundings. Externally, diplomatic and other friendly engagements of India with both Bangladesh and Myanmar, and then further with the countries of East and Southeast Asia assume importance. Some policy actions of the Government of India in this direction are visible. But steps for integrating the Northeast from within into a single economic entity now require more serious attention. This is an area where progress has been rather slow and policy interventions seem to be devoid of a clear long term vision.

## **Ugly Plutocracy has Made a Farce of Manipur Politics**

**Pradip Phanjoubam\***

Writing of Manipur and the Northeast, especially by those of us who belong here and therefore fit in the category of what psychoanalysts have come to refer to as the subject in analyst position, has never been

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\*Editor, Imphal Free Press, Imphal, Manipur.

easy. We run into many self-inhibiting hurdles, and among these is the forbidding shame of telling life experiences which we are aware others will find difficult to not only understand or empathize, but believe.

Indeed, so many of what have become ordinary and routine life experiences for those living in this remote region would sound incredible, incredulous and fantastic to the outside world. Ours is a world in which the extraordinary have become ordinary, lawlessness has become the law, the incredible and incredulous have become the everyday reality, the unbelievable have become the commonplace...

Not too long ago it was even difficult to convince people elsewhere that works remain undone because of slow internet, or bad telephone lines, or perennial unscheduled and extended power cuts, who would have a sympathetic ear to outlandish stories of gas cylinders not only costing in excess of Rs. 1000, but also people standing in tediously winding daily queues to buy them; or for tales of highway blockades that last for months; of routine paralyzing bandhs called by unheard of sundry organizations; of the fears of unwarranted combing operations by security forces; of ordinary salaried government officers becoming multi-millionaires amidst an expanding sea of impoverished masses; of academics whose only sense of achievement is the next promotion and pay raise. On these fronts at least, things have improved considerably, or have they? Why do we still continue to hear of government boasting of having fostered amicable hill-valley relations, but was compelled to cancel a cabinet meeting because a civil society organisation did not allow it? Why do we still hear of people locked up in jail because of posts on social media deemed objectionable by the government? How have notorious drug cartels been allowed to flourish under the very nose of the government? The list of such bewildering realities unique to the state can go on.

There are also less immediate questions with no answers. Why wouldn't reports of annual droughts in a place which receives some of the highest rainfall in the world sound fantastic to someone who has not lived in the region? Amidst all these, how are we expected to tell stories of fake encounters that have devastated the place despite stern strictures by the country's highest court, grenade gifts by so called freedom fighters to intimidate ordinary people, the permanent state of exception to democratic norms so blatantly represented by the continued promulgation of black laws such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), without sounding like exaggerations or over reactions?

I distinguish the difficulties faced by the subject analyst from those of the objective observer, precisely because however incredible these stories are, therefore however untellable they seem, the subject analyst has no choice but to believe them, for they are indeed his own reality too. His problem, as Dori Laub and Soshana Felman in “Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History” say, is that of the witness rather than the observer. Unlike in the case of the objective observer, memory comes in the way of his analyses. He can and does communicate freely with others who have shared his experiences, but often finds himself at a loss to figure out how he can credibly communicate these experiences to the outside world.

Writing of a similar inhibition but in the context of the Holocaust, Saul Friedlander observes, because memories are so widely different and sometimes incredible, another kind of gap in representation often results because of silence of survivors. Within the same survivor community these memories will circulate freely as their shared experience will ensure they do not appear incredulous. But it is in the dissemination of these stories outside the community where the inhibition would be. ‘The silence did not exist within the survivor community. It was maintained in relation to the outside world and was often imposed by shame, the shame of telling a story that must appear unbelievable and was, in any case entirely out of tune with surrounding society,’ Friedlander notes.

This probably explains why there are so few from the Northeast writing their own histories of trauma they are so familiar with. In most cases, it is the objective observers from outside the region who are left to take on this task. While the role of the objective observer is indispensable in its own ways, for they have the advantage of wider panoramic perspectives of unfolding events which often evade those caught up in these same events, to leave everything to be explained from this vantage alone would amount to leaving a huge vacuum in any effort to understand the region holistically. It is therefore essential for analysts in the subject position to come to the fore.

This however is by no means as easy as it sounds, given the trends in history writing in academics and equally relevantly, in reportage of history making events in journalism. It would be pertinent to remember here, journalism often is described as the first draft of history as much as it has also been described as literature in a hurry. On a more serious and empathetic note, good reflective journalistic writing has also been called ‘a nation talking to itself’.

The emphasis in history writing and journalism is for the analyst to detach himself from unfolding events and dispassionately observe. This already and automatically marginalises the analyst in subject position.

The difficulties then, as noted earlier, are largely a matter of what are now well-known inhibitions of writing trauma, including not the least the incredible nature of the skewed reality regions immersed in endemic trauma situations. The tendency in these places has always been for the abnormal to become normal, and in the same breath, the normal to become abnormal. The Northeast without doubt would qualify to be such a region.

In a rather cynical way, this turning of everyday logic on its head is captured in many popular local adages in Manipur and elsewhere. In reference to the government employment market in Manipur for instance, it is now a very common and indeed universally internalized wisdom that to be honest and sincere in the discharge of official duty is to ask to be a self-exile. That in a world which has become steeped in corruption and bribery, it would be career suicide to think of swimming against this tide.

In other words, insanity has become the new sanity, and to insist on being sane would now amount to insanity. A bizarre analogy of this I can think of from school chemistry practical classes is the experiment in which hydrogen is demonstrated as combustible in an atmosphere of oxygen, but when the situation is reversed and the hydrogen is made the atmosphere inside a glass jar, it is no longer hydrogen which remains combustible but oxygen which bursts into flames inside the hydrogen-filled jar.

The challenge is clear. Difficult though it is, the Northeast must shoulder the task of telling its own stories to the world, not always to contradict, but also to complement what the world has already told and knows of it. They must tell these stories as they have experienced and understood faithfully, however incredulous these may sound to the rest of the world. But the challenge does not end there. The Northeast must find the language to tell these stories in ways they can be understood by the world.

In contemplating these matters, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the 1982 literature Nobel laureate, who died recently, and whose obituaries filled the pages of newspapers the world over for weeks, comes to mind. The literary giant found a way of telling the incredible experience of another

beleaguered region of the world, his native Latin America, in ways the world outside of the region not only understood, but also stood up in gratitude that another creative vantage has become available to them.

What appeared as exaggeration to the rest of the world, Marquez convinced them all that this was the reality of his world. Much like the Northeast, this is also a world where the abnormal is often the normal and the normal likewise has become the abnormal. In this narrative style which the world today knows as “magic realism”, a corpse can still be acutely aware of its self dignity, as in “The Third Resignation”, watching with horror to see if any of his relatives who come to mourn him held up a handkerchief to her nose to confirm his suspicion that his body was beginning to smell. Or at night, as he lays in state inside a coffin, wishing his mother would leave the lights on and not leave the room too soon lest rats climbed into the coffin and began nibbling at his toes. In the corpse’s sense of helpless entrapment and impotence, in his lack of empowerment to determine the shape of events that had a bearing on his state of being, in his abject inability to resist events that went against his will, there is something of every oppressed society’s own despair.

In Marquez’s world of magic realism, joint patriarchs and matriarchs in extended joint families live to see as many as five generations of progenies, as in “One Hundred Years of Solitude”; or dead birds can drop ceaselessly from the sky like torrential rain as in “The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother.” Marquez exaggerates consciously and with a flourish too, but in doing so, he conjures up in his own inimitable way, a picture of how in circumstances of prolonged oppressed existence, the line dividing the normal and the abnormal can become blurred and easily confused.

This state of utter confusion of values and perceptions is nothing new to the Northeast, therefore the appeal of Marquez’s and other Latin American writers’ “magic realism” to this world as well. The myriad explanations for the recent macabre massacre in Bodoland in Assam, many of them contradicting each other; the various bitter, grand and now increasingly grandiose struggles for sovereignty in the region making strange bedfellows with struggles for tribal status under the Indian constitution; existing tribal populations till recently resenting others calling themselves non-tribals, yet when the latter decide they too want to be tribals, suddenly turning around to oppose the move; a lady fasting for 13 years over a draconian law; entire populations rising

violently against the use of military in civil policing under undemocratic acts such as the AFSPA, yet the same populations voting the political party which unambiguously supports the AFSPA back to power repeatedly.

These pictures are surreal. They are also just a few samples of the ingredients of the incredible, incredulous, fantastic, absurd, unbelievable world the Northeast has become today. Surely these stories cannot be told with justice in standard narratives with the familiar Aristotelian beginnings middles and ends. Sadly, the Northeast still awaits such a tribe of creative and committed story tellers, capable of finding new vocabularies and idioms to make the fantastically impossible, comprehensible to the rest of the world.

In Manipur's absurd theatre, something else is happening. Democracy has become a façade behind which a plutocracy is germinating. This portends extreme danger for the society in the near and far future. This is not unique to Manipur though, for many see the whole of India and indeed the entire Capitalist world, coming to be ruled by plutocrats. The enlightened aversion of this changing order of political power, is what has made Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), a runaway success story so far, as many analysts have so incisively observed in recent times.

In plutocracy, State power not only comes to concentrate in the hands of a few of the wealthiest directly or by proxy but also becomes a monopoly in their and their progenies' hands.

In Manipur and most other Northeastern states, the evolving plutocracy is even more grotesque. The wealthy, with the exception of a few, became wealthy not by industry or enterprise, but by brazen and institutionalized official corruption. These emergent plutocrats have no commitments to the society at all, and are interested only in fleecing the system with no thought ever of giving anything back to it. Their way of ensuring their monopoly of power is to reduce everything to purchasable commodities, beginning from education, to jobs, to their and their children's privileged positions in society. A democratic answer to this question, capable of reversing the system's gears, to return it to meritocracy and equitable justice, rather than allow it to slip further into the abyss of plutocracy and corruption, is surely another urgent revolution Manipur awaits.

# Sewer Deaths in India

S.P. Jakhanwal\*

*The main purpose of this article is to highlight the miseries of an emerging class of sewer and septic tank cleaners; their arduous nature of work in hazardous conditions and to sound alert that unless timely action is taken, social and economic condition of this class of people will further worsen.*

*“Sewage deaths: not deaths but killings”*

## **I. Introduction**

The end of year 2020 marks an important milestone in the history of sanitation in India. On the 19th of November 2020 (World Toilet Day), the central government launched *Safaimitra Suraksha Challenge* which aims to ensure that no life of any sewer or septic tank cleaner is ever lost owing to hazardous cleaning. *The Challenge* envisages promotion of mechanized cleaning in 243 cities by 30 April 2021 by creating public awareness, providing suitable infrastructure and training for the purpose. The motto seems to be: create conditions so that no person needs to enter a sewer or septic tank. The government is also in the process amending existing legislation, especially Prohibition of Employment of Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2011 making mechanized cleaning mandatory. Encouraged by the unprecedented success of the first phase, Swatchh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA)-II was launched in mid-2020. Hopefully, whole India (both rural and urban) will be declared ODF (Open Defecation Free) within a year or so. But will it also be successful in ending manual cleaning of sewer lines and tanks? Will it be able to control the rising trend in sewer

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\* Author is a retired secretary to Govt. of India and former Professor in Amity University.

deaths? Will it be able to liberate and rehabilitate the class of sewer cleaners? These are the issues discussed in this article.

Whenever, the problem of sewer death is discussed, we get involved in issues relating to sanitation and open defecation. Reasons are apparent. Provision of adequate sanitation and access to household toilet facilities gives rise to second generation problems of collection, transmission and treatment of sewer waste in a dignified and scientific manner.

In the preceding 40-50 years, provision of adequate sanitation and ending open defecation had been engaging serious attention of the world community in general and public health experts in particular. This is duly reflected in observance of decade 1981-90 as the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade. With limited success in the decade, sanitation (along with drinking water) were included as goal No.7 and 6 respectively in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG: 2000-15) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG: 2015-30). While India succeeded in many other areas, targets in sanitation and ending open defecation remained unfulfilled in MDG. Open defecation and the dehumanising practice of carrying head loads of human excreta, continuing even decades after independence, had lowered India's image in the world. Thanks to the drive launched by governments and NGOs, manual cleaning of latrines and removal of night soil manually are no longer seen in towns – big or small. (Note that certain NGO's continue to report traces of this practice still existing in some pockets.)

Similarly, Swatchh Bharat Abhiyan -I led to dramatic reduction in open defecation. While the 'near eradication' of these two age old social evils give us a sense of satisfaction, a new evil is raising its monstrous head.

Emergence of a new class of sewer cleaners is unfortunately a bye product of sanitation drive. Elimination of the practice of open defecation, universal access to individual household toilets and emergence of large complexes in towns and cities result in bigger, longer and deeper sewer systems. As a corollary, size of work force engaged in cleaning and maintenance of sewer tanks and lines also grows. Mechanization will not reverse the trend; it will only make the process less hazardous. This is amply established in surveys on Manual Scavengers conducted in 2013 and 2018. Number of manual scavengers went up from 14,505 in 2013 to 39,093 in 2018.

## II. Sanitation Initiatives in the Recent Past

In the first four decades following independence, policy makers, following the footsteps of Gandhi, saw it mostly as a civil rights issue: and remained pre-occupied with removal of *untouchability*. Even though the Constitution had abolished untouchability, discrimination and deprivation continued in practice. It was probably felt that untouchability is a legal issue and can be tackled by making law more stringent against those who practiced discrimination. Untouchability Offences Act, 1955 replaced by Protection of Civil rights Act of 1976 were manifestation of this hangover from Gandhi. The policy makers did almost nothing to tackle the problem where it arose. Dry latrines and open defecation continued unabated till 80's. Then came the UN Decade of Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation (1981-90). It was in 1986 that the central government brought Central Rural Sanitation Programme. This was followed by *Total Sanitation Campaign* in 1999; by *Nirmal Bharat* in 2012. However, it was only during SBA-I (2014-19) that the programme ran full throttle.

A table listing Milestones in Sanitation history in India since Independence is at Annex-1

The table below shows how Rural Household Toilet Coverage was progressing at snail speed till 2011.

1981	1	2015	50
1991	11	2016	63
2001	22	2017	82
2011	33	2018	85
2012	40	2018	71 (by NSO)
		2019	95 (end of SBA-I)

### Reduction in Open Defecation

Reduction in open defecation was mere 01% each year from 1981 to 2011. Remarkable improvement is seen after 2015. At the time of launching of SBA-I, it was estimated that 550 million people in India resorted to open defecation - bulk being in villages. As SBA-I concluded on 02 October 2019 it is claimed that only 50 million were yet to give up open defecation. More than six lakh villages and 4234 cities in India were declared ODF.

The aforesaid figures of open defecation should be accepted only after **CAG Report on Central Sanitation Programmes (1999-2014)**

The CAG Report No. 28 of 2015 on Performance Audit on Sanitation Campaign/Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan for year ended March 2014 is a scathing criticism of the programme performance.

First is lack of data integrity: huge discrepancy in reports on access to individual household toilets. During 2009-14 (five years), targets and achievements in construction of rural household toilets were as under:

	<b>Target</b>	<b>Achievement</b>
	(figures in lakh)	
BPL Families	T : 426.32	A : 222.32
APL Families	T : 469.76	A : 207.55
Total	T : 896.08	A : <b>429.87</b>

At the same time, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment reported that as many as **693.92** lakh toilets were already constructed till February 2011.

Census figures, surely more reliable, confirm only **367.53** lakh rural household toilets in 2011. No meaningful analysis is possible in the face of such discrepancies. Only Census: 2021 will give conclusive figures.

Given the necessity of reconciling figures, fact remains that achievements of SBA-I during 2014-19, with claims of having constructed around 90 million toilets, are remarkable.

Second, such a gigantic failure at the hands of monitors was the result of their utter lack of seriousness in reliability of data. As against Rs.22.40 cr. booked in the programme for Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E), only a sum of Rs. 0.32 cr. was spent on specified items; a sum of Rs. 22.08 cr. having been diverted to other uses.

Third, from performance audit angle, picture is all the more bleak. About 33% of rural toilets constructed were defunct. Reasons recorded were: poor quality control, quality of construction, incomplete structure and non-maintenance.

Fourth, even the approach and strategy of the programme are under shadow. Approach was to make it 'demand driven'. The strategy to generate demand was to lead a campaign based on information, education and communication (IEC). But the funds earmarked for IEC remained unspent to a large extent. Even convergence with other

programmes, in which individual household toilets were to be constructed, was not achieved to the desired extent.

### **Latest Field Survey (NFHS-5)**

It is pertinent go over to the findings of the Fifth Round of National Family Health Survey: Phase I (2019-20) conducted by the International Institute of Population Studies (IIPS) just released (December 2020). First phase field survey related to 131 parameters in 22 States/ UTs conducted in the second half of 2019. Item No. 9 reads: “population living in households that use an improved sanitation facility”. I was associated with a survey on tobacco use in a few NE states conducted by the IIPS about ten years back. They organise such surveys with a lot of technical sophistication. Their findings, table below, may reflect ground realities quite closely.

#### **Population living in households that use an improved sanitation facility**

<b>States</b>	<b>2019-20</b>		<b>2015-16</b>	
	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>
Andhra Pradesh	89.1	72.1	77.3	54.4
Assam	69.7	68.4	68.6	49.0
Bihar	69.2	45.7	49.4	26.5
Gujarat	89.3	63.3	74.0	63.6
Himachal	85.0	81.3	81.8	72.3
J and K	85.6	72.3	75.7	53.8
Karnataka	84.4	68.5	79.7	54.7
Kerala	99.0	98.5	98.7	98.2
Maharashtra	75.1	69.4	72.0	52.3
Meghalaya	81.3	83.3	82.9	61.4
Telangana	81.8	72.9	76.2	52.3
WB	75.0	64.7	68.0	52.8

An explanatory note says that these figures may not reflect on access to toilet facilities.

While the achievements during four years of SBA- I are remarkable, one may have to accept that we are quite far from achieving 100% open-defecation-free status, especially in rural areas. Possibility that people continue to resort to open defecation, in spite of availability of

toilet facility (household or public) or existence of dry latrines cannot be ruled out.

### **III. Sewer Deaths**

#### **Rising Trend in Deaths caused during manual cleaning of sewer lines and septic tanks**

Rapid growth of urbanization has encouraged governments and urban local bodies (ULBs) to lay new or expand sewer systems. In bigger towns like Delhi and Mumbai, about 60% of sewage generated flows through sewer lines. Enlightened and financially strong ULBs have set up sewage treatment plants with or without mechanized handling. Yet, there are hundreds of towns and cities where ULBs face problem of choked sewer lines, overflowing sewer tanks and sewage overflowing on roads. Not surprising that *ad-hoc* and emergency manual cleaning of sewers are undertaken, under the threat of spread of epidemics, both at household and municipal levels. In villages as well, this problem will soon become a priority issue: construction of toilets under Swatchh Bharat will result in many fold increase in volume of sewage generated. For some time, twin-tank dry latrines (sulabh latrines in common parlance) will absorb the additional load but not for long. Big villages will have to opt for sewer lines and sewer treatment facilities in due course.

In the last few years I have seen hefty men (almost naked with only a loin cloth around their waist) standing deep in the sewer lines and tanks – pouring out hundreds of buckets of dirty foul-smelling sewage. Can we shut our eyes to the immense health hazard to which these low paid wage earners are exposed? The practice is prevalent even in modern localities like New Delhi Lutyen zone or in Mayur Vihar Phase-I. Such *ad-hoc* cleaning is undertaken even in planned colonies where sewer lines were once laid but have been blocked or over loaded.

This class, poor but hefty in their youth, which risks life for a few hundred rupees in a day. Situation was further aggravated recently by a series of sewer related deaths in bigger towns. Such tragedies may be occurring even in smaller towns but not getting adequate media coverage.

#### **A. Trend in Sewer Deaths (25 years)**

In a span of 25 years, (1993 -2018) as many as 774 persons reportedly died while cleaning sewer pipes or tanks (sewer deaths). While 19 States/

UTs reported varying numbers of sewer deaths, 12 States/UTs reported 'nil'.

States	No. sewer Deaths 1993-2018	No. of deaths 2018-19	Total
Andhra Pradesh	18	0	18
Chattisgarh	0	05	05
Chandigarh	03	0	03
Bihar	06	06	12
Delhi	33	11	44
Goa	06	0	06
Gujarat	143	02	145
Haryana	56	03	59
Karnataka	69	02	71
Kerala	03	0	03
Maharashtra	09	10	19
Madhya Pradesh	07	0	07
Punjab	31	04	35
Rajasthan	38	0	38
Tamil Nadu	194	09	203
Telangana	02	02	04
Uttarakhand	06	0	06
Uttar Pradesh	67	09	76
West Bengal	18	0	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>774</b>
(average: about 30 per year)			

#### **Trend in Sewer Deaths (Five Years):**

While replying to a question in Lok Sabha on 11 February 2020, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment informed that there were 376 sewer deaths as reported by 18 states/UTs. Year wise break up was as under:

2015	57
2016	48
2017	93
2018	68
2019	110
(2015-19)	376

**(average: 75.2 per year)**

The Ministry further informed that the following states/Uts reported NIL deaths in five years:

Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Odisha, Jharkhand, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Sikkim, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Puduchery, Lakshwadeep, Meghalaya and Andman and Nicobar Islands.

Average number of deaths per year in a period of 25 years (1993-2018) was around 30 per year; but the average has gone up to 75 in the last five years (2015-19). The rising trend is not only undisputable but disturbing as well.

Rising trend in sewer deaths is the second generation problem. It was but expected that

- (a) with the rising trend in access to household toilets problem of liquid waste will also increase.
- (b) added to this is the increasing length of sewer lines and depth of septic tanks in urban area.
- (c) in absence of mechanization the age old practice of cleaning sewer lines and septic tanks will continue and result in more accidental deaths.

### Urbanization and Sewer Deaths

Is Sewer Death a bye product of urbanization?

The following table lists five states with highest sewer deaths as also with highest urban population:

<b>Five States with Highest No. of Sewer Deaths (1993-2018)</b>		<b>Five states with highest urban population in million (census 2011)</b>	
Tamil Nadu	203	Maharashtra	50.8 m
Gujarat	145	Uttar Pradesh	44.4 m
Uttar Pradesh	6	Tamil Nadu	34.9 m
Karnataka	71	West Bengal	29.0 m
Haryana	59	Gujarat	25.7 m

Tamil Nadu was the most urbanized state (48.4%) and also reported highest number of sewer deaths. Gujarat second from the top in sewer deaths is also highly urbanized with 42.6% urban population.

The point being made out is that the severity of sewer accidental deaths is an urban phenomenon. This is easily explained by the fact that length and depth of sewer systems in towns are prone to accidents.

## Urban Rural Divide

Census 2011 figures of rural-urban share of households which require cleaning as per size of pit and type of latrine are:

Urban Sewer	29%
Urban Septic Tanks	29%
Rural Sewer	6%
Rural septic Tanks	36%

The following are to be kept in mind when viewing the situation from rural-urban angle:

*First*, sewer lines are found rarely; most of toilets have septic tanks for containing excreta. These tanks are not deep; excreta gets decomposed and tanks are cleaned periodically to remove slurry or dry excreta. Chances of accidental deaths while cleaning them are small.

*Second*, Swatch Bharat Abhiyan-I, in a period of five years (2014-19) claims to have almost done away with the practice of open defecation. Number of household toilets in rural households shot up by almost 100 million. These household septic tanks will require periodic cleaning. Even a simple guesstimate is that in due course a workforce of about a million will be required for this job.

*Third*, flood zones will pose special problem of maintaining and cleaning of septic latrines. Septic tanks will get inundated with flood water; will make latrines unusable and may require emergency dewatering and cleaning.

In urban areas, hotels, factories and large complexes may have bigger and deeper sewer systems. Municipalities and corporations lay sewer systems quite deep in the ground. Their cleaning require special equipment and care. **Most of the sewer deaths occur in this sector.**

## Sociological Aspects (Class Divide)

A personal experience of the author may be worth recalling here. We were on pilgrimage to Badrinath in U.P. (now Uttarakhand) around 1990. After a long road journey, we settled in a guest house of a paramilitary force just on the opposite bank of the holy stream. The famous temple was clearly visible from the big glass windows. Also visible was a small (basti) settlement a little away from the temple on the 'south' of the temple. The very look of the *basti* suggested that it was a low income group settlement. Based on my experience of "settlement training days" at the beginning of service career, I shared

my apprehension with the family: the small gusty area should be a harijan *basti*. When the *khansama* brought tea, I could not no longer wait for my curiosity to be answered. The *khansama* did not take time in replying that the “*dakhinwari basti*” was of *harijans*. A class of people engaged in cleaning (including manual scavengers) was a reality of Indian villages whether in the plains or in the hills.

Rashtriya Garima Abhiyan, under the sponsorship of Jan Sahas Social Development Society, conducted a survey (January – July 2018) of families of victims of sewer deaths in 11 States; and identified 140 incidents in which 302 deaths had occurred. The study comprised 51 incidents involving 97 deaths.

Major findings and observations throw a lot of light on sewer death cases are summarized below:

- (a) the study reiterates the well known fact that the socially and economically backward classes (SC/ST/OBC) constitute majority of manual scavengers employed directly or through contractors. 94% of the families of the deceased belonged to scheduled castes, 2 % to scheduled tribes and 4% to other backward classes.
- (b) Most of death victims, while cleaning sewer lines or septic tanks, were members of the following castes:  
\* Valmikis \* Mehtar \* Dom \* Bhangi \* Har \* Hhadi  
\* Ghasi \* Olagana \* Mukhiyar \* Thoti \*Hela \*Halalkhor
- (c) It is mostly the young / adults who died in sewer death incidents.

Age distribution of sewer death victims is as under:

Age Group	Percentage of Total deaths
15- 25 yrs	37
25-35 yrs	35
35-45 yrs	23

- (d) Almost half of the deceased were uneducated; while the other half had studied up to 10th standard.
- (e) Almost two-thirds of victims were married.
- (f) Legal proceedings in sewer death cases leave a lot to be desired. In spite of the directive of the Supreme Court in its judgement of 27 March 2014 for filing criminal case and launching prosecution in all cases of sewer death, ground situation was miserable. FIR was registered only in 35% of study sample.

Even in cases where FIR was registered, IPC sections 304 and 304A dealing with negligence causing death were not added.

- (g) Supreme Court, in its judgement of 2014, had fixed a compensation of Rs. ten lakhs to families of victims of sewer deaths. Here again, in many cases compensation was not paid.
- (h) Rehabilitation of the families of victims of sewer deaths was also neglected.

Nothing less than a social churning is needed now. We cannot allow this to linger as had happened with the practice of carrying human excreta as head-load. Time has come for social activists and planners to take head-on the practice of manual cleaning of sewers and liberation of those engaged in this type of job. Bonds of affinity between certain castes and certain degrading profession must be broken. I wonder why this has escaped the attention of Human Rights Commission.

In all towns with sizeable population and sewer system there has to be a sewer cleaning and collection unit. Such units will normally comprise a vehicle fitted with suction pump, collection tank and a dumping yard all scientifically managed. Number of units which a town should have will naturally depend on the quantum of sewer being generated and passing through sewer lines. Covering all cities with population of one lakh or more just in one year may be a feasible target.

#### **IV. Challenges in Sewer Management**

##### ***(a) Rural Areas:***

Villages in India are, generally speaking, dense human settlements. Finding safe location for sewer tanks may be a challenge. Sources of drinking water in villages comprise wells, shallow tube wells, and tanks near by. Ensuring that these sources of water or even ground water in the country-side are not contaminated will pose another challenge. One or two years after the construction of new sewer tanks may be all right, but once they are fully filled up, they will require cleaning and de-silting. How slurry be taken out? Who will take it out? Where will this slurry be disposed off? In nearby low lying areas? In nearby 'nala' and rivulets? In flood zones, slurry in septic tanks is likely to spread all around. It is time to visualize, plan and prepare. Panchayats are totally absent from the scene when it comes to sewer management. Neither

they have the funds nor trained man power nor pumps to deploy. They may levy a suitable levy for maintaining sewer pumps, carriage and disposal sites. Planning for sewer treatment plants, one in each CD-lock, may be a good proposition to begin with.

***(b) Small and medium size Cities***

Fortunately, almost all ULB's in small and medium size cities have rudimentary staff, funds and carriages at their disposal. ULB's earlier collected latrine tax which many have amalgamated with Property tax. Now that dry latrines and collection of manual collection of human excreta are not in practice, they should reorganize, reorient and restructure their 'sewer' cell. All of them must be mandated to operate mechanized handling and disposal system in their jurisdictions. at the same time, they should encourage small private enterprises to attend to requisitions from house owners at reasonable charges.

***(c) Metro and Mega Towns***

Towns with ten lakh of population or more have to bear major burden of reducing sewer hazards. It is in these towns that most of sewer deaths take place. Sewer cleaners are employed by them or hired by them. Law is not wanting in most cases. The Law enforcement authorities including the local police may have to play a major role in catching the offenders and bringing them to books.

**V. What can be done?**

(a) XV Finance Commission has submitted its report recommending, *inter alia*, devolution of funds to the states from divisible pool. An earlier Finance Commission had agreed to take into account the requirement of funds by local bodies while working out their recommendations. It is now the turn of the states/UTs to devolve funds to urban and rural local bodies. While attempting to do so, states/UTs may mandate that the SFC's will look into the requirements of funds of local bodies in management of sewer waste.

(b) Local bodies- both urban and rural- will have to play an aggressive role in sewer management in their jurisdiction. After all, solid waste (garbage collection/disposal and latrine service constituted their traditional responsibilities. Unfortunately, financial health of local bodies, generally speaking, is very weak. Apart from funds receivable

from state governments, these local bodies should not hesitate in levying appropriate sewer taxes and levies, as per statute applicable to them.

(c) States/UTs have responsibility of implementing PEMSRA 1993 and also of ensuring compliance of Supreme Court directives in the landmark judgement of 27 March 2014. Findings and observations in Garima Study will be an eye opener for them. Good Governance includes truthful implementation of laws and statutes dealing with welfare of the weak and downtrodden (equity). Law enforcing authorities and local administration (DM/SP) have yet to show due diligence in the matter.

(d) Thanks to the spirited advocacy for the uplift of the *Harijans*, there are thousands of non governmental organizations (NGO's) - big and small- working in this field. To name a few: Sulabh International and Safai Karamchari Andolan (SKA). They earned laurels in India and South Asia for developing an intermediate technology and creating a new mind set for abandoning the practice of manual handling of human excreta. Sulabh Founder Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak was awarded Padma Bhushan and SKA National Convenor Bezwada Wilson received Magsaysay award in this field. It is high time, in the changed scenario, that Sulabh International and similar NGOs change gears and contribute effectively to the process of safe and mechanized handling of sewer.

(e) Like the mushroom growth of water pump repair units in rural areas, sewer management brings a new business opportunity in small towns and cities. Demand for sewer tanks' cleaning in villages and small towns is growing day by day. Slogan like 'sewer service: just at a telephone call away' augurs well and has promise of profits. Local bodies will have to play a vigilant and meaningful role in regulating such businesses with the standards of service, equipment and maximum service charges.

(f) In metro cities, with deeper and bigger sewer systems, problems are more complex and will require application of higher level technology. Investment in specially designed suction-cum-jetting machines, protective gears, safety equipment, trained man power and oxidation ponds, etc will mean bigger investments. Civic amenities in NCTD alone had submitted an estimate of Rs. 3,000 crore. ULB's and private enterprises both can co-exist in such towns for providing these services. On the pattern of SBA-I, CSR funds may be made admissible for this type of mechanized sewer cleaning equipment.

(g) The biggest danger lies in old manual scavengers being sucked up in the new sewer cleaning jobs, thus perpetuating class discrimination.

Hence, the necessity of rehabilitation of liberated manual scavengers by states and ULBs in other avocations.

(h) Census 2011 reported about 6000 towns - small and big. About 60 have population of one million and more. A company, specializing in provision of sewer cleaning services at modest rates has enormous prospects. State and local governments should be encouraged to chip in by providing subsidy and ancillary facilities.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Inept handling of fast growing sewer related problem is laced with serious consequences: the old class of manual scavengers and head-load carriers of human excreta will constitute a new class. There will be an unusual rise in sewer related deaths, or in 'sewer killings'. Class based discrimination will get a new lease of life. Last, reports of sewer deaths in rural area will also start coming. As all planners know, tackling such problems in more than six lakh villages will pose a serious challenge.

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**Annex - 1**  
**Major Milestones in the History of Sanitation**  
**in India since Independence**

- 1951-56 : Sanitation Programme in First 5 -year Plan
- 1955 : Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955
- 1976 : Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1976  
: (replaces old Untouchability Act of 1955)
- 1981-90 : International Decade on Drinking water Supply and Sanitation
- 1986 : Central Rural Sanitation Programme
- 1989 : Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989
- 1993 : Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993
- 1993 : Statutory Commission on Safai Karamcharis is set up
- 1999 : Total Sanitation Campaign
- 2004 : National Safai Karamcharis Commission is set up by a government resolution
- 2012 : Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan is launched
- 2013 : Prohibition of Employment as Manual scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 (PEMSRA) is passed
- 2014 : Landmark Judgement of Hon'ble Supreme Court on sewer Cleaning and Deaths
- 2014 : Swatchh Bharat Abhiyan - I
- 2015 : CAG Report No. 28 /2015 on Central Government Sanitation Programmes
- 2019 : Swatch Bharat Abhiyan -II
- 2020 : Safaimitra Suraksha Challenge by the Ministry of Urban Development  
: Bill to amendment PEMSRA 2013 is tabled

## Voting Through the Post: Procedural and Normative Concerns

**Ujjwal Kumar Singh\***

In November 2020 elections in two democracies – one in the world’s largest democracy and the other in the world’s most populous democracy – brought ‘postal ballots’ to public scrutiny. This scrutiny triggered debates around the procedures for conducting elections and the normative concerns which make elections meaningful in a democracy. It is important to see how the debates on what is construed as ‘absentee’ voting have assumed a specific connotation in the contemporary context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The questions of norms and procedures have a longer history in India, which have accumulated around the right to vote of those who for different reasons are ‘absent’ from the constituency in which they are registered to vote. In this context, whose right to vote in absentia is recognised by the Election Commission of India (ECI) and successive governments, through rules and laws, become points of contestation. These contestations generate processes through which principles for justifying such a right get articulated and affirmed or disputed. The recent proposal by the ECI to allow Non Resident Indians (NRIs) to vote through Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS), in the forthcoming State Assembly elections in West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry,<sup>1</sup> has provided the space to examine the contests over law, procedures and norms. In particular, it has afforded the opportunity to revisit the idea of a ‘constituency’ and the relationship between constituency and citizen-voters. The ETPBS facility was provided to ‘service voters’ in the 2019 Lok Sabha election. The extension of this facility to NRIs would

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\* Ujjwal Kumar Singh, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Delhi. E-mail: [ujjwalksingh@gmail.com](mailto:ujjwalksingh@gmail.com)

require an amendment in the Representation of the People Act 1951 and changes in the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961. In a letter to the Law Ministry, the ECI asked the ministry to expedite the process, buttressing its proposal by noting that the amendment would ‘boost the image of country internationally’.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, while the ECI sees the extension of the facility to NRIs as an extension of the continuing efforts of the Commission to facilitate voting for overseas electors’, opposition parties have expressed apprehension that this could lead to large-scale manipulation, with ballot papers being sold for profits<sup>3</sup>

### **Territorial Constituency and the Idea of ‘ordinarily’ resident voter**

The idea of a territorially delimited constituencies is distinct from constituencies as ‘embodied spaces’ representing special interests, e.g., of minority groups, or women as separate electorates/constituencies (Singer, 2007, p.56). The ‘constituency’ as inscribed in electoral laws in India, is not seen in terms of a people who would be represented in a decision making body through modes which ensure either a descriptive representation through a trustee or of ideas through a delegate (Pitkin 1967, Phillips 1995). It is seen as a geographically inscribed electoral space, ‘random, permanent and involuntary’ (Rehfeld 2005), which can form subjective communities of interest to vote as a bloc but may also have the potential to assume the characteristics of a deliberative community which enhances accountability (James 2015). Article 325 of the Constitution of India provides for ‘one general electoral roll for every territorial constituency’ for elections to the Parliament and to the state legislative Assembly and Council. The implication is that no person would be ‘ineligible for inclusion in, or claim to be included’ in a *special* electoral roll on grounds of race, religion, caste or sex. It is interesting that there were several multi-member constituencies till the second general election to give representation through reserved seats to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and elections to state councils are held partly through electorates representing special ‘interests’, e.g., the constituency of electorates holding a graduate degree.

Under the provisions of Section 17 and 18 of the Representation of People Act (RPA), no person can be registered in more than one constituency and no person can be registered more than once in the same constituency and should be ‘ordinarily’ resident in that constituency (Section 19, RPA 1950). Section 19 of the RPA lays down the conditions

which determine the registration of a citizen as voter. A citizen of India who is not less than 18 years of age can register as a voter in the electoral rolls of a constituency only if he or she is 'ordinarily resident' in that constituency. In explaining what the expression 'ordinarily resident' means, Section 20 the RPA provides that a person 'temporarily absent from his or her place of ordinary residence for reasons specified in the Act and those who have a 'service qualification', shall be 'deemed to be ordinarily resident' in the constituency. Under the Act service condition applies to the following categories: members of 'armed forces of the Union', 'members of a force to which the provisions of the Army Act, 1950 (46 of 1950) have been made', e.g., Assam Rifles, CRPF, BSF, ITBP, SSB, NSG, GREF in BRO, CISF etc., 'members of armed police force of a State, serving outside that State', 'a person who is employed under the Government of India, in a post outside India'. Under Section 60 of the Representation of the People Act and Rules 1951 (RPA1951), persons identified as voters under the 'service qualification' in the RPA 1950 are construed as a distinct 'class' of persons for whom 'special procedure' for voting has been provided, so that such voters can cast their vote either in person or by postal ballot or by proxy'. In addition, Section 60(d) of the RPA 1951, also enables 'any person subjected to preventive detention under any law for the time being in force to give his vote by postal ballot'. The Conduct of Election Rules 1961 lays down the special procedure to be followed for those who are permitted under the RPA to vote as a special class of voters. It includes personnel who are on election duty.

### **The NRI voter: A Special Class**

The Election Commission of India identifies three 'sub groups' of voters/electors: the 'service voters', the 'resident electors' and the 'overseas or Non Resident Indian (NRI) electors'.<sup>4</sup> While the first two have been discussed above, it is the third category of voters – the Overseas (NRI) voter that has been a recent addition to the Indian electorate, inserting a new principle of 'extra-territoriality' in the scale of representation of constituencies. In 2010 an amendment in the RPA 1950 allowed an NRI, that is, 'a person who is an Indian citizen but is ordinarily resident outside India for education or employment', to register as a voter in the constituency mentioned in his or her passport as place of residence. The newly inserted section 20A of the RPA 1950 allowed an NRI who has been 'absent' from his place of residence 'whether temporarily or

not' to register in the electoral roll and vote 'at an election in the constituency'. The insertion triggered off a debate on the violation of the 'principle of local representation'. The amendment was the result of a promise made to the Indian diaspora by then Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh at a Pravasi Bharatiya Divas commemoration in 2009. It must be noted that following this amendment, an NRI could vote only by being physically present in the constituency where he or she was registered to vote, on the polling day. The NRI community, however, pressed for e-voting rights, and petitioned the Supreme Court in 2014 for the restoration of their right to vote. Nudged by the Supreme Court and pushed by the BJP, in August 2017 the government approved a proposal to further amend the RPA to allow NRIs to vote through 'proxy'. Under the system of voting by 'proxy', the NRIs can register themselves as voters online, and appoint a person as their proxy to vote. Parties like the Congress and the CPM have been critical of 'proxy' voting, because of its susceptibility to violation of secrecy of ballot, and the consequent trust deficit.<sup>5</sup> A year later, the Lok Sabha passed the amendment in the RPA by voice vote to approve proxy voting by NRIs. Concerns continued to be raised and opposition parties asked that the amendments be referred to a Select Committee for detailed discussions. Regional parties were apprehensive that large and resourceful parties would benefit from the change.<sup>6</sup> The Bill, however, lapsed after the dissolution of the Lok Sabha in May 2019 in preparation for the general election.

Almost a year later, the ECI along with the Ministry of External Affairs has *proposed* the possibility of extending the facility of voting through postal ballot through the ETPBS (Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System) which has hitherto been available only to the service electors in the armed forces, to the NRI voters.<sup>7</sup> Under the ETPBS the NRI voter would receive the ballot paper electronically and return it through ordinary mail. The push towards ETPBS comes from the ECI as an additional option for NRI electors. The ECI has reportedly been addressed by NRIs who have found the option of physical voting expensive and restrictive as evident from the fact that only about one crore NRIs have registered as voters to use the option of physical voting, the maximum number being from Kerala.<sup>8</sup> It is interesting, however, that the ECI proposal of extending the ETPBS to NRIs is to be confined to non-Gulf countries, as a pilot project.<sup>9</sup>

### **A question of enfranchisement**

The first Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sukumar Sen started the practice of writing narrative reports of each election, a practice that was followed till 1983. The narrative report on the first general election by CEC Sen emphasized the importance of appropriate laws and procedures to run an *efficient* electoral system. In a context where the laws for conducting elections were being made piece-meal, CEC Sen interpreted the ECI's constitutional role of conducting elections as serving a 'national purpose'. The task of preparing the electoral rolls based on universal adult franchise was a humungous task. Soon after the announcement of the election dates, the Government of India issued an eighty-page booklet prepared by the Law Ministry in consultation with the ECI, giving details of the rules of procedure to be followed in the conduct of elections. In this booklet the provision of postal ballots for the armed forces and diplomatic personnel was laid down. Interestingly, apart from persons eligible to vote through postal ballots, a separate list of persons under preventive detention was also prepared and arrangements were made to enable them to vote through postal ballot. Of a total of 2,96,828 postal ballot papers issued for the armed personnel, a large proportion of envelopes with the postal ballots were returned without being delivered due to wrong addresses. However, 1,07,000 voters were able to exercise their right to vote by postal ballot. The CEC believed that the postal ballots, even in cases where they were delivered, were not effective, since the ballot papers did not carry the names of candidates, and in most cases the voters were not able to vote 'intelligently' because of unfamiliarity with the candidates in their constituencies.<sup>10</sup> In the election to the State Legislative Councils members of Legislative Assemblies voted by personal ballot. Electors comprising the graduate, teachers and local authorities constituencies voted by postal ballot.

Several general and state assembly elections later, when laws for the conduct of elections are sufficiently entrenched, the question of making franchise effective for all those who are entitled to vote remains significant for the ECI. The discussion on postal ballot for the voter 'absent' from his or her constituency in the previous section drew attention to one such category – the NRI. The concerns around facilitating the exercise of franchise by this category gave impetus to extending to them modalities available to the armed forces and those stationed abroad on government duty. In the recent past similar concerns have been expressed by scholars and activists for 'internal migrants'.

P. Sainath has for long pointed at the split between the political cycles of democracies and the livelihood cycles of those who are 'locked into endless step-by-step migrations' in search of an elusive livelihood in cities due to breakdown in rural economies and agrarian distress.<sup>11</sup> While large numbers of rural poor get excluded from the electoral process in their quest for survival, Sainath points out, there are some specific periods in this survival cycle when they are most likely to be out of their villages, which ironically are also the months (April and May) when general elections are held.<sup>12</sup> Shreya Ghosh and Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay (2020) point out that when the government proposed the amendment to the RPA in 2018 to extend proxy voting rights to the NRIs, it justified it as a 'need' for the country as a whole to 'respect and recognise the achievements of the NRIs'. Ghosh and Bandyopadhyay argue for similar 'respect' to be shown to the internal migrants, who constitute the bulk of the 'missing voters' in elections.

More recently, in the context of elections held under the Covid-19 Pandemic in Bihar in November 2020, postal ballot was introduced as a special measure for those rendered 'vulnerable' by the virus. Apart from issuing guidelines for those with Covid-19 symptoms or residing in containment zones, the ECI extended the facility of ETPB system to persons with disabilities, voters above the age of 80 years, those notified in essential services and those who were COVID-19 positive and in home or institutional quarantine. It must be noted that the notification of these changes in the rules related to postal ballot in June 2020 through changes in the Conduct of Election Rules was criticized by the opposition parties as 'arbitrary and unconstitutional' and in violation of the secrecy of the vote which was fundamental to free and fair elections. About four lakh voters had been contacted by Booth Level Officers (BLOs) all over the state. In the first phase of polling around 52,000 voters opted for postal ballots. The ECI stated that in the remaining two phases the ECI would continue its efforts to make the election process more 'accessible, inclusive and safe'. Unlike the postal ballot facility exercised by the service voters, in the Bihar elections those who opted for voting through the post, filled up a form. The ballot was carried to the residence of these voters and the process was videographed to ensure 'transparency'.<sup>13</sup>

Significantly, quite like the dispute that erupted in the US Presidential election that were held around the same time, the postal ballot count became contested in the seats where the BJP won with a

narrow margin. The leader of the Mahagathbandhan, Tejashwi Yadav, alleged that ‘chhal and bal’ (deceit and force) has been used by the BJP which was reflected in the narrow margins of the defeat of twenty Mahagathbandhan candidates. This, he alleged was evident also from the manner in which the ECI ‘did not abide by its own rule on counting the postal ballots first’.<sup>14</sup>

The resonance with the dispute over postal ballots in USA is, however, only to the extent that both implicated voting through postal ballot while questioning the outcome of elections. Unlike India, the rules of procedure pertaining to the conduct of elections vary across states in USA. Apart from members of the armed forces or those with disabilities, an absentee voter status for a specific election or a permanent absentee voter status can be obtained by electors in USA as a matter of convenience. While the facility of ‘early voting’ or voting before polling day, regardless of whether or not the vote is being cast by post or physically at a polling booth, is available to all voters in USA, early voting for those casting a postal ballot become imperative if the vote is to reach the returning officer by a specified deadline, to be counted as a valid vote. In the context of the USA the recent Presidential election saw concerted mobilisation by Joe Biden’s Democratic Party urging its supporters to vote early using the mail-in or postal ballot – which was sought to be thwarted by President Trump through cost cutting in US postal services - which would have impacted mail-in voting. This move was subsequently reversed.<sup>15</sup> But President Trump continued to cast doubts on the procedure and outcome of the counting of postal ballots – calling them ‘dangerous’ and ‘fraudulent’.<sup>16</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The ECI’s proposal to extend the ETPBS to NRIs in the forthcoming state assembly elections has drawn our attention to the procedures that must be adopted to make adult franchise truly universal. The idea of territorial constituency and preparation of electoral rolls commensurate with it has made ‘residence’ a condition for registration of voters for a constituency. The accommodation of those ‘absent’ from the constituency has been done through the provision of postal ballots, initiated in the first general election for specified classes of voters as a ‘special’ measure. In 2010, the desire to connect to the Indian Diaspora in meaningful ways took the form of extending the special status of ‘absent’ voters to those among the Diaspora who had not given up

Indian citizenship and were outside India for work or education. While the idea of territorial constituency may be seen as weakened in disregarding geographical ties, the idea of a constituency as also one of 'interest' may be seen as making its presence felt. The need to further facilitate voting by NRIs through the extension of proxy votes and more recently by ETPBS, can be seen on the one hand as affirming the enfranchisement of a class of persons who do not have political rights in the host country because of their citizenship status; on the other hand, it may also be seen as creating a hierarchy among 'absent citizens' – those like the NRIs who can negotiate their terms of belonging and present themselves to the state as worthy candidates for political rights, and those like the 'footloose' internal migrants who constitute the largest chunk of missing voters and have little bargaining powers. The graded response of the state precipitates the question of procedural certainty and democratic outcomes alongside concerns around integrity of election procedure itself.

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- <sup>8</sup> Of the 12.6 million NRIs, around a hundred thousand are registered as voters with the ECI. The ECI believes that the extension of the ETPBS system would lead to 'at least 60-65% of the 12.6 million people residing overseas' becoming eligible to vote. 'No postal ballot pilot planned for non-Gulf NRIs: Election Commission', *The Hindustan Times*, 24 December 2020, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/no-postal-ballot-pilot-planned-for-non-gulf-nris-election-commission/story-ILEsxoaoqYsHwfDp3OIILL.html>, accessed on 24 December 2020.
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- <sup>11</sup> The National Sample Survey's definition of the 'last usual place of residence' of a migrant is 'the village where a person has stayed continuously for at least six months immediately prior to moving to the present village/town'. P.Sainath, 'The millions who cannot vote', *Hindu*, 15 March 2004, p.10.
- <sup>12</sup> In April-May 2003, for example, close to two million Oriyas were out of their State looking for work. Lakhs of people from just the three districts Nuapada, Kalahandi and Bolangir were out of their villages, either pulling rickshaws in Raipur, or working in the brick kilns in Vizianagar, or even the construction sites of Mumbai. The exodus starts in February itself, as Sainath witnessed the migration of two-thirds of villages from the Telangana region to Mumbai. *Ibid*.
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# India's Nuclear Policy: Strategic Imperatives and Transformation

**Veena Kukreja\***

## Introduction

India's decision to conduct nuclear tests in May 1998 and acquiring the status of nuclear weapon state was a decisive turn in India's nuclear policy in particular and global nuclear order in general. India's development-disarmament narrative transformed into a deterrence discourse – depicting a paradigm shift in India's strategic locus. It is significant to note that though India initially after its independence was against the nuclear weapons but the strategic imperatives later compelled it to possess nuclear weapons which culminated in India's nuclear device test in 1974 termed as a 'peaceful nuclear explosion' (PNE). However, India did not give up its quest for conducting the nuclear test in future in view of emerging security scenario in the region. Pakistan's unexpectedly rapid nuclear progress during the early 1980s and the considerable pressure mounted on India in the mid-1990s to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). According to Stephen Cohen, 'no other country has ever engaged in as lengthy, wide-ranging, and intensive debates as India did before it crossed the various nuclear thresholds' (Cohen 2001: 159).

Despite the previous failed attempt to test nuclear weapons in 1995, India under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee took a bold decision to conduct nuclear test successfully in 1998 and declaring itself overtly a nuclear weapon state. In the later years was being recognised as a *de facto* nuclear weapon state without being a signatory to major nuclear non-proliferation treaties. Despite testing the nuclear

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\* Prof. Veena Kukreja is Professor and Head of the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi. New Delhi.

weapons and India's reluctance to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) for its discriminatory clauses, New Delhi had been strongly protesting against nuclear proliferation. In this context, since 1998 Indian nuclear policy has been witnessing continuity rather than change (Joshi and O'Donnell 2018).

### **Development of India's Nuclear Weapons**

India's first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had a major influence on country's nuclear thinking. Though Nehru was against the nuclear weapons but was not against the nuclear technology which he considered important for national development (Rajagopalan 2010, Abraham 1999). Later on, New Delhi considered the importance of nuclear weapons in terms of achieving strategic autonomy and to provide self-sufficiency in her diplomatic, political and economic affairs (Ogden 2011: 290).

The changing security scenarios with the neighbours where India had to face the India-China 1962 war and India-Pakistan war in 1965 and China's testing of its first nuclear weapon in 1964 made New Delhi to realize the importance of the nuclear weapons for its security. These emerging security challenges has made the then Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri to approve the Subterranean Nuclear Explosion Project and authorised the Atomic Energy Commission to prepare for peaceful nuclear explosion.

After Shastri's sudden demise, Indira Gandhi, the next Prime Minister carried on the nuclear weapon programme further and successfully conducted India's first "peaceful nuclear explosion" in 1974 (Das 2015). This was a clear departure from the previous views of India where New Delhi considered the military utility of the nuclear weapons that was necessary for its security. During this time there was a debate on non-proliferation that culminated in Non-Proliferation Treaty which India found it discriminatory as it upheld the horizontal nuclear proliferation of the nuclear weapon states (Saran 2013). By not abiding or willing to be a part of NPT, the nuclear weapon test option was open for India.

### **Pokharan II: 1998 Nuclear Tests**

Disintegration of USSR coupled with the consequent end of Cold War marked a beginning of new phase in India's nuclear thinking. India for a long during the Cold War had relied on the Soviet Union for military

aid and in a way had gained security assurance and protection against the rivals. With the breakdown of the Soviet Union, New Delhi had lost a reliable security partner. In The post-Cold War world order the US made non-proliferation a key issue in its foreign policy agenda. US pressure was mounted on India to sign NPT and Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (Nizamani 2000: 59). In the wake of post-Cold War new world order, with deteriorating regional security imperatives coupled with absence of global disarmament India realized that it was normative idea to cling with the notion of non-weaponization (Mohan 2003: 15).

The major reasons that pushed India for this test was the growing security threats in its neighbourhood. During this period New Delhi's security challenges in its immediate neighbourhood namely growing cross-border terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir as well as Sino-Pakistan nexus had compelled it to strategize its defense and nuclear policy. To ensure survival in an anarchic world New Delhi has to rely on self-help strategy. India was planning for the second nuclear weapon test in the 1995 but could not conduct one as it was detected by the US and there was international pressure to stall it. India was successful in testing the second one in the 1998. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) prior to coming to power, in its Election Manifestoes of 1996 and 1998 had spoken of re-evaluating the nuclear policy and showed its determination to conduct nuclear weapon tests. India tested the nuclear weapons at Pokharan, Rajasthan on May 11 and 13, 1998 and declared itself as a nuclear weapon state. Motivation for India to weaponize was a mix of security prestige and domestic reasons. In this context security remained the major driver while prestige and domestic politics to an extent contributed in shaping and exercising India's Nuclear proliferation choices (Clary 2013: 19).

India's decision to conduct Pokharan II and formally declare itself as a Nuclear Weapon State witnessed a significant transition in India's nuclear policy. India now abandoned its earlier position in favour of using atomic energy only for peaceful purposes and opened a new door for the nuclear weapon option. It also officially stated that India would utilise nuclear power for energy production as well as for its national security.

### **Nuclear Doctrine of India**

According to Mahesh Shankar and T. V. Paul, "nuclear doctrines are ideally founded on a strong conception about the role, purposes and

limitations of nuclear weapons, how those weapons fit into the pursuit of a country's grand strategy, and a set of core beliefs and ideas about the operationalization of the weapons to reflect a sound balance of all these different facets" (2016: 1).

India's nuclear doctrine that started shaping after the nuclear test was also influenced by India's own principles and security challenges. Apart from Nehru's major influence on the nuclear weapons programme, the "nuclear policy was also influenced by India's international security condition as well as by domestic variables such as the vagaries of political change and the influence of bureaucratic elites" (Rajagopalan 2010: 95). India's nuclear doctrine was prepared by National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) in 1999. There were two major principles that are important to the India's nuclear policy. First, is India's policy of 'no-first-use' (NFU) which means that India would not use nuclear weapons first and will not use it against any non-nuclear weapon states and second is the 'minimum deterrence' were the major principle charted out in 1999 by the NSAB. The Indian nuclear doctrine was officially released in 2003 were major elements of this doctrine were same as the 1999 doctrine by adding some elements and the changes in the no-first use.

### **No-First Use Policy**

India has adopted a defensive policy of no-first-use which has also been debated widely and was altered in the review process in 2003. Keeping in mind India's foreign policy principles of peaceful coexistence, New Delhi had a defensive policy of NFU where India did not want to provoke its rival states to involve into conflict and hence maintain peace in the region (Khanijo 2016). India still sticks on to this policy and often reiterated their commitment towards this. This in a way has projected India as peaceful state and reinstated this globally.

The successive government have supported and adhered on to this policy. The critics points out that the NFU posture is likely to result in large/wide scale destruction in the first strike. Among the armed forces official there has been resentment on NFU policy of India. Scholars like Vipin Narang (2013: 150) are of the opinion that India's no-first-use policy is a myth because "there are several caveats that undermine the sacrosanctity of India's NFU pledge".

Given the changing security scenario and while Pakistan is adopting the first-use option then India's no-first-use is under question. In this

case New Delhi might be taking risk. It is also argued that this policy has hardly helped to bridge trust deficit with Pakistan (Joshi and O'Donnell 2018: 179). However, India's this stand has helped it to be considered as a responsible nuclear power with no intension of using it.

### **Credible Minimum Deterrence**

The other major policy debated aspect of the doctrine is on the "building and maintaining a credible minimum deterrent. Over the years, scholars while analysing India's nuclear posture have analysed over the credibility of nuclear weapons whether India is capable of defending itself during conflict or deter its rivals from attacking. The major principle of deterrence is state's capability to secure the second-strike capability that assesses the effectiveness of the arsenal, the survivability, reliability and accuracy of weapons and efficient system of command control (Basrur 2014). The notion of 'massive' retaliation was added against any nuclear attack on India (Rajagopalan 2010). Along with the dilution in the no-first use the Indian nuclear doctrine is characterised as 'credible nuclear deterrence'. The 2003 revived doctrine put 'credible' before 'minimum'. The major debate was whether the concept of 'minimum deterrence' is more relevant or 'credible deterrence' that depend on the force development (Joshi and O'Donnell 2018: 165). There is difference on this and some scholars do not agree with it. Vipin Narang is of the opinion that India's "credible minimum deterrence" is increasing a myth which is neither credible towards China nor minimal towards Pakistan (Narang 2013: 147). Scholars like Rajesh Rajagopalan (2008) has characterised it as 'assured retaliation' because in his opinion "the changes that have taken place in the doctrine, especially the dilution of the NFU and NSA pledges and the reference to massive retaliation all suggest that assured retaliation is a better characterised of India's nuclear strategy than 'credible minimum deterrence'" (Rajagopalan 2010: 102).

### **India-US Civil Nuclear Deal: India's Inclusion in the International Nuclear Order**

The US in the past had pressurised New Delhi to sign NPT and CTBT and opposed India's nuclear weapons tests by imposing economic sanctions on it. But in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when India could not be forcefully got under the non-proliferation regime despite the prolonged negotiations between Strobe Talbot and Jaswant Singh the US decided to

accommodate India in the international nuclear order (Talbot 2007). It was under the Bush administration, the US sought to have a global partnership with India in the light of the growing power of China. The US announced its willingness to cooperate with India on civilian nuclear technology that was denied in the past. Though the nuclear deal was a part of strengthening the Indo-US strategic partnership but it did in fact accommodate India in the global nuclear order.

Though India through this deal had to separate its civil and military nuclear facilities, there were positive aspects of this deal. As Vanaik maintains “It gave greater international legitimacy to India’s *de facto* nuclear status as well as enabling further enhancement of its nuclear arsenal since domestic uranium supplies could now be maximally used for military purposes, while the civilian side could now rely on its further enhancement by imports of both uranium and needed technologies and equipment, including foreign investments in setting up turnkey reactor projects” (Vanaik 2015: 16). The US was successful in getting the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to end its sanction on exports imposed on India being a non-signatory to NPT. This also facilitated India to have the export of uranium from other states (through NSG waiver). The nuclear deal provided an opportunity where it was in a way the international community recognised India’s nuclear weapons and also helped in the nuclear commerce with other states.

### **Nuclearization of India and Pakistan and its Implications for Regional Security and Stability**

The acquisition of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan in 1998 marked the radical shift in South Asian geo-politics. The nuclear tests by the two rivals alarmed the whole world as the fear of nuclear weapons being used during the time of conflict. After the nuclear tests both the states had adopted a nuclear posture of “minimum deterrence” which in the present times is highly contested. Scholars like Krepon (2015) believe that it created a dangerous situation in South Asia. Kashmir was depicted as a ‘nuclear flashpoint’ by the various scholars. In this context Carranza notes “Pakistan has a stronger realist rationale than India to keep nuclear weapons in order to deter an Indian conventional military attack in Kashmir” (Carranza 2016: 3). This has facilitated arms race in the region making the region a major flashpoint or domain for nuclear catastrophe.

Since 1998 India and Pakistan from then on have both increased their missile tests to outdo each other and counter them (Das 2015: 181-182). China has been helping Pakistan in its development of nuclear programme and missiles build up which in turn strengthened its position against India and counter its nuclear programme.

India's indigenous missile development capabilities are much stronger than that of Pakistan whereas the latter has been taking the support of external power like China where it derived its Shaheen and Ghaznavi missiles from China and Ghauri from North Korean Nodong missile (Vanaik 2015: 71). Pakistan is involved in producing tactical nuclear weapons and a short-range battlefield nuclear missile like Nasr (Carranza 2016: 3).

The major debate after the India and Pakistan's nuclear tests revolves around the creation of stability and security in the region. The debate on South Asia's nuclear security is complex because the optimists tend to over-emphasise the stabilizing effects of nuclear weapons and pessimists are too alarmists.

Kargil aggression (1999) was the first military clash between two nuclear armed powers since 1969 Sino-Soviet war. Kargil was a landmark event not because of its duration or casualties, but because it contained a very real risk of nuclear escalation (Lavoy2009).

In order to explain peace or stability in South Asia after the bomb scholars have used Glenn Snyder's "stability-instability" paradox. Paul Kapur is of the opinion that Snyder's "stability-instability" paradox does not work in the case of South Asia. While scholars like Cohen (2013) argue that nuclear South Asia is stable like the case of Cold War Europe, Mario Carranza (2016: 33) argues that "the stability-instability paradox did not work in 2001-02 border standoffs—when an all-out war between India and Pakistan appeared imminent and both sides threatened to use nuclear weapons without inhibitions, as if the nuclear taboo did not exist". On the other hand, scholars like Rajesh Basrur argue "that the "absence of nuclear deployment" during the post-test crises shows that minimum nuclear deterrence has been at work in South Asia" (Basrur 2014). In the opinion of Shankar and Paul, "nuclear doctrines and postures on both sides have increasingly adopted characteristics that are less likely to engender stability and more likely to provoke arms racing and generally destabilising dynamics" (Shankar and Paul 2016: 6). Recently, the post-Uri Indian surgical strikes against the terrorist launch pad in PoK and the 'pre-emptive' retaliation after Pulwama, raises the question on the recalibration of nuclear stability.

Nuclear weapon in South Asia seems irreversible reality. In view of Sino-Pakistan nexus India is compelled to join the cascade of nuclear race in the region. Consequently, the de-nuclearization of India and Pakistan is ruled out in the foreseeable future. Therefore, while nuclear disarmament should be a long-term goal, in the prevailing scenario the two countries need to pursue minimum deterrence policies to reduce the possibility of deterrence failure (Chakma 2015). India's priority should be towards security and safety aspects of nuclear weapons and arms control approaches. It is imperative for India to engage in multilateral diplomacy as well as utilize operational synergies to secure the fissile material stocks in the region.

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# Dhamma Beyond the Himalayas [Buddhist Heritage of Uzbekistan-1]

**Sunita Dwivedi\***

The mesmerizingly beautiful Buddhas and bodhisattvas, excavated from the monasteries of Old Termez, Dalverzintepe and Kuva [Ferghana], Buddhist figurine and medallion from Minguruk, Sattepa and Takhtakaracha Pass [near Samarkand] as well as several heads of devatas [gods] from the Bukharan cities of Varakhsha and Paikend are evidence of the once flourishing Buddhist cities of Uzbekistan. They point to the magnificent art that arose from the ateliers of the Amudarya, Surkhandarya, Zerafshan and Syrdarya valleys.

The rare images on display at the prestigious museums of Tashkent, Paikend, Termez and Ferghana, were once part of the embellishments of Buddhist chapels that were built and patronised by the rulers and wealthy merchant guilds who drew their riches from the flourishing Silk Road trade.

Apart from drawing our attention to the close ties shared between India and Uzbekistan, the Buddhist art points to the enormous reach of Buddha's Dhamma beyond the Himalayas and the Hindukush and the contribution of artistes, scholars and missionaries in establishing the Buddhist faith in the river valleys of Uzbekistan. It also draws our attention to the various foreign and local influences that moulded the art of ancient Uzbekistan to produce the marvels of *Haya Viharaat* Fayaztepa, the *Khadavaka Viharaat* Karatepa and the numerous Buddha colossi of Dalverzintepe and Kuva.

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\* Sunita Dwivedi is a Silk Road traveller and author having travelled along the Asian circuit of the Silk Road .She has written three historiographical travelogues viz. *Buddhist Heritage sites of India* [2005, reprint 2017], *In Quest of the Buddha- A Journey on the Silk Road* [2009] and *Buddha in Central Asia- a Travelogue* [2014], *Buddha in Gandhara* [2020].

The journey of Buddhism from India into Uzbekistan along the Silk Routes is however a fascinating story. We find a deep and immediate connection between Buddha's 'Enlightenment' in the remote city of Bodhgaya [India] with the Oxus region as the first Buddhist stupas were built in the neighbourhood of Termez as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC by the first Central Asian disciples of the Buddha.

Buddhist texts and travel records of Chinese pilgrims Xuanzang inform that the first disciples of the Buddha, Bactrian merchants Trapussa and Bhallika were travelling along the Uttarapath [the northern highroad of India] with several cartload of merchandise when they met the Buddha after his Enlightenment. They offered him honey and cakes and received his teachings, becoming the first disciples. This was the beginning of the formation of a band of lay disciples. The two merchants returned to Bactria with strands of hair and nail pairings of the Buddha and built a stupa over the relics in the 6<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> century BC which was the 'very first stupa of the Buddhist religion erected.' says Xuanzang.

The Kabul and Indus Valleys, which were in close communication with the Oxus Valley, too received the teachings of the Dhamma during Buddha's own life time. King Pukkusati (Puskarasarin), who was a contemporary of Buddha, ruled over Gandhara in the middle of the sixth century BC. King Pukkusati joined the *Sangha* and became an ardent follower of Buddhism. He took active part in popularising Buddhism in his kingdom. Likewise Rudrayana who occupied the throne of Roruka in Sovira (or the Lower Indus Valley) in the days of the Buddha also joined the Buddhist Sangha as a monk. The kingdom of Rudrayana, apart from Punjab, also included parts of Afghanistan and Kashmir.<sup>1</sup>

Buddhist missionaries too are learnt to have been active during the life time of the Buddha. King Bimbisara of Magadh had despatched embassies to the Indus and Kabul Valleys with gold plates inscribed with the three jewels [*of the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha*] and various tenets relating to the Buddha's teachings. In the northwest frontier regions of India and Afghanistan that comprised Gandhara, a large population of Persians, Greeks, Syrians and Romans living since the time of the Persian Achaemenids were also converting to Buddha's faith.

A period of 500 years beginning 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC to the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> century AD is thus considered crucial for the massive spread of Buddhism to the regions of Central Asia and China. The transmission took place

under the patronage of rulers from the period of Mauryan emperor Asoka [3<sup>rd</sup> century BC] to the period of Indo-Greek kings Demetrius and Menander [2<sup>nd</sup> century BC] and Kushan king Kanishka [1<sup>st</sup>/ 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD] when missionaries were actively propagating the religion. During the time of the Mauryan emperor Asoka [273-236 BCE] Buddhism was proclaimed the official religion of the Mauryan empire and after the Third Buddhist Council convoked by Asoka, missionaries were despatched to several Greek kingdoms to spread the faith.

Beside being a halting place for Indian traders and monks, the Oxus Valley served as a transmitting centre for Buddhist doctrines and ancient Indian scripts that played a major role in the diffusion of Buddhism to Sogdiana and other areas of Central Asia. We learn of Sogdian traders with their centre at Samarkand and as well as those living in the Sogdian colonies in different parts of Central Asia who also came in contact with Buddhism and Buddhist culture.

According to Indologist B.N. Puri, the Sogdian monks contributed towards the transmission Buddhism in China. An illustrious Sogdian monk who worked in south China in 3<sup>rd</sup> century was Kang Seng-hui.<sup>2</sup> Their names are distinguished by prefix *Kangas* the ancient name of Sogdiana was Kang-kui. Indologist Lokesh Chandra mentions the names of some illustrious Sogdian monks who translated Sanskrit sutras into Chinese: Kang Chu in AD 187; Kang Meng Hsiang worked at Loyang in AD 194-199; Kang Seng-kai alias Sanghavarman in AD 252; Kang Tao-hu translated a sutra in AD 396; Sogdian Kang Tao-hu is said to have travelled to China on foot during the Tang dynasty.

During the early centuries of our era, renowned Buddhist centres arose in the valley of the Oxus river that formed the southern frontiers of Uzbekistan and which was in continuous contact with India. It was this region [also known as Bactria] which provided not only the first disciples of the Buddha and the first stupas, but also first Buddhist Graeco-Bactrian kings, Demetrius and Menander in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. The association of Greeks with Buddhism in the two centuries preceding the Christian era is proved by Ceylonese chronicle, *Mahavamsa*.<sup>3</sup>

The *Mahavamsa or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, in fact, informs us of the flourishing states of Buddhism during the time of the Bactrian-Greeks. It gives us an idea of the extent of Buddhism practiced in Central Asia especially in the regions of Pallavabhoga [Parthia] and Alasanda [Alexandria or the Greek city of Alexander]. The *Chronicle* informs that when the Mahathupa of Anuradhapur in Srilanka was being

consecrated by King Duttagamini in 140 BCE, thousands of bhikshus or Buddhist monks came from foreign lands including Central Asia. Among these were monks from contiguous regions of Pallavabhoga [or the Pahalavas/Parthians] and from the region of Alasanda [Greeks from Alexandria] in large numbers. Of the many Alexandrias set up by Alexander of Macedonia, at least one lay in the valley of the Oxus at Kampyrtepe in Uzbekistan, and another in the valley of the Syrdarya, named Khojend or 'Alexandria Eschate' [the Farthest] on the modern Uzbek-Tajik border. In Afghanistan we learn of Alexandria Caucasus in the country of Paropamisadae at Begram near Kabul and another Alexandria Aria, west of Kabul at Herat.

*'The wise Mahadeva came from Pallavabhoga [Pahlavas from Parthia] with four hundred and sixty thousand bhikkus and from Alasanda [Alexandria] the city of the Yonas [Greeks] came Yonamahadhammarakkhita with thirty thousand bhikkus.'* [Mahavamsa XXIX.37 c.39 Trans. Wilhelm Geiger]

Thus a staggering number of Central Asian Buddhist monks, about five lakh, travelled to Srilanka in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE for the consecration ceremony of the *Mahastupa* or the great stupa of Anuradhapur. Among these about thirty thousand came from the city of Alasanda [Alexandria] alone.

About 250 BC an independent Greek kingdom had been founded by Diodotus in Bactria. The Greco-Bactrians who entered Gandhara in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, were believed to have already been familiar with Buddhism, owing to the missionary activities of Asoka about 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. After the Third Buddhist Council held at Patliputra, Asoka had despatched *thera* [Buddhist teacher] Maharakkhita to the Greek country and Majjhantika to Kashmir and Gandhara. In the *Yonarattham* or the Greek country Mahrakkhita preached the *Kalakarama Sutra*.<sup>4</sup> The Graeco-Bactrians or the Indo-Greeks had therefore no problem in adopting Buddhism as their religion which had no prejudice of race or class and was a strong creed.

History informs that after the decline of Mauryans, Greeks from Bactria conquered neighbouring Gandhara and Punjab between 185-180 BCE. And an independent Indo-Greek kingdom was formed. Demetrius [Devmitra] and Menander [Milind] were the famous Indo-Greek kings who had their capital cities at Pushkalavati [Charsadda near Peshawar in the Kabul Valley], Taxila [in the Indus Valley] and later Sagala [Sialkot in Punjab along the Chenab Valley]. Both Demetrius

and Menander were interested in Buddhism<sup>5</sup> and contributed to the expansion of Buddhism in Afghanistan, Bactria and neighbouring regions.<sup>6</sup>

After the Indo-Greeks, the transmission of Buddhism in Uzbekistan and all of Central Asia was stimulated by the formation of the Kushana empire<sup>7</sup> It is believed that the first stupas arose on the horizon of Termez in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE [during the Kushan period]. While Bactria was the original nucleus of the Kushana kingdom, the vast Kushana empire included the southern parts of Central Asia [including Afghanistan] and northern India as far as Bihar in the east and Sind and Baluchistan in the south-west. In the north and north-east it included Kashmir and extended upto Khotan.<sup>8</sup>

Kujula Kadphises [rAD15-65] has been regarded as the founder of the Kusana kingdom. He extended his empire from the frontiers of Persia to the Indus. Short epigraphs on his copper coins discovered in many places give us sufficient evidence that he had embraced Buddhism. The Kharosthi legends on the reverse of some coins describe: "*Kusanasa Yanasa Kujula Kaphasa sacha-dhramathidasa*", "(coin) of Kujula Kaphasa, chief or king of the Kusanas, steadfast in faith" and "*Kujula Kasasa Kusana Yav(u) gasa dharmathidasa*", "(coin) of Kujula-Kaasa, chief or king of the Kusanas, steadfast in faith".<sup>9</sup> Kaniska [r. 78 to AD 101], the successor of Kadphises II, was regarded as the greatest of the Kusana rulers and a staunch supporter of Buddhism. According to Buddhologist A.K. Warder Kaniska emulated Asoka in his support for Buddhism and also in his tolerance of other religions, for his coins display besides the Buddha [BODDO coin], the gods of Brahmanism, Zoroastrianism and the Greek religion (especially Zoroastrianism), which presumably flourished alongside Buddhism in the Iranian and Central Asian provinces of the Empire, as well as in Gandhara itself, where it had been established in the time of the Persian Empire. His reign inaugurated a period of exceptional prosperity for India, following a long period of invasions and wars.<sup>10</sup>

The Kushan Empire that continued up to the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD attained its highest power under the reign of Kanishka. Kanishka was inclined towards Buddhism and his patronage of the fourth Buddhist council is recorded in a Kharoshti document.<sup>11</sup>

The Kushan period is also notable for artistic activity. Ateliers came up along the Amudarya, Surkhandarya and the Sydarya, where stone carvers and stucco artists under the patronage of rulers and

merchants of the Silk Road, worked to produce small and big images of Buddha and Buddhist deities that were installed in shrines along the river valley of Uzbekistan. Many of the images commissioned, were of colossal Buddhas that were installed in high and double-storied chapels, as seen at Dalverzintepa. There were temples where images of the Buddha were installed; palace paintings which portrayed the bodhisattvas in struggle with the Mara, the demon; houses with idols engraved on the gates showing their religious preferences; shrines where the Indian goddess Sridevi was installed; temples where 'Fire Buddha' was worshipped; villages which were marked as *kafir* villages and where cities drew their names from the Sanskrit 'Vihara' meaning Buddhist temple and monastery.

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## Remembering Four Central Asian Scholars

**Prof. P.L. Dash\***

Professor B.B. Kumar was a gentleman par excellence. I got to know him as Editor of the DIALOGUE, when he was planning an issue on Central Asia and sought my help, which I assured him to do and ensured that the issue was a success. I had just one question: could I include Central Asian scholars or it should be only Indian scholars. His reply was clear and cogent. “Include, without them it would remain incomplete.” We proceeded and the volume was out in a couple of months. After that we had several interactions whenever I visited Delhi and Kumar Saheb was free. The meetings were in India International Centre and discussions were purely academic and on burning issues facing contemporary Central Asia. His inputs were incisive and piercing, touching upon core issues of democracy building in then newly independent Central Asian, countries which have already passed through the muddle of state building even after two decades of independence. He liked the specifics of turbulence facing each country – river water problems, ethnic issues, cultural and historical ties, foreign policy, Russia’s role in that region and plethora of other issues. When the frail, Khadi clad Kumar Saheb entered into my room I had never imagined he would be so well informed and aware of developments in Central Asia.

Years passed by and our second meeting was destined to be more intimate on the soils of Central Asia itself somewhere in the summer of 2013. Kumar Saheb had grown trimmer. He was on a delegation

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\* The author was Professor and Director of the Center for Central Eurasian Studies, University of Mumbai and ICCR India Chair in international relations at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Tashkent.

sponsored by the External Affairs Ministry and headed by Dr. K. Santhanam, former Director, IDSA. I suppose Kumar Saheb was the senior most member of the team, intellectually agile and inquisitive to know many things. The happiness on his face on seeing me at the Dustlik border (Uzbekistan) was clearly visible. I was then ICCR India Chair professor in International Relations at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Tashkent. The Ambassador, Mr. Gitesh Sarma, called me and said “Professor a delegation is coming from our country.” He passed on to me a list from across his table and asked whether I knew any of them. He confessed that he hardly knew any one of them. I replied “I know almost all of them personally.” Some were my colleagues, others were my students and still others my seniors. That’s how Ambassador Sarma deputed me to greet the delegation at the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border not very far away from village Khodjaev on the Uzbek side. Houses in the village were then being demolished to widen a Chinese sponsored highway, connecting Kyrgyz borders to Tashkent.

We spent that night in a hotel. Kumar Saheb, apparently too tired, retired to bed early. We met next morning at breakfast. My daughter, who was pursuing her Masters’ degree in Dentistry in the Tashkent Medical Academy, was with me as well as secretary of Indian Cultural Centre, Dildora. Kumar Saheb was too happy to see my daughter and blessed her. My colleague, Gulshan Ditle from JNU, was with us as were many others including Mr. Ramakant. The schedule of the day was at the Babur memorial in Andhijan. It was a huge complex and we had a structured program. There I met Kumar Saheb at the lunch table where we discussed at length various issues. Andhijan was the home town of Moghul emperor Babur and a beautiful memorial stands witness to it. Around sunset, it was time for us to leave for Fergana. Thus I accompanied the delegation from Dustlik border up to Tashkent from where we parted ways: They went ahead on their journey to Khiva and I stayed back in Tashkent because I was committed to teaching and did not wish to miss class and my students.

Professor Kumar’s insatiable inquisitiveness to delve deep into a subject was his hallmark approach to knowledge. The innumerable pieces he had penned as editor of DIALOGUE would go a long way to prove that. He practically steered the journal into influential stability and it would never look back although Kumar Saheb is no more with us. I remember to have a particular discussion on Madan Mohan Hardutta, the traveler scholar, who passed through the repression of

Stalin years where he was exiled and on being set free in the process of de-Stalinization under Khrushchev, finally settled down in Tashkent to teach Urdu and Hindi to numerous Uzbeks- Professor and Diplomats alike. I requested Kumar Saheb whether we could place an article on Hardutta written by the first Uzbek Ambassador to India, Professor Surat Mirkasymov. Kumar Saheb readily acquiesced to accommodate my request and we published the piece.

The last time I had the fortune of interacting with Kumar Saheb was on telephone. When he was Chairman, ICSSR. The discussion was lengthy and substantial on India's academic exchanges in the past with Central Asia, particularly during the Kushan period. He requested me for some archival material, unfortunately to which I was not privy. I referred him to a volume published by our Embassy in Tashkent on ancient Central Asia and directed him to contact Uzbek Embassy in Delhi to lay his hands on that volume. His demise December 8, 2019 is an irreparable loss to the community of scholars working on Central Asia. Kumar Saheb is no more, his memory lingers with us as if he is very much amidst us.

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I would fail in my duty if I do not remember the most recent loss to scholarship on Central Asia. Three more Professors, Hari Vasudevan of Kolkata University, who died of Covid-19 in 2020 and Professor Devendra Kaushik of JNU and Abdulkhai Muminov of UWED, Tashkent, who made their sterling contributions to Central Asian Studies. Their contributions to Russian and Central Asian studies over the past four decades had dominated the discourse about these personalities. They were tall figures in the field and left behind scores of students working in various parts of the world and continuing their legacy.

Hari was close friend to me and we spent many a day discussing Central Asia. He organized numerous conferences when he was Director of the Maulana Abul Kalan Azad Institute of Asian studies. Once, I remember, in the summer of 2010, I and Hari were together on a delegation to a conference held in different locales in the proximity of river Selenga near the Siberian city of Ulan-Ude. The organizer was Professor Bazarov of the Siberian branch of Russian Academy of Sciences. We are exploring the footprints of Buddhism in Siberia and visited all famous places connected with that great religion. There are

manuscripts written in Tibetan language and still stored in archives close to Ulan-Ude. While we were strolling in the dense Taiga woods, we were discussing how that wealth of knowledge from the archives would be used in future. Most of those are virgin documents preserved by the Russians, awaiting future researchers to lay their hands on them. In one Siberian monastery, we found that Buddhist priests were trained in a monastery in Bengaluru and working in a monastery in Siberia. Hari is no more, but his legacy continues.

Professor Devendra Kaushik was a sound scholar on Russian and Central Asian studies. His books on developments in Central Asia and on Indian Ocean along with numerous articles are his footprints on scholarship. A few minutes of discussion with him would often leave me flabbergasted to wonder how much this man knew. Evidenced by his discussions we could gauge his depth of knowledge to be immense and breadth of his vision always merged with infinity. His absence has created a distinct void in Central Asian Studies. He was always compassionate to his students and unhesitatingly helpful to the needy and the poor. I knew Professor Kaushik from my JNU days when I was attached to CREES as a CSIR Pool Officer. Kaushik Saheb's advice on different occasions were a memorabilia. He was Ph.D. examiner to many of my past students in subsequent years, who are now working successfully in different countries of the world.

A day before shifting to Tashkent I had visited Professor Kaushik at his residence in Gurugram on 17 December, 2011. He was as cordial as ever and we had a cup of tea together. He quipped: "finally, ICCR has chosen a scholar from the field to occupy India Chair." I thanked him for his compliments and after spending over an hour bade adieu to him, not knowing that would be my last meeting with him. All three Professors were my very dear academic friends whose memories live on. With a deep sorrow in heart, let me candidly admit that Central Asian studies in India has lost three bright jewels. RIP Professors.

Professor Abdulkhai Muminov's sudden demise of Covid-19 in Tashkent in August 2020, was a real shock to me. He was my Uzbek buddy, brother and colleague, heading the Law department at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Tashkent, where I was India Chair Professor in International Relations for two plus years. We were everyday lunch mate but my reminiscences go back to Namangan, Andhijan, Khojand and Kokand, which he showed me as a native in the summer of 2013. We traveled together along with Professor Murat

Bahadirov and spent four days in the valleys. We visited river confluence of Naryn and Karadarya, cattle market of Namangan, crossed the Naryn bridge several times, danced in the functions of his niece's wedding and visited many other places. When I did not see even a mosque, I asked him "where is Islamic fundamentalism?" He quipped: "it is in the psyche of critics." We went along. He was kindness and humility personified, scholarship hidden behind it, but at the time of need, scholarship took the uppermost. He had visited India twice to attend conferences- first time at the University of Kashmir in Srinagar and the second time in JNU, New Delhi. On both occasions I was not with him.

Our last, intimate academic meeting was in the Sortan Petrochemical complex near Qarshi Khanabad, Uzbekistan. Bahadirov, Muminov and I were on a lecture tour for workers of the factory for 3-4 days. I still distinctly remember how in a bright moonlit midnight we were returning in that desert cool road from Qarshi to Sortan after a program with his ex-students. The train journey was as memorable as the sojourn in Sortan because we enjoyed each other's company. Abdulkhai's demise has created a void in Uzbek legal academic circle and he is missed by the intellectual community as much in Uzbekistan as in India and by all those who knew him. RIP Abdulkhai Aka.

# Fake News on the Internet: Pattern, Spread and Solution

Biju. P. R.\* and Dr. Gayathri O.\*\*

## Introduction

Craig Silverman, the media editor of BuzzFeed has coined the term “fake news” in its present meaning. He used the term to refer a cluster of websites, which posted fabricated stories in mid-2016 to influence the decisions of its viewers. But the term gained momentum in a record time following the electoral victory of Donald Trump in the U.S election and Brexit campaign in the U.K in 2016. Collins Dictionary named it the Word of the Year for 2017. To put it simply, any information that misinform people can be said to be fake news.

In the beginning, commentators have claimed that it is news to misinform consumers of news. Many people prefer to see it as information pollution, whereas others guess it as an ambiguous plan of action to execute certain agenda by unidentifiable forces. A deep analysis gives the impression that fake news has a meaning beyond common sense understanding that it is black and white.

It is a fact that fake news is not a recent phenomenon. It existed since the ancient world and has been used by various actors. In modern times, fake news has been profoundly used by political actors and other entities to serve their interest. But one thing that makes fake news distinct and dangerous nothing like those in the past is its near total

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\* Biju. P. R., Assistant Professor and Head of Department, Department of Political Science, Government Brennen College, Thalassery, Kannur-670106 (Kerala). Email-bijugayu@gmail.com Moblie: 09847477116.

\*\* Gayathri .O., Assistant Professor and Head of Department, Department of Political Science, Government College Madappally, Vadakara, Calicut- 673102 (Kerala). Email-gayubijuspeak@gmail.com. Moblie:09847815163.

anonymity and the nature of medium used to exploit. As Internet is providing unregulated platform to publish any information, fake news has many takers. And it has acquired a pandemic nature nowadays just because of the quick publishing opportunities endowed with Internet.

Fake news in India has many takers. Common sense interpretation of fake news being reported and seen on social media platforms tends to give a distinct pattern. A clear pattern ties them together, which gives the impression that fake news being spread is not simply time pass and satire contents. It has a clear pattern. That said barring very few, majority cases conform to a pattern that originates from the socio-political structure and conflict zones unique to India. A list is given below, collected by a random selection, which are thirty-nine in number of fake stories are analysed to find out a pattern, if any; and locate reasons for its fast spread.

### **The Pattern**

This paper has surveyed the following list of fake news by a random selection. The links to the news are also shared in the endnotes. The news cited is also just Google touch away.

#### **1. Spreading communal discord**

- A. Protesters in Lucknow have chanted Pakistan Zindabad
- B. Rohingyas are eating the flesh of Hindus
- C. Ninety-five percent of rapists in India were Muslims
- D. Temple was discovered upon demolition of mosque in Karnataka
- E. Hindu kids were forced to learn Koranic verses in Karnataka School

#### **2. Some leaders are exaggerated as superheroes**

- A. World leaders around Modi
- B. Professionals and academics praising Modi
- C. Modi works for 18-20 hours daily
- D. Modi was the first PM to visit Kumbh at Prayagraj
- E. Rahul Gandhi, the third most trustworthy political leader in the world ranked by BBC

#### **3. Stalwarts of freedom movement and modern India was hyped**

- A. Nehru was a playboy

- B. Nehru battered by a mob after the Indo China war
- C. RSS Shakha attended by Nehru
- D. "I am Hindu merely by accident- Nehru

**4. Some contemporary political leaders as inefficient and corrupt**

- A. Rahul Gandhi saying a machine can convert potatoes into gold
- B. Video of a man pointing at grand buildings in Italy as owned by Rahul Gandhi
- C. "I will change the direction of sunrise if become Prime Minister"- Rahul Gandhi
- D. "I am a fool", admits Rahul Gandhi

**5. Harming reputation of individuals**

- A. Sonia Gandhi as fourth richest in the world
- B. The real "character" of Sonia Gandhi
- C. Did Arundhati Roy undermine Indian army?
- D. Indira Gandhi converted to Islam and Rajiv Gandhi was seen holding his hands as chanting some Islamic prayer at a funeral crowd of Indira Gandhi.

**6. Propagating extreme nationalism and national pride for electoral victories**

- A. Moroccan four-line road as India's Char Dham
- B. 3500 tonnes of gold reserve found in UP's Sonbhadra gold mine
- C. India didn't avail loan from World Bank from 2015-2018

**7. Some political parties as anti-Hindu and anti-nationals.**

- A. Rahul Gandhi signed as non-Hindu in Somnath temple register
- B. Pakistani flags waved at the celebration of Congress victory in Rajasthan elections
- C. Clipped video of Rahul Gandhi claiming Gandhiji's non-violence was inspired from Islam
- D. Congress leader offering support to the family of suicide attacker

### **8. Inciting violence**

- A. Child lifting fake news and mob lynching
- B. Muzaffarnagar riots of 2013

### **9. Fake polls and reports**

- A. BBC pre-poll survey predicting BJP's electoral win BBC lists Congress as the most corrupt party
- B. B. Modi is the second most corrupt PM- Fox News
- C. Fake news around UNESCO

### **10. Pseudoscience on social media**

- A. Vaccines cause health problems
- B. Ancient sages were modern scientists
- C. Internet invented in India
- D. Aeroplanes were mentioned in Ramayana
- E. Plastic surgery was done in ancient India

Some news is invented only to spread communal discord. There is news that portrays leaders and political parties as single solution to the entire problem. Stalwarts of freedom movement and modern India are belittled by others which make political and social icons in the past as exaggerated narratives with nothing substantive in them. Some news has to present contemporary political leaders as incompetent and dishonest, while damaging the reputation of individuals and political rivals are favourite to yet others. More disturbing among all these is the one that evokes nationalistic sentiments, which tries to mobilise people in line with India's ancient heritages. Some political parties as having no nationalist outlook tend to be prime content of a set of news. There is news that incites violence: gender, caste, religious and others. Fake polls and reports with hidden intentions are aplenty. Science claims aimed at constructing nationalistic pride in Indian heritage are also flooding on Internet. But these types of fake news don't end up in India given the current pace at which it is seen as growing.

The news types listed above draws a pattern that operates in the conflict zones of India. That said those who benefit from fake news are certainly the one who loves to perpetuate these zones of social divisions unique to India.

That said, the sociological anatomy of fake news draws many parallels with politics that operate on extremist ideas. Deployed primarily by unidentifiable actors to engage in extremist politics, fake news

operates in hate ideas. Strategising to grow its audience through politicising minorities, history, myth, and science, fake news is weaponisation of news spaces on the Internet. Fake news is analogous with divisions and social fissures unique to India. That also means fake news is caste news, science news, hate news, and sexist information in India. A catalogue of factors unique to fake news in India.

A review of fake news listed above gives the impression that some news perpetuates casteism and communalism while others spread hate against minorities and lower caste. A considerable portion of fake news caters to conservative politics. Others are making science claims in which ancient mastery over scientific inventions are articulated to a greedy audience.

Some actors hide behind majority of fake news. They cater to extremist politics while others feed on populist politics in which fake news is deployed to create an impression that ruling elites are anti-people and totally neglect people's interest where as the mass is real. Some people behind fake news are sexist who disseminate fake news content against people just because of the reason that they hate women. Some actors behind it are certainly one who spread hate against minorities. Then there is politically oriented fake news which exaggerates the achievements of ruling government while there is news that tries to malign the ruling parties in power.

The review of fake news found that it is not that simple as there are hidden intentions, actors, ideology, and a politics, and considering its quick spread in a variety of forms and medium, fake news is clearly an attempt to misinform a population with clear intentions. It is deployed as a weapon to misinform an audience in line with a bogus narrative and mobilize them against a perceived enemy, who still exist only in theory. There are elements of populism that give life to false news. Populism simply is the rhetoric that ordinary people are pure and real whose concerns are totally neglected by ruling elite, who are anti-poor and anti-people. Populism is also used as a communication strategy deployed not only by right wingers, but the left and other political actors all across the broad political spectrum to achieve mass support based on propaganda. Fake news though finds synergy with it, goes beyond it.

So it must be presumed that there are more to the fake news being spread on social media. It is a narrative, which has deep synergy with India's unique social structure. Fake news operate in the conflict zones

where divisions based on caste, religion, gender, and class are perpetuated. That said fake news and social divides in India finds close linkages. Fake news is a fiction that caters to emotion and personal beliefs. People love to see emotion more than facts. Fake news just does that. It provokes emotions, spreads fast, and evokes quick responses. Hence a convenient fiction is invented to the advantages of some actors who hide somewhere at the pretext of pro-people images.

Then there comes an important question, which is the actor who spreads all these fake news on Internet. There are people behind it, but often hiding under the cover of false images. Some appear in fake profiles, while others pretend to be good people. Subsequently there are actors whose only interest is to spread it for no reason and create dissensions in society. Yet there are some actors who weaponise social media with hidden intentions. That all serve to their interests.

### How is It Spread

It is also intriguing to know how fake news spreads at a high velocity. The false news surveyed gives impression that it is disseminated through social media, which is the most effective ways to spread fake news. More than being a platform to connect, it is providing immense opportunities for propagators of fake news. There technological designs favourable to those who deploy fake news to serve their interests. Best method is developing bots. Bots are used to spread fake news on social media. Bots are algorithm on social media that analyses the behaviour of people. There are bots on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and others. That said bots know what people love to see and not to see. If people love racist contents, bots anticipate it and serve news accordingly on news feeds of users. Bots give news accordingly based on people's interest to spot news. This is called filter bubble.

But they are not alone. Cookies are used to track who visit and why people visit particular websites. Cookies are then used to create personality profiles. It shows content creators that which fake news content that people are most likely interested in. But there are other things too that create a congenial ecology for selling fake news. The most important thing is trolls. There are people who love to sign up social media accounts only for the purpose of spreading fake news and fanning the flames of misinformation. But hate trolls have a distinct purpose. They either support a hate ideology or align with the idea that best method of crushing dissent is silencing the opponent. Trolls

therefore are bit more personal attacks. Hate trolls perpetuate hate against minorities. It is a god world, where bogus stories about a society based on scriptures are disseminated. And a review of fake news testifies that it caters to a god world, where Mandir, cow, Vedas, Manusmriti and ancient scriptures are venerated. Some hate news is anti-woman while others are racist. But trolls that serve to silence dissenting voices are the weird. Trolls aimed at silencing opponents are infact damaging democracy itself.

But the most important thing about fake news is how politicians use it. They love to push a good image to their electorate. Social media is the best means. Using social media analytical firms and AI based data mining methods, political class share messages that are favourable to them and buys a good and popular image to them. In the past, advertisements were used to sell products. But now social media is used to sell exaggerated political images to audience just like products are being sold in a market. It has almost become impossible for political class to exist, without sharing exaggerated content that self-market only their good images. Fake news is deployed to serve this purpose.

More disturbingly false news is deployed to give logic to a society that finds its root in feudal hierarchy. Fake news celebrates race, upper caste, and glorifies rebuilding of society based on hierarchical order. Lot of fiction is spread through fake news which finds huge audience.

One sorry thing about fake news is science claims. Science in the form of fake news is now disseminated. It got a growing audience. Unverified claims about inventions in ancient India are now bigger sell on Social Media. It incites mass emotions favourable to those behind the fake science claims.

Casteism is perpetuated. Caste news on social media disseminate in a lightning speed. Now people can simply boast of their caste, belittle others and use bogus data to legitimize casteism. Claims about scientific foundation of four fold classification of ancient Indian society called Varna system is abundantly supplied by fake news.

### **What is the Solution**

From using fact-checking tools available online, finding the source, locating how many people viewed a particular story to check grammar and spelling, and developing a critical mindset; plenty of things become means in fighting down fake news.

A country with superstition, and deep-rooted value system along with deep fissures in the social structures where social divides based on caste, religion, gender, class, and literacy perpetuated by hate, fake news is escalating the divisions. Dealing with it means a lot of things.

Fighting it doesn't mean you have to innovate on technology to meet the challenge. Rather it goes beyond the filtering mechanism or automation of AI-based content censorship to the sociology of social structure, where fake news operates in the conflict zones of society. Plenty of actors are competing for your attention. Political actors, strangers, corporates, charities, data vendors and news platforms; all spawn a constant stream of eye-catching photos, text and audio-video materials and articles. No matter wherever you might go looking for information— Instagram, Google, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, ShareChat, attention merchants persuade you to behave the way they want you. Attention is like oil. Those who grab data about you, also control you. There is a hidden attention economy that grabs your curiosity for serving their interest.

But in the race to catch your attention, not all the players feel like they have to tell the facts. You cannot always depend on social media platforms as filtering of the falsehood is not a serious commitment of social media companies. Then how to spot and overcome this is an important question. It poses a serious challenge not only to those responsible for preventing it but ordinary social media users like you and me.

In the era of fake news, disinformation, misinformation, bullshit, propaganda, deep-fakes clickbait, hoaxes, and satire; being able to identify quality information has become an essential part of being good citizenship.

Then there comes the problem. Why do social media companies are silent about fake news. Of course they have responded to the problem in a positive light. But there are more things required to be done to prevent fake news. There are so many loopholes in the design structure on social media.

In India eight social media platforms are prominent in figuring out false information. Facebook, Twitter, ShareChat, Instagram, TiTok, YouTube, Google and WhatsApp, are prominent, each of which is unique platforms.

One thing common to all of them is that the design for information dissemination in these platforms is also helping those who want to

spread fraudulent news. That said Facebook has lots of fake profiles which is used to act as a medium for spreading false information. WhatsApp is a hub of fake news. ShareChat is leveraged by hate speakers in regional languages. Algorithms on these platforms are letting people in such way people love to see only what they want to see. If one is interested in seeing lots of information that exaggerates achievement of ruling dispensation, algorithms give them the same. Casteists, sexist, hate speakers and conservatives selectively share news that interests their audience.

Moreover, to filter fake content, social media companies have to invest more on automation of AI based fact checking. As of now, majority of these platforms are located in foreign countries, their free speech laws come in conflict with those prevailing in India.

What is the way out? Lot of things can be done to prevent it. From using fact checking tools available online, finding the source, locating how many people viewed a particular story to checking grammar and spelling, and developing a critical mindset; a plenty of things become critical factors in fighting down fake news.

First of all, common sense is what makes people empowered enough to deal with it. One can identify fake news by applying one's commonsense. Syntax, grammar and spelling are important index of fake news. Just consider when you next time happen to see that is unusually sensitive and generating sentiments.

Beware of scam artists. Don't get lured by news pieces with enticing headlines. When you happen to see news which purportedly evokes so much curiosity, just conduct a fact check. Verifying the domain is very important. Do a quick verification scan, if the news information spread on WhatsApp or Twitter is like wildfire. If it is trending and lots of people share and forward it on their timelines and news feeds, it will definitely be picked up by news agencies and media houses. WhatsApp is the hub of fake news. So be cautious before reading or forwarding any news on WhatsApp.

Then use fact checking tools that find fake news. If you use Chrome, try installing PolitEcho. Chrome plugin, This Is Fake, created by Slate will mark fake news stories in Facebook news feed. Fake News Alert, PolitiFact, Factcheck.org, or Snopes, BOOM, SM Hoax Slayer, altnews.in, check4spam.com, Factly, India Today Fact Check, Quint Webqoof, and News Mobile Fact Checker are other useful fact check tools.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper was to find out the pattern, if any, in fake news, how is it spread, and draft a solution to prevent its wide dissemination by reviewing the methods used by the forces behind it. This paper by the review of links found that despite the flood tide of fake news in circulation, a clear pattern ties them together, which gives the impression that fake news being spread is not simply time pass and satire contents. Some fake stories exacerbate religious and caste tensions. Others grow on patriarchy and social censure against sexual minorities, while others have unique symmetry with the rise of extremist politics. Many fake news stories appear to support India's ruling establishments, while others support elements across the broad political spectrum from left to right. It has a clear pattern. Barring few, majority cases conform to a pattern that originates from the socio-political structure and conflict zones unique to India.

Above all, consider that fake news is very much subjective. It differs from people to people. No AI technology can understand subjective thing like fake news as effectively as human brain can. What is fake is not so to the other person. No technology as of now is so competent enough to measure hate and untruth as human brain can. So the best solution to fake news is: YOU!

# History of Mass Media as “Attention Merchants”: How Media Shaped Attention Economy

**Nitesh Tripathi\***

## **Introduction**

Mass Media offers countless choices as there are endless number of television channels, variety of programs, films, shows, websites, and apps to keep ourselves occupied. Media content is being produced and proliferating at such a pace that it’s almost impossible to keep a track. Be it- which video/image/meme/GIF to watch, share or post, whom to talk or chat with, which film/serial/show/song to view. In pre-industrialization era, news or information was just limited to libraries. Only the traditional media or folk were available as forms of entertainment. And news came only through official sources. With rapid industrialization and innovation in technology, mass production became possible. And thus mass circulation of newspapers and later mass production of radio television and started. Earlier every media was available on their respective platform- serials and shows on television, news in newspaper, songs on radio and CD players, films in theaters etc. But as new millennium set in, the line which differentiated them got blurred and converged all of them on a single platform i.e. the Internet. With advent of subscription based streaming platforms on Internet, it has become possible to find all the content- both old and new at one place. Media technologies like smartphone has made “anytime anywhere” consumption of media possible. While before

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\* Nitesh Tripathi is a Research Scholar (JRF) Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, Banaras Hindu University (Varanasi).  
Mobile No- 8109941679. Email: tripathinitesh23@gmail.com

arrival of Internet, there was constraint of synchronicity but now people can watch what they want and at whatever time they wish to. The vast quantity of content can be understood from the fact that there are 500 million tweets in a day and 100 million hours are uploaded every minute on YouTube. The amount of new information produced every year is around 2 billion exabytes. On the other hand, we have limited attention and time (24 Hours a Day) and thus it becomes challenging for content creators to attract our attention. So they use every trick and technique, be it fair or unfair to capture attention and most of the times without our consent.

Though critics call it “Information Age” and hail “Consumer as the King”, but in reality, the consumers are paying a heavy price in form of time, attention, privacy and off course money. 45% of people in the world spend an average time of 153 minutes per day on Social Media, 60% say that they are constantly connected (Online) and an average person would have watched 78,000 hours in front of television in their lifetime (According to OnePoll). So to keep up, people multi-task their activities and engage in concurrent media use (also known as media meshing). And that is why they often get overwhelmed with the extent and excess of media. James Franco, an actor once said “It’s what the movie studios want, it’s what professional writers want, it’s what newspapers want, it’s what everyone wants: Attention. Attention is power.” Our brain receives an estimated 11 million bits of information from all our senses. So our brain tunes out (ignores) some stimuli and instead focuses on a particular task or object. This ability to focus is called attention. But there has been so much bombardment of content that people are suffering from “Information Overload”. In 1971, Herbert Simon had said that in Information Age, wealth of information means poverty or scarcity of attention and a need to efficiently allocate it. Thus the challenge in today’s world is to not just find the right information or content but also find time to understand and process it.

### **Definition and Origin of Attention Economy**

Psychologist William James defines attention as “taking possession by the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought. It implies withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others”. While Samuelson and Nordhaus, describe Economics as “the study of the allocation by individuals and societies of scarce resources”. As we

all know in today's Information Age, attention is somewhat a scarce resource as we can only focus on one task at a time if we want to excel in that task. Whenever we multitask, it decreases our output and increases our chances of making mistakes. There are limited hours in a day and we can process only a certain amount of information at a time. Too much of information would confuse us and we would be unable to process it. Thus if we put together the concepts of attention and economy, we come up with the study of the "Attention Economy" where attention is treated like a commodity and its allocation becomes basis for conducting business and marketing. And those who attract and sell attention are called "Attention Merchants". According to Tim Wu they are basically industries or companies who harvest attention by capturing and reselling that attention to advertisers.

The concept of Attention based Economy was first given by Herbert Simon, who proposed that in Post-Industrial economy, attention is necessary to process the knowledge and information of the world. Using analogy of demand and supply, he argued that in Information Age there is abundance of information and countries are moving towards Knowledge-based Economies, but at the same time it is creating a poverty and scarcity of attention. As far as the "origin" of Attention Economy is concerned, it began with the advent of advertising. Claude C. Hopkins was the person who revolutionized the business of harvesting attention on a large scale and selling it to advertisers. He was an expert in attracting attention so as to create demand for new products. He is credited with pioneering the direct mail advertising (which is known as spam in present times) for Dr. Shoop which had a reach of millions. He also pioneered the idea of sending free sample along with the mail in order to sell Douglas Smith's Liquozone which was nothing but merely snake-oil (snake-oil is a substance with no real medicinal value sold as remedy of all diseases). The advertising reached a new level when posters started cropping up on streets and crowded markets across the world. In coming years with advent of Mass Media such as newspapers and radio, advertising became its "life and blood" i.e. became important for its survival. Also media became platform for company's advertisements as we will see in following sections.

### **Print Media**

The success of advertisements in reaching masses and boosting sales, made industries notice its potential of capturing attention. Newspaper

organizations (at that time only print media existed) of New York were the first to put advertisements in their newspapers. The ads ensured that the newspapers remained profitable (even though they were providing news at price lesser than production cost). Sooner more and more companies started giving ads to them. Thus media and the industries complemented each other and developed a symbiotic relationship which got stronger as time passed by.

Penny Press- Benjamin Day who began New York Sun is known as the first “Attention Merchant” in the history of Attention economy and is also considered as the pioneer of Penny Press. Unlike his rivals who were selling newspaper for 6 cents, he wanted to sell his newspaper for a penny i.e. at a price under which everyday items like soap, grocery etc. could be afforded. He convinced advertisers to put ads in his paper and thus came up with a business model under which he was reselling the attention of his readers for marketing and advertising purposes. To further reduce cost he published in tabloid format instead of broadsheet. His newspaper had a larger audience than other newspapers due to his eye catching headlines and stories. Since Day was not a journalist and just a businessman, he barely cared about ethics. He only wanted to sell as many newspapers as possible and so he focused on crime news and insisted writers to write news in a sensational, juicy and dramatic manner. He didn’t refrain from even lying. One of the first instances of “Fake News” (way before 1938 War of the Worlds broadcast) was when New York Sun published a story on “the bat people living on the moon”.

Time Magazine focused on publishing major public figures including politicians, businessmen and celebrities from arts, entertainment and sports on their cover every week and announced a “Man of the Year” in the autumn. On the hand, People’s magazine made its name by publishing celebrity interviews. Richard Stolley who was its Editor came up with few rules such as “the face on cover should be recognized by 80% of the people”. The other rule was “Young is better than old. Pretty is better than ugly. Rich is better than poor. TV is better than music. Music is better than movies. Movies are better than sports. And anything is better than politics.” In a way the “Celebrification” of all the media platforms and rise of celebrity culture and can be attributed to People’s Magazine. It focused on information on celebrities as such stories captured attention of lots of readers. In this regard, Karen Armstrong, a historian says that people like watching

celebrities as it as an “essential craving” of all people to be connected with the “extraordinary”. The magazine encouraged self-revelation by the celebrities and thus a “new confessional culture” came in existence. This confession format of interview was quite sensational and attention seeking and later adopted by television channels. Around the same time the celebrities took up brand endorsements and thus began the business model where they started reselling the audience that they could attract, to the advertisers.

### **Television**

In the beginning of Television, TV programs mainly relied on “eyeballs” of viewers. These programs during commercial breaks showed advertisements for which the advertisers gave them money. This was the major business model for their earnings apart from subscription fee that they took as a charge from viewers. More viewers for the program meant more money for the producers. Thus the programmers developed various attention seeking formats so that the viewers would “Stay Tuned”. In 1986, The Oprah Winfrey Show debuted and it relied on emotional and confessional style which became its USP (Unique Selling Proposition). This was the same style that People Magazine used in its interviews. Since big and small revelations were made on her show by celebrities, it garnered a lot of viewers. (Satyamev Jayate and Sacch ka Saamna are few examples from present in Indian context) Most of the Chat shows that came up around this time relied mainly on Celebrity Interviews with a mix of Game Show and Stand Up Comedy. Donald Horton and Richard Wohl conducted a study on Chat Shows and concluded that television’s representation of celebrities was aimed at creating an illusion of intimacy so as to make viewers feel that they were developing a relationship with them. Techniques on Chat shows such as: small talk, use of first name, informal conversational tone and close-ups made viewers feel that they are part of the show. This they called as “para-social interaction” i.e. “intimacy at a distance.”

Soap Operas also use tear jerker format for the same reasons. Some other shows depended on profanity and dramatic on-show confrontations between guests. This was first started by The Jerry Springer Show in 1991. Even today this technique is used by news channel anchors who indulge in High-Decibel altercation (Arnab Goswami, Rubika Liyaquat, Anjana Om Kashyap) with panel members and reality shows (Like Big Boss) for sake of TRP (Television Rating Point).

Mary Bunim and Jonathan Murray were asked by MTV to make scripted soap opera but later due to budget constraint began working on unscripted soap opera. This format of filming ordinary people competing under constant surveillance had combination of both soap opera (as they has story line and plot but at the same time spontaneous) and game show. This format later came to be known as “reality television”. It was based on the fact that, very act of observation influences the behavior of a person which is known as Hawthorne Effect. The show became a major hit as just like a serial it had dose of drama, interpersonal relationships and conflicts. Also like a sports match, it had rules, uncertain outcome and in the end there was a winner and a loser. While previously people were watching celebrities on screen, the reality television inverted the process of making a celebrity. Here celebrities were made by collective attention of people which somewhat also falls under “panopticism”. Just like industrial revolution gave every person a hope to be rich, same way these shows gave every person who is talented a chance or hope to be famous. By end of 2000, reality shows began ruling the prime time of every TV channel (the advantage being that they are inexpensive to produce in comparison to soap operas).

### **Gaming**

In the 1960s Ralph Baer had come up with the idea of playing video games by connecting video console to electronic computers. A Californian company, Atari built a cabinet with a computer inside where one could play the game inside like a pinball machine for a quarter of dollar (probably taking inspiration from Casinos). In 1977, Tomohiro Nishikado made video named “Space Invaders” which was a worldwide success. With more interactive games launched in coming years, gaming became a top grossing industry and became a major competitor to the film industry. Video Games made the computers (which were earlier meant for just business purpose) an indispensable part of entertainment business. Though most of the earlier games were hard, yet youth and kids were attracted and engrossed in it. This even made the psychologists worried who compared games with drug addiction. These games were popular because just like real game of tennis or football, the fast actions of the game constantly engaged the visual cortex, which reacted automatically to the movement without any need for intentional focus. Also unlike games in reality, video games were not constrained by the

laws of physics. Thus the challenges in the games were calibrated in such a manner that they looked appealing and at the same time tough as well, so that the players keep coming back to spend their money on playing these games. Cognitive Scientist Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi said that the games induced a “flow state”, in which gamers felt “strong, alert, in effortless control, unselfconscious, and at the peak of their abilities.”

### **Internet**

Rise and rapid monetization of Internet corporations such as Google, Facebook, Amazon etc. along with the massification of personal computers and smartphones; increase in Internet penetration and access; and rise in average time spent online has made Attention Economy the “New Economy” which is integrating other economies as well. And it is moving towards Big Data (i.e. meta-information or information about information. Content is simultaneously generated, shared and consumed by the users themselves and thus they play an active role in shaping the web content. But Goldhaber feels that the vast volume of information on Internet is turning attention into an “intrinsically scarce” and “valuable commodity”. Internet has become a platform for exchange of attention as it has capacity to generate and distribute information in audiovisual form (combination of texts, images, sounds, videos). Also it provides efficient mechanisms to measure the attention that it captures and hence able to maximize its profits through advertising.

There is a saying in advertising “if you are not paying for the product, you are the product”. Almost the whole Internet is based on this statement. The attention and data of online users are sold by digital platforms to third parties who use it to design their product and improve marketing strategy. Since the companies pay more when more users remain on the website, they design their websites in such a manner that it keeps the users hooked for long. Functions such as: Refresh to get New Feeds, Posting Stories, Uploading pictures and videos, Like and Comment, Suggestions and Recommendations, Customizing Profile, Updating Status, Chatting, Video Calling, Streak, Updates, Scrolling, Poking are different ways in which they keep people “Online”.

**Check-in-** In early years of Internet, Stephen Lukasik developed “check-in” technology which enabled a person to check mail. This attention consuming habit later became a major part of most of the Social Media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Cognitive scientist

Tom Stafford believes that the check-in impulse is based on “operant conditioning” given by scientist B. F. Skinner. Based on an experiment where Skinner conditioned a pigeon to peck the button so as to be fed, he proposed that behavior is a learning process whereby some actions are reinforced by positive consequences (rewards) and some actions are discouraged by negative consequences (punishments). But unlike Skinner, Stafford believes that the most effective way to maintain a behavior was not through a consistent and predictable reward but rather through “variable reinforcement” i.e. rewards that vary in their frequency or magnitude. This is the same reason why people come back to gamble or do fishing. The addiction to gambling is due to fact that the reward is unpredictable, both in frequency and magnitude. Same way checking email became a habit as most of the time when people checked, there was no mail, but still they kept checking in hope that at least once in a while they will receive a mail.

**AOL-** One of the earliest online computer network AOL (America Online) had “Electronic Communities” where people could chat and email. It later came up with “Chat Rooms” where youth thronged due to possibility of sexual titillation, flirting with random strangers and sex chatting. Apart from this it gave them the excitement and transgression that they were craving for. When online check-in became daily/hourly ritual, AOL starting “harvesting” attention of users by using “Walled Garden” strategy under which the advertisers paid AOL for online ads. Some organizations started sponsoring news on AOL (few of them were in fact advertorials). To increase profits, AOL starting inserting ads in emails and even sold its user’s email address to companies for direct mailing. The strategy of sending mass unsolicited mails (spam) was first done in 1978 by Gary Thuerk, a few decades before AOL came into existence.

**Google-** Google devised its own way to generate revenue by selling the attention of users to advertisers but without being too pushy. It showed advertisements only when the user was ready to or about to buy something and is searching Google for the same reason. It created auctions for text-only advertisements that ran alongside the search results when a specific search term was entered. Later each ad was assigned a “quality score” based on how often it was actually clicked. Thus, with the help of “cookies” it was able to run ads that were not only relevant, but also which people had actually liked.

**Blogging-** User Generated Content became trendy with onset of blogs. Initially known as “weblog”, it was a new form of expression, discussion and confession where people (or bloggers) wrote in conversational tone. Since Social Media had not arrived, there was a lack of platform where users could vent their frustrations, report problems, express feelings etc. Soon these “bloggers” gained followers, which later developed into small communities (based on interest, geography and subject). It also gave rise to “amateur” or “citizen” journalism in coming years and popularized the idea of “sharing” as a means of drawing attention. Some bloggers (of fashion and entertainment) also got sponsors and thus they started promoting brands and products. Youtube (launched in 2005) was a user generated video sharing website which became a platform for amateur as well as professional musicians, dancers, comedian and in fact anyone who wanted to show off their talent to the world. It gave rise to a model where every user was both the speaker and the audience (Within a year there were 100 million daily video views). Thus in 2006, Time magazine named “You” as its Person of the Year as it felt that people are now in control of the Information age. While Print and Electronic media propelled a model where people paid attention to celebrities, in New Media i.e. Internet, the people started paying attention to each other.

**Facebook-** Around this time, a social networking site- Facebook came up (in 2004) that focused mainly on conversations and user generated content. Not just this, it brought people to Facebook due to various other reasons like- people could also stalk other people’s profiles, validating the person’s existence by sending or accepting “Friend Request”, updating own profile and uploading pictures. It came up with the idea of creating pages for companies and added the “Like” button which revolutionized Social Media websites and advertising sector. Now people were able to announce happy/sad news, new relationships etc. and even “Like” other’s posts as well. Thus Facebook grew in size due to the Network Effect (a phenomenon where a service gains additional value as more people use it) as more and more people of all age groups joined it. Apart from this, Big Data on “Like” button also helped Facebook in knowing where its users went online and what their interests were. Accordingly it placed ads in feeds through “Nano-targeting”. One thing that Facebook was able to convince advertisers was that it was creating brand awareness and measuring brand loyalty (and not influencing people to buy products).

**Twitter-** Internet made idea of “micro” and “nano” famous become trendy for those who aspired to or couldn’t become famous. And Twitter was one of the platforms that served this purpose. It gave a promise of fame for everyone with only requirement being witty, weird or expressive. Twitter came in existence when full form blogging was waning and so it limited its “tweet” (or blog) to just 140 characters. On Twitter, people could follow (and also comment and retweet) their favorite politicians, celebrities and idols and receive their tweets automatically unlike blog of old times where one had to visit the blog in order to read what the blogger wrote. Also users were able to post funny videos and images, interesting links, important news and announcements. This model of celebrities bringing fan/followers and driving the traffic and option of “hashtag” (or Trending) made Twitter a go to place for people who wanted to know what their idols are up to or what new is happening in the world. In earlier times, attempt to measure popularity of a celebrity was done by James Ulmer who proposed Ulmer Scale. It divided actors in A-list, B-list, C-list and D-list on the basis of their bankability and value or audience that they attracted to the film by starring in it. But it was limited to just actors. Twitter measured popularity of every celebrity and even personalities; be it from politics, science, arts or sports. Most followed celebrities on Twitter have as many as 113 million followers (USA Ex-President Barack Obama) and 110 million followers (singer Justin Bieber).

**Instagram-** One of the most “attention capturing” platform on Internet is Instagram (later acquired by Facebook) which was launched in 2010. Its first major achievement was that it enhanced the smartphone camera with variety of filters that could be applied on photos clicked by it. While Twitter was text centric, Instagram created a niche by being photo centric social networking site. Its brilliant innovation of linking smartphone camera with Internet made it a useful application for youth who moved to Instagram when their parents and elders thronged on Facebook. Some used it to show off their photography skills while others used it to show their lifestyle (i.e. what they ate, where they travelled etc.). Its second and even more fantastic innovation was “Selfie” which became a craze among smartphone users to such an extent that in 2013, selfie was named “Word of the Year” by Oxford Dictionary. With Instagram people were able to portray a visually enhanced and glorified version of their life just like celebrities. The “Like” function gave them validation about how they looked but it got

worse when people starting comparing the looks of a person with the numbers of likes their photos garnered. Users created multiple accounts to show their multiple versioned life- the “real” one (Rinstagram) i.e. the polished or glamorous version with more followers and the “fake” one (Finstagram) i.e. unfiltered, real and candid images for close friends. By 2012, it had amassed 30 million users. Instagram also roped in celebrities like Kylie Jenner and Kim Kardashian who brought more traffic on the app due to their wide appeal among youth. Companies realized that celebrities with millions of followers would give them better reach than any traditional ad campaign. So they started approaching these Instagram celebrities with product placements and brand endorsements. Soon the trend of “Breaking the Internet” began when celebrities like Kim Kardashian started posting sensual or edgy pictures on their account to garner maximum likes.

**BuzzFeed-** In 2010, BuzzFeed was gaining huge popularity. It was a news website that pioneered the techniques of “virality” and headline optimization which we today know as “clickbait”. Headlines like- “26 pictures that perfectly capture how insanely cold it is across the US”, “If you were stabbed by a pencil and still have a mark you are not alone”, “21 things that almost all white people are guilty of saying”, “11 cake decorators who should be fired and 11 who deserve a promotion”, “She thought she was in bed with her boyfriend until she saw his face”, made the viewers feel the urge to click and read the irresistible story. The art of making something “viral” which was mastered by Jonah Peretti was used by BuzzFeed and many other websites like Reddit who started putting up images like “Grumpy Cat” and videos like “Gangnam Style” which caught attention of millions. Later “Grumpy Cat” would become one of the earliest memes and Gangnam Style would go on to earn 3.5 billion views on Youtube. Their use of GIFs to present complex issues in funny way was criticized by many journalists who felt that the website is bringing the standards of journalism to an all time low. Sensational headlines, provocative images, gossipy, superficial and click-driven news were few of the elements employed by BuzzFeed that made viewers not just click the news but also share it with others. Ultimately, its methods were copied by other websites like The Huffington Post and also print media organizations that wanted to stay in business and thus began the era of “clickbait” journalism. By 2015, BuzzFeed has more than 200 million

unique viewers and most of its traffic came from Social Media websites like Facebook.

**Netflix-** Netflix initially began as a company which mailed DVD. Later it began streaming but it was known for buying Hollywood leftovers (i.e. buying rights of Old films already released, films that were never released or were rejected for release). In 2013, it released all the 13 episodes of House of Cards at once which became an instant hit. This gave rise to phenomenon of “Binge-Watching” i.e. watching multiple episodes or even seasons of web or TV series in one/multiple sitting or rapid succession. To earn profits, Netflix did not show ads but put up subscription. Netflix created a niche for itself by projecting itself as an immersive and commercial free television and made bingeing mainstream. Most of the early shows on television were episodic i.e. the viewer could catch up with the show/serial even if he starts watching from the middle. In this regard, the greatest attention capturing innovation on web (in fact inspired by web) was “hyper linking” of serials. In “hyperserials”, the episodes were interlinked and each episode had its own consequence which made it impossible for a viewer to understand the serial until he didn’t start from the beginning. Thus each and every episode had to be watched till the end. “Breaking Bad” by Vince Gilligan pioneered this technique of “Hyperserial” which was also adopted by Netflix.

### **Smartphone**

Smartphone is one of the most addictive devices among all media technologies as it is portable, highly interactive and appealing. It’s a multi-purpose device on which we can do lots of things like social networking, view video, exchange instant messages, view graphics and photos, listen to music, watch TV serials, play games, search things and catch up on the news. The craze of smartphone can be anticipated from the fact that on a population of 7 billion people in the world, there are more than 5 billion mobile users and in India, there are 400 million Smartphone users. As far as history of Smartphone is concerned, it started out as an improvement to pager on which people could read mails on the go. Mihalis Lazaridis and Doug Fregin who had designed this, made a new version which had bigger screen, a keyboard and capacity to retrieve mails (push technology). This version was named Blackberry. As it could be used for texting, voice calling, checking mails, web browsing and faxing, the phone became a huge success all

over the world. On the way to home or office, the phone gave convenience of catching upon news or checking work mails. But if we look on the flip side, the time of travelling in which people were free from media exposure was captured by phone. Later Apple entered the smartphone market with iPhone and Google came up with Android. The monopoly of Blackerry was thus challenged. Later Apple took over Blackberry and became the king of Smartphone market. By 2011, Apple had amassed around 500 million users. Meanwhile more and more competitors like Samsung, Nokia, HTC etc. entered the market and captured the share of smartphone enthusiasts by bringing latest technologies and applications at low cost. Also gaming apps like Angry Birds, Subway Surfer, Candy Crush etc. came up for passing time on screens. They were easy to play but at the same time very addicting due their appealing design. The Smartphone achieved the distinction of converging all the media platforms including the Internet at one place. But it also took a heavy toll on attention as well as attention span of users.

### **Conclusion**

The present study deals with the economic aspect of Mass Media and how it sustains and runs on human attention. Apart from this, the history of “Attention Merchants” and the attention capturing techniques used by them were also discussed. In 1960s, Marshall McLuhan had said that Media is the extension of man, but media technology of present time is not just an extension but instead turning into a body part (Wearable Technology is an example). Technologies like Virtual Reality and Smartphone are getting more immersive and habits like check-in, clicking, scrolling infinitely are changing the brain for worse.

Mass Media ushered in the Information Age and made it possible to get information or news with just a click. But at the same time, too much content is decreasing the value of information. Also Mass Media is harvesting the data and attention of users and then selling it to advertisers to make profits. Whenever we say “harvesting” attention, it means that we are not the owner of our own attention and it’s correct, because they know psychological techniques to catch our attention. The power of “Attention Economy” can be understood from the fact that Big Six companies of Silicon Valley- Apple, Alphabet (Google), Facebook, Amazon, Netflix and Microsoft are the among the biggest companies of the world. The Attention Economy is run by advertisements

which are nothing but black hole sucking our attention and time. These companies have the advantage of knowing our vulnerabilities and weaknesses and thus they are able to shape/mould people and public opinion and set agenda.

### **Suggestions**

When information is abundant, the brain is unable to process all of it. Philosopher Harry Frankfurt had said that “What has no boundaries has no shape”. When there are constraints we are able to achieve our goals. For example- In a race, there are rules and there is race track and the person who is able to perform under these restrictions wins the game. Same way under constraints and limitation people excel and produce results. Rousseau believed that “To be driven by our appetites alone is slavery, while to obey a law that we have imposed on ourselves is freedom”. If we abide by constraints and rules we are able to achieve our goals. Just like Odysseus instructed his sailors to tie him to the mast and to plug their ears with wax in order to survive, same way we need to put barrier on information flow so as to manage our attention and allocate it to our goals. Hence the challenge of self regulation needs to be taken seriously.

In Paris when posters became a menace people started an anti-poster movement to put restrictions on where a poster can be put and thus ensuring that the beauty of the city is restored. It is high time that there should be a cap or limitation on monetization of people’s attention and collection of personal details of users. Also permission on collection of the data should be brought under the purview of IT Laws. Making collection of personal details without permission should be made punishable offense.

The first rectification of wrongdoings by Attention Economy came from one of the most popular Smartphone brand in the world- Apple. In 2015, Tim Cook CEO of Apple said that Silicon Valley has built their business by selling information of users and it’s wrong as they are treating user not as customer but as product. Apple launched Content Blocking Safari (Operating system) Extensions for its products iPhone and iPad. Safari had Content Blocking which helped in blocking cookies, ad images and videos, resources, pop-ups. Not just this it also blocked tracking and sending of data from phone to the website. This made Internet work faster and also ensured restoration of privacy of users.

The initiative of taking back control of attention has been taken by a few of those who get exhausted and overwhelmed with media technologies and go for Digital Detox for a while. Digital Detox is a period of time during which a person refrains from using electronic devices such as smartphone or computer so as to reduce stress and focus on interaction in real world. In coming years, to preserve and protect human attention will become both the need and a challenge for humanity.

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# Reinventing Democracies: Women's Quest for Space

**Dr. Nabila Sadiq\***

*“There cannot be true democracy unless women’s voices are heard. There cannot be true democracy unless women are given the opportunity to take responsibility for their own lives”*

*–Hillary R. Clinton*

Democracy aptly defined as the government of the people, by the people, for the people symbolizes an ideal. Ancient Athens furnishes the classical example of practice of democracy (even if imperfect) where the whole populace would gather in the marketplace of the city to vote on various matters of rule. Though democracy as a system bears its own failings, it certainly serves most of the governments as a political alternative. Hence, the fundamental point follows: would it be a true democracy if bereft of the presence of women; for as a concept, democracy envisages equal power relations among all the humans.

In a democratic government, political power rests with the people that allows them to have a say in the choice of their rulers exercised via the vote of every adult member of the populace. As such, democracies envision a government made up of those who truly represent the people, convincing them of the aptness of their choice of a caring government. Moreover, the people, if given free power, will be more careful about using their power as they will have to bear the consequences if the elected head turns out to be wanting in honesty and sagacity. As a manifestation of power of the people, democracy facilitates the process of decision making to be in tune with the will of the people and thus preempts abuse of power.

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\* Dr. Nabila Sadiq, Assistant Professor, Sarojini Naidu Centre for Women’s Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi-110025.

A true democracy means equal representation of the people who constitute it (Habermas 1998). Since, women form almost half the population of the world, a true democracy would give them the voice and the number in the political system. However, democracy means more than just increasing the number of women in politics; it inspires an extended participation of women in policy making both at the national and international level. The Inter – Parliamentary Union notes that a democratic parliament reflects the views and interests of the society from which it is drawn and shapes the society’s social, political and economic future accordingly(2008:13). Therefore, the equal participation means parity in representation of men and women in both the numbers and levels of decision making; it evenly reflects the views and interests of both men and women in society. Still, democracy would not be a real democracy until women’s voices are multiplied in legislatures and political institutions. In brief, inclusion of women in politics defines democracy.

This paper seeks to study the gender dimension of democracy and explores the ways to make a state more democratic by increasing women’s participation in politics.

### **Democracy and Democratic Rights**

A country to be democratic needs a system of government based on regular elections, with the presumption of one person, one vote. But how democracy is put into practice or in what manner it is expressed and recognized in daily life would depend on the choice of an individual country. There is not a single method to implement or make democracy function everywhere, and there is not one way as to how democracy is experienced or defined by the people. In order to discuss as to who defines and partakes in democratic rights, the concept of democracy has to be defined.

Julia Paley (2002) writes:

*“Democracies are usually characterized by formal equality for all citizens under the law.” (481)*

However, not all women know much about the term ‘democracy’, but most of them are aware of the value of their right to vote.

Likewise, Carol Pateman opines that democracy presumes individuals as free and equal under the law. Voting she defines as fundamental for a democracy that serves as means to give all citizens

the chance to influence politics. But voting should be based on voluntary participation, according to Pateman. Political rights and obligations are closely associated with the freedom of speech, opinion and choice. This means that equal rights should not be restricted by age, gender, profession or social status (2003: 60). But there is a dilemma in this, according to Pateman.

*“Many citizens see their vote as a duty associated with citizenship and, again, the important question is how far, if at all, this leaves room for anything that could reasonably be called freely and deliberately given consent” (Pateman 2003: 66).*

Although these duties can be discharged in a voluntary manner but the connotation of force comes with the usage of the term ‘duty’.

In respect of the West, we usually refer to liberal form of democracy. Liberal democracy is the most common political system practiced in the Western countries. It is built on a mixture of two sets of values: traditional values of civil rights and natural rights. (Robertson, 2002: 281). A highly developed country where the above values are well established is commonly referred as an advanced liberal democracy. According to Martin J. Bull and James L. Newell, the Scandinavian countries, Great Britain and the U.S. are some of the countries that are living this definition. Although political corruption does exist in these countries as well, but some level of trust in politicians and bureaucrats is present there as well which is absent in non-democratic states. Hence, they function efficiently as liberal democracies. (2003:174) (Gleisner 2007: 28-29).

Thus, if people are not allowed to decide by themselves who to vote for, that would subvert one of the core values of democracy. From a general point of view, countries like the United States, United Kingdom, India, etc. are termed the examples of a durable democracy.

### **Women, Democracy and Political Empowerment**

T.H. Marshall (1950) in one of his works offers a vision of a just society based on equal participation of all citizens in social and political communities where social inequalities connected to class are not passed from one generation to another. The interconnection between capitalism, the modern welfare state and the development of a system of civil, political, and social rights of the citizens is the strength of this vision. There is a keen awareness of the importance of common culture and shared experiences as an expression of the citizen’s membership in a political community. The model that the vision substantiates has been

employed as a critical measure to evaluate the extent modern democracies live up to their principles of freedom and equality. Though the feminist scholars are still arguing the outcome of the model and its relevance to understanding women's citizenship but we cannot simply discard this model (Siim 2000:7). Significantly, this model has served as an inspiration for the reinvention of the framework of citizenship among the sociologists, political scientists and feminists. Sociologists have talked about institutionalization of rights by using this citizenship framework (Turner 1992). On the other hand, political scientists have stressed on the participatory aspect of citizenship and the need for integrating new groups as citizens by focusing on their socio-cultural 'difference' (Young 1990).

From a feminist perspective, Marshall's model of citizenship has been criticized for being androcentric due to its framework apparently built on an underlying male norm: the citizen as a man, and wage-work as the basis for citizen rights. Many feminist scholars have been stuck with this framework of citizenship, but the concept of citizenship as such has been rather contentious in feminist theory.

Feminist scholarship views liberal, republican and social-democratic approaches to citizenship in a gendered perspective. While liberalism focusses on the public/private divide, which is based on the individual freedom/right of citizens against the state and on private virtues. The feminist critique argues that one of the implications of liberalism has been a tendency to exclude women and issues of everyday life from the public dialogue. Hence, the feminist approaches to citizenship have used different vocabularies in their discussions on gender and citizenship. Furthermore, they have competing visions with respect to defining a good citizen as well as in their strategies to include women in citizenship.

### **Women's Participation and Democracy**

In the context of democracy, political participation and representation seem the most crucial topics of debates for women. Political representation is about making someone, generally the citizen, present in one way or another, even if that person as such is not physically present. Numerous factors determine the structure of opportunities for women's representation in the elected office (e.g.: electoral system, affirmative action strategies within the party lists, the social and occupational networks of the aspiring men and women) (Rule 1987; Norris 1997; Karam 1998; Kenworthy and Malami 1999; Caul 1999;

Reynolds 1999). In addition, the trend toward gender equality is intimately linked with the inclusive processes of cultural change and democratization. In a sense, the link between women's representation and democracy is self-evident, for women account for over half the population in many countries of the world and if the majority doesn't have full political rights, the society cannot be considered democratic. However, historically, women were not even given the right to vote until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Women had to overcome traditional cultural norms in order to get the vote as these norms excluded them from the public domain of politics in the first place. Infact, women attained the suffrage as late as 1920 in the United States, and still later in other cultural zones (IPU 1999). Furthermore, getting the vote did not make women eligible for political leadership until the last few decades, and they are still heavily underrepresented in parliaments and cabinets (UN 2000) (Inglehart, et.al. 2002).

Even though democratic institutions existed prior to the emergence of the idea of gender equality, but it has been a salient factor in the process of democratization today. Still, gender equality should be seen as part of a broad social change and not just the effect of democratization. It is part of the change that is transforming many aspects of industrialized societies and supporting the spread of democratic institutions. As such, there is a greater need to promote participation of women in the decision-making process today. Indeed, democracy and gender equality are interlinked and mutually reinforcing terms. Former UN Secretary-General Ban Kimoon says, *"While women's political participation improves democracy, the reverse is also true: democracy is an incubator for gender equality."* Thus, democracy provides public space for discussion of human rights as well as women's empowerment. It is seen as enabling mobilization among women's groups and makes it easier for women to realize their political, civil, economic and social rights. (UN News 2011)

*"Women were among those who marched in Côte d'Ivoire to uphold the democratic will of the people –with several of them killed for making that stand,"* said Mr. Ban. *"In Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere, women have been among those in the vanguard demanding change, rights, dignity, and opportunity."*

Gender inequality in decision-making processes thus remains a great impediment to democracy that calls for more to be done to bridge the gender gap in democratic participation. Certainly there has been appreciable progress in the matter and more women in more countries

are enjoying their entry into parliament. Yet, as of June 2019, only 11 women were serving as Head of State and 12 as Head of Government.<sup>1</sup> Further only 50 countries have reached the target of 30 per cent women in national parliaments.<sup>2</sup> (UN Women 2019)

Accordingly, the goal of gender equality cannot be treated as just an ‘add on’ and need to be seen as an intrinsic part of democracy-building. Further, laws, policy measures and practices need to be adopted to rectify age old inequalities to achieve democratic principles of inclusiveness, accountability and transparency.

*“Democratic governance cannot be fully achieved without the full participation and inclusion of women....Without the full participation of women in decision-making processes and debates about policy priorities and options, issues of great importance to women will either be neglected, or the way in which they are addressed will be sub-optimal and uninformed by women’s perspectives”.* (UN News 2011)

### **The Politics of Women’s Representation**

Diverse arguments can be thought of to emphasize the essentiality of women’s presence in the political realm. To begin with, for a government, democratically organized, it is crucial to inculcate in all its citizens, irrespective of their class and race, a sense of aspiration to facilitate the scope to serve their community; realization of the idea to serve the community would prove the legitimacy of a government. Moreover, if all the citizens are provided an equal opportunity to participate in the decision making and confided a sense of fair trust in its efficacy, it will strengthen the roots of polity. To be specific, women constitute a very big pool of talents and so their abilities, viewpoints and thoughts should be given due importance in selecting the leaders of society. Indeed, even the symbolic value of women leader cannot be underestimated. If children, while growing up, see both men and women playing a role in political sphere together, they would imbibe or come across a wide range of options that would help them prepare for later life. The inception of the terminology of “gender gap” in public opinion and change in voting behaviour over the past two decades go to testify that women progressively view their political interests as distinct from those of men. Defining the ‘women’s interests’ may seem a highly arguable proposition, yet one cannot deny that women bring different perspectives and ideas to bear on public policy matters. Hence, the election of more women to public offices is immensely momentous and positively

necessary. Political commitment to increased women's participation everywhere holds the key to the solution to the women's involvement in politics. Gender equality, needs to be preserved as an unequivocal goal of democracy.

Notably, an important query often posited puts forward whether numerically increasing women in politics will make a difference to them and to the nature of governance? The question can be dealt with in two ways. First, democracy is heralded as the most representative of all political organizations human civilization has lived through so far. Indeed, underrepresentation of women who constitute almost half the population turns the democratic setup into a hollow sham. Conversely, equitable representation of women in a polity would deepen the democratic process. Second, women suffer from a myriad of disabilities more than men due to lack of education, health, hygiene, sanitation, drinking water, nutrition and so forth. In consequence, women are generally more embroiled in issues like these. Hence, various studies have revealed that women in general are more responsive to the issues of human development. A greater representation for women shall, therefore, entail a shift in the focus of development programme from the capitalist market based towards human and social welfare. Although most women enjoy the universal right to vote, there still exists a big disparity between the strength of women and men actively participating in politics. Out of 192 countries, only twenty countries now have women heads of state and government (10%).<sup>3</sup> Women are also outnumbered by men in parliaments around the world. The participation rate of women in national-level parliaments globally is 24.5% today. In a developing country like India, they hold merely 13.1 in both the houses of parliament (IPU 2020).

Women's empowerment in politics, in sum seems of primeval value for creating a genuine model of democracy and for setting in order a true human progress.

### **Women's Political Empowerment: Issues and Challenges**

No doubt, men dominate the political realm and devise the rules of political game, thus defining the measure of evaluation of political acumen. The prevalence of the male-dominated phenomenon drives the women either to reject politics altogether or stoically shun the male-style politics. In the 21st century, over 95 per cent of the countries of the world have granted women the two most fundamental democratic

rights: the right to vote and the right to stand for elections. New Zealand became the first country to give women the right to vote in 1893; and Finland was the first country to adopt both the democratic rights in 1906 (Ballington and Karam 2005). With Saudi Arabia granting women the right to vote in 2015, all women have the right to vote in every country that holds elections today. In Maldives, Women got the right to run for president only after the constitutional amendment in January 2008.

In theory, the right to stand for elections or to become a candidate and get elected, is based on the right to vote. In reality, women's right to vote is limited because most of the candidates standing for political elections are male. This is true even for the established and old democracies. The women's low representation in some European parliaments is a clear violation of their fundamental democratic rights as well as their basic human rights. The unequal rate of representation for women in legislative bodies acts as an instrument of furthering the status quo and ignores the true spirit of democratization. In most countries *de jure* difficulties prevail, as the laws are not being enacted or not being followed or for not existing at all (Ballington and Karam 2005:34-35).

Another point of view holds socio-economic conditions for women as secondary to electoral system barriers in women's legislative recruitment within the democracies. This means that attempts are not made to elevate women's socio-economic condition so that they can engage more with politics. But we cannot ignore the fact that political structures play a very decisive role in women's election to parliament. The countries following proportional representation in their system of elections have seen three to four times more women elected than others (e.g., Germany and Australia). However, socio-cultural and economic challenges are also an important key to increasing their political representation. Researchers point out a correlation between the women's legislative recruitment and the number of women working outside their home, and to the percentage of women college graduates. At the same time these barriers cannot be ignored. The challenges which women have to overcome to enter politics includes poverty and unemployment, lack of adequate financial resources, illiteracy and limited access to education and choice of profession. Furthermore, the dual burden of domestic tasks and professional obligations cannot be ignored altogether (Ballington and Karam 2005: 39-41).

Although, most of the challenges to women's political representation have been eliminated or degraded, they continue to exert weight in public office.

The barriers today act in two ways to keep the number of women in public office low. They deter many women from seeking office or inhibit success of those who choose to run for office. The first type of way the barriers act seems most daunting for women. When women run against the non-incumbent men, the rate of success of both men and women appears actually even (Newman 1994). Since the 1970s, studies have found very little or no difference in the percentage of votes received by men and women candidates if the party and the incumbency of opponent candidate were controlled. Similar outcomes were also observed in men and women running for other political offices. So, it is in fact the failure of women to actually run that contributes most to the absence of women in political arena.

## **Enhancing Women's Representation in Political Legislatures**

### ***Political Action Committees***

In virtue of the focus on improving the number of women in the national legislatures, the process of selection of parliamentary candidates seems quite relevant. The efficacy of the measures to assure the likelihood of women's selection particularly in relatively 'safer seats' rather than in marginal or hopeless ones, maybe a positive factor in improving the number of women in the legislatures. For example, in the US, campaign finance has been considered a means to this end. Election campaigns have always been pretty costly and the changes in the communications media have made them more so. In the US, Emily's List<sup>4</sup> was founded in 1984 to raise money for pro-choice female candidates. For the 2006 elections it raised around \$46m for the candidates it was supporting. Similar schemes were established in Australia and in the UK where Emily's List UK was launched in 1993 to help women parliamentary candidates of the Labour Party.

### ***Electoral System Reform***

A lot of debate about the political system suggest that women's chance of selection as parliamentary candidates substantially rises higher under a Proportional Representation (PR) party list system than under a First Past the Post (FPTP) system. Here, the political parties assume the role of main gatekeepers. Under the FPTP system they select only one

candidate per district, where there is no scope for deviation from the 'standard' type, traditionally the 'incumbent' male candidate. But the PR list system, with multi-member districts entails a more conscious process of balancing the party ticket so as to draw support from the different constituencies and hence give chance to 'new' women candidates (Randall 2011). Matland (1998) in his work tried to extend this theory for democracies in the developing world. He uses the data on 24 OECD countries. His findings averred that changing from a majoritarian to a proportional electoral system would result in a 15.6% increase in the ratio of women in the legislature. However the electoral system did not make much of a difference within the developing countries. This was due to two reasons: increased representation was not demanded by women themselves and the costs of running women candidates was way too high for the party leaders. Hence, Matland concludes that there is a 'minimum development level' below which the nature of the electoral system becomes irrelevant. However, a statistical study by Tripp and Kang (2008) which looked at 155 countries concluded that the electoral system does play a decisive role. (Randall 2011:7)

### ***Gender Quotas***

Gender Quotas are defined as *'positive measurement instrument aimed at accelerating the achievement of gender-balanced participation and representation by establishing a defined proportion (percentage) or number of places or seats to be filled by, or allocated to, women and/or men, generally under certain rules or criteria...quotas can be applied in order to correct a previous gender imbalance in different areas and at different levels, including in political assemblies, decision-making positions in public, political life and economic life (corporate boards), as well as to ensure the inclusion of women and their participation in international bodies, or as a tool to promote equal access to training opportunities or jobs'* (EIGE 2019). The gender quotas were first introduced in the 1970s in Norway and subsequently adopted in the UK<sup>5</sup> and a number of European countries. The adoption in a succession of Latin American and African countries largely took off from the mid-90s, receiving a boost from their endorsement at the Fourth World Women's Conference at Beijing in 1995. By 2006 they had been adopted in more than 84 countries (Tripp and Kang 2008). Over time, interest has substantially shifted to the impact of gender quotas

on levels of women's political representation. Now, there exists a considerable literature on the subject.<sup>6</sup>

It seems fairly relevant to glance over the view that quotas do in fact raise the level of women's political representation. This is quite likely that the (compulsory) reserved seats approach ensures compliance and the political parties voluntarily opt for gender quotas. However, the compliance level shrinks if the parties are obliged to acquiesce in these policies. Party leaders are not necessarily enthusiastic to stick to the policy norms and even seek refuge in the pretext that enough women hesitate to take the initiative. Still, if they please to adopt women candidates, they may place them low down the list in party list systems, or in unwinnable seats.

Tripp and Kang's (2006) work which used the data for 2006 from 155 countries concludes that gender quotas do indeed have a significant and positive effect on women's representation in political legislatures. For example, due to the passage of 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment act in India in 1992, women's grassroots political representation reached 50% by 2009. This act reserved at least one-third of the seats of all Panchayat Councils and one-third of all *Pradhans* (heads of the Panchayat) for women. Research on panchayats (local councils) in India reveals that the number of drinking water projects in areas with women-led councils was 62 per cent higher than in those with men-led councils. Women Panchayat Raj (village committee) leaders are seen to be increasingly involved in their communities, ensuring quality healthcare and education, as well as the financial considerations necessary to realize access to these services, which are enthusiastically discussed at their meetings (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004).

### ***Women Self-Help Groups and Networking***

Apart from the quotas, another method, the self-help groups and networking, has quite improved women's representation in politics. These methods have, in particular, played a very salutary role in the region of South Asia. *Mahilya Samikhyas*<sup>7</sup>, a program started in 1989 for the women's empowerment under the Ministry of Human Resource Development in India serves as an example of women's self-help groups. This program has been conducive to transforming the political culture of the villages enabling the women to exercise power in public spaces through participation in the Panchayat system or in the school management committees. As part of this program, the women are

organised into *sanghas*<sup>8</sup> which have created spaces for political accountability in their local governing bodies. Apart from reservation and quotas, this program is another example of the efficacy of the access to the government structures for women.

Furthermore, there is at hand an extensive documentation on experiences of collective power through women networking in South Asia. For instance, in Pakistan, women councillors formed a network and later an election alliance in 2005. More than 500 women joined the alliance and contested election from the platform of the alliance; as a result nearly 65% women contested for general seats on the platform (for more see Farzana Bari 2005).

Additionally, a study to evaluate experiences of women in panchayats until the mid-1990s in India goes to ascertain the proposition that networking has been helpful in promoting the women's political empowerment. *Aalochana*<sup>9</sup> collaborated with feminist journalists, for a study of twelve all-women panchayats that worked in villages in Maharashtra before reservations were legislated nationally in 1992. Findings of the study, conducted in 1994 and 1995, were published in the book '*And Who Will Make the Chapatis?*' (Datta 1998). These processes proved that strong community-based organizations as well as networking serve as alternative support structures to create an amicable environment for women and other disadvantaged groups. The *Aalochana* initiative illustrated that feminist-inspired programs can be a catalyst for political change at the grassroot level (Sekhon 2006).

### ***Training Programs***

The 'training programs' are another strategy to increase women's representation in politics. For example, an umbrella network of women's organizations in Trinidad & Tobago launched a training program in 2013 to educate the women about the fundamental elements of politics in the country. Following the first round of trainings, half of the women who ran for office won seats in the local elections — almost all of which had previously been held by men (UNDP 2015).

### **Conclusion**

Women's political participation forms the key attribute of democracy; it covers the front pages of newspapers in the established democracies as well as the countries moving toward democracy. The phenomenon of women rising as builders of democracy is as much in evidence

nowadays. Also, visible are women in the forefront in countries with no background of democratic tradition working for democracy and concerned to get registered to vote and make their vote visible. Circumstances for promoting democracy may not be all that rosy, but women's groups are certainly realizing that they can serve as a source of inspiration to democratic change. Maybe, as women's group, they set forth on their journey under a sort of radar drawing no heed from the unfeeling authorities. Sooner, however, their numbers grow, their presence is acutely felt and their voice distinctly heard.

Political empowerment of women has been commonly portrayed as a key driver for economic and social empowerment. However, attempts to secure political representation for women in higher political echelons have woefully failed. Fresh impetus emanating from a modern outlook may ease the harsh circumstances.

There exist a number of inhibitions that inhibit the women from entering politics or exercising their authority if in power. However, that doesn't disguise the fact that women's political empowerment remains crucial for a true democracy. Invariably, women endow policy making with new perspectives as reflected in the passage of several women - oriented bills. Also, human development in general and political culture in particular owe much to the not so unmitigated presence of women in politics.

To sum up, the thought of future of women in politics gives a sense of optimism if dynamic and intelligent women gifted with a will to fight continue to strive ceaselessly to enter politics.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> UN Women calculation is based on information provided by Permanent Missions to the United Nations. Some leaders hold positions of both head of government and head of state. Only elected Heads of State were taken into account.
- <sup>2</sup> There are 192 countries worldwide which means only 26% of the total states have more than 30% representation of women in their legislatures.
- <sup>3</sup> Bangladesh (HG), Barbados (HG), Belgium (HG), Bolivia (Plurinational State of) (HS/HG), Denmark (HG), Estonia (HS), Ethiopia (HS), Finland (HG), Georgia (HS), Germany (HG), Iceland (HG), Nepal (HS), New Zealand (HG), Norway (HG), San Marino (HS), Serbia (HG), Singapore (HS), Slovakia (HS), Switzerland (HS/HG), Trinidad and Tobago (HS).
- <sup>4</sup> Emily is an acronym for Early Money Is Like Yeast.
- <sup>5</sup> They were adopted by the British Labour Party in 1992.
- <sup>6</sup> There exists a Global Database of Quotas for Women today whose main sponsors are International IDEA and the IPU (see [www.quotaproject.org](http://www.quotaproject.org)).
- <sup>7</sup> The Mahila Samakhya (MS) programme, is a national programme for women’s empowerment under the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) which started in 1989. It was a response to the 1986 education policy that recognised education as a means of empowerment and transformation and also acknowledged women’s empowerment as key to social transformation (Centre for Budget and Policy Studies 2016).
- <sup>8</sup> Women are mobilised and organised into sanghas or samoohs in the MS Program where they come together, discuss, reflect, organise, analyse, and articulate their needs and attempt to address them jointly (Centre for Budget and Policy Studies 2016).
- <sup>9</sup> Aalochana, which means critical review, is “a non-profit research and documentation centre on women which was established in 1989 by five feminist activists” which aims “to systematically collect and provide information on issues related to the social, political, economic, legal and personal aspects of women’s lives,” and “to disseminate the results through pamphlets, booklets, slides, audio and video cassettes, films, lectures, seminars and posters” (Aalochana 2003).

## Bru Accord: Political Settlement or Surrender to Religious Intolerance?

Deepika Singh\*

16<sup>th</sup> January 2020 marked an end to the long Bru crisis as the agreement was signed in the presence of Minister of Home Affairs Amit Shah, Chief Ministers of Tripura and Mizoram, Bru representatives and senior officials. This agreement is very significant for the reason it has put an end to the Bru Crisis. It has addressed every aspect of Bru migrants i.e. 34,000 Bru refugees will be settled in Tripura with Centre providing a package of around 600 crores for their settlement and all-round development.

This historical agreement is very inclusive in nature as it endeavors to settle Brus in every aspect of life giving them a dignified life. The provision of this historical agreement are as follows:

- 40X30 sq.ft of residential plots to each displaced Families,
- a fixed deposit of rupees 4 lakhs,
- aid of 5,000 cash per month for 2 years,
- Rupees 1.5 lakhs to build house and free rations for 2 years from the date of resettlement. To ascertain the numbers of those who will be settled, a fresh survey and physical Verification of Bru families living in relief camps would be carried out.

The agreement is part of continuous efforts being made by central government in assisting two state governments since 2010 for Bru rehabilitation. Till date Around 2,000 families have returned to Mizoram, while many desired to settled in Tripura due to apprehensions about their security in Mizoram.

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\* Deepika Singh, Assistant Professor (Political Science), Sri Venkateswara College, University of Delhi.

The agreement can be considered as watershed moment in bringing lasting peace and prosperity in the region, which is marked by ethnic strife and conflicts. It is being considered as a strong step as part of Centre's agenda of mainstreaming North-East Region and solving perpetual long drawn problems to achieve the motto of 'Sabka sath Sabka Vikas Sabka Vishwas'

## II

The North-East of India is an extremely significant region given its geographical proximity to China, and Southeast Asia through Myanmar and Bangladesh. The endeavour is to provide the region a new space by logistical intensification i.e. expansion of railways, construction of roads, dams and highways. These logistical developments consequently are leading to an increased demand of labour. It has been surmised and been assumed that stability and peace would prevail in the region by monitoring and regulating population flows in nation. Stringent border patrolling measures to curb illegal migration was prioritized by the Government. However, the concept of migration in Northeast India is fraught with inherent contradictions. In a deprived region torn by ethnic clashes, armed insurgency, illegal infiltration, poor infrastructure and massive displacement, peace has remained either elusive or transient.

It is interesting to note here that migration, per se, was not initially viewed negatively in the Northeast. In fact, during the British era, labour migration from neighboring states was encouraged to keep both the tea and timber industries functional. The issue of migration only became a matter of security concern, when it was related to resource politics. For instance, the Bru/Reangs in Mizoram were repeatedly targeted by the Mizos as "outsiders despite possessing valid documents.

The Mizos affirm that Mizoram is for the Mizos and not for the Reangs. The Mizos, backed by the Church and the militant Mizo Students Association (Mizo Zir la i Pawl) have threatened the Bru/Reangs that they should conform to the general cultural and religious standards followed in the state. This situation has been going on since the state of Mizoram was formed in 1987. The Bru/ Reangs did not take kindly to these threats and formed their own associations to protect and promote their own ethnic identity, language and culture. In fact, an identity awareness has emerged in the minds of some youths of the Bru/ Reang community.

## **The Concept of Identity**

The term 'Identity' has a number of connotations, as per Eric H. Erikson, "A sense of identity means a sense of being at one with oneself as one grows and develops, and it means at the same time a sense of affinity with a community's sense of being at one with its future as well as its history or mythology." (Vanlaltlani 2007:1-3) On the basis of this definition by Erikson human identity can be understood in terms of common cohesive co-relations through which different tribes and nations, creeds and classes experience themselves to be a single species and especially in times of crises, sacrifice to this claim and ethics that are theirs.

The Bru/Reang belong to the Tibeto–Burman family of languages. Language is the most important and best communicating medium in human society. The language of the Bru is called "Kau- Bru" in their native language, here Kau means language and Bru means the name of the tribe, but generally it is known as Bru language. Even though Bru language is of a smaller family, and counted as dialect, it is worth considering retaining an ethnicity and developing the language of the ethnic group, it requires uplifting the psychological status of the community through the native literature.

Bru are one of the 21st schedule tribes of the Indian state of Tripura. The correct nomenclature for them is Bru. The name Reang has been accidentally incorporated by the Indian government during a census count. One half of the population of Reangs resides in north district of the state, the remaining are in the South and Dhalai district of Tripura. Reangs have been termed a "Primitive Tribe by the Government of India. In the entirety of North-East India only two tribes are recognized as "Primitive Tribal Group , one of these are the Bru (Reang) in Tripura and other are the "Maram Naga" in Manipur (Vanlaltlani: 2007:15-18). Bru community which belongs to the minority Hindu religion, comprises the second biggest tribe in Tripura. The majority of the Bru belong to the Vaishnav school of Hinduism. They are polytheists and believe in multiple Gods and Goddesses. Their important festivals are Ker, Gongga, Mwtai , Gorla, Chitragupura, Hojagiri, Katangi Puja. Laxmi Pooja is their very famous pooja which is celebrated on Karthik Purnima. Religious observance is community based.

The Bru/Reang tribes complain of ethnic and religious persecution and allege that the dominant Mizos, who are almost wholly Christian

want to convert them to Christianity and the Mizo way of life. It is very unfortunate to note that the Bru being a minority group the majority of whose members are mostly illiterate, except a few of the younger generation and are therefore not able to compete with Mizo groups who are far more educated and thus possesses representation in the State Assembly. The Bru are also socially and economically marginalized by the dominant Mizos. The Bru community suffer from identity crises because of the aggressive Mizo Christian evangelists have tried to replace the Bru religion, belief and their practices with Christianity. But the rays of science and technology have reached to Bru people also. They have become aware about what is going on around them and most importantly they have become aware about the loss of their own identity.

As previously mentioned, that now the Bru have become aware about the fact that they face an identity crisis as well as confusion in their socio-economic, political and religious spheres. Such a feeling of confusion and crises has led them to ask about themselves who and what they are and what kind of rights they have as rightful citizens. Their experience of identity confusion and crisis has motivated the Bru to start a process of recovery of their community identity. For that purpose, their religious identity is the main factor uniting the Bru together and helping them to begin the process of identity resolution and development.

Influx of Bru Family's from Mizoram to North Tripura district started from 29 October 1997 and continued up to September 1998 due to serious ethnic problem. As per Tripura government approximately 6800 families migrated to relief camps. Again some families came to these camps due to killing of one Mizo boy on 13 November 2009. Government of India is giving financial assistance to these migrated Bru through government of Tripura since 1997 and up to 2016 more than 287 crores have been given in assistance. Till now 1030 families have returned to Mizoram in six phases started from 21<sup>st</sup> May 2010. The repatriation took place in year 2010, 2012, 2013 and 2014.

So as per the Tripura Government records 5286 families are staying in seven camps with a population of 31223. All of these seven camps are situated on 649 acres of forest land, 69 acres of land which was under the possession of local tribe people and 54 acres of private land as per the details given by the Tripura Government.

In spite of recommendations from the National Human Rights Commission, the state government of Mizoram has refused to take back the displaced because they maintain that only half of them are citizens of the state. Although a memorandum of understanding was signed between the main Bru rebel group and the Mizoram government in April 2005 and the Indian government has endorsed a rehabilitation package for Bru IDPs, repatriation could not start. The Mizoram government had only agreed to permit the return of some 270 people, consisting of former militant cadres and their families, while no time table had been given for the repatriation of the large majority of the displaced. In the meantime, the Bru IDPs live in grim conditions in the camps where they face severe food shortages as well as a lack of medical and education facilities( Chakravarty 2008:48-49).

However, between November 2010 and May 2011, more than 3,300 of the IDPs were able to return to Mamit District in Mizoram with the support of India's Ministry of Home Affairs. The ministry's "resettlement and rehabilitation" package included Rs 80,000 cash for each family and free food ration for one year, in addition to support for local economic development in the return area. In September 2011, however, the returns stalled again. The returnees to the district were subjected to an identification process to determine whether they really were from Mizoram, failing which their deportation would be demanded. This process was initiated by two students organizations, the Young Mizo Association (YMA) and the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), which in 1997 had played a role in the violence against Bru people and their subsequent displacement. Thus out of 30,000 IDPs, only 3,300 were able to return and re-settle, the future of the remaining Bru people still hangs by the thread (Monirul And Phanjoubam,; 2007:13-16).

In the second phase, the Mizoram government was instructed to prepare ground to resettle the remaining 1,300 Bru families in three villages i.e. Bunglehmun, Rengdil and Zamung. However, quite a few influential Mizo NGOs opposed the move to resettle the Bru Internally Displaced families(IDP) families in these specific areas on the other hand, 16-point memorandum submitted by the Bru demanded that the Bru were resettled collectively and not in a divided manner. All of this has created a block in the return of Bru IDPs back to Mizoram. This scenario of displaced Bru community raises the following concerns:

- The ethnic conflict and law and order situation in Mizoram has led to the inhuman sufferings and migration of Bru community.

- Constitutional safeguards i.e providing them Autonomous District Councils (ADC) can rehabilitate and empower Bru Community.
- What would be the implication of the Mizoram-Tripura dispute on the law and order situation of the North East Region?

The roots of the current conflict can be traced to 1994, when a political party called the Bru National Union (BNU) was formed to promote the tribe's welfare. In September 1997, at a conference in Saipuilui village in Mamit district, the BNU adopted a resolution to demand for an Autonomous District Councils (ADC) for Brus in the Western belt of Mizoram. Mizoram is predominantly inhabited by Mizos. Other tribes in the state include the Hmars, the Lai and the Chakmas, each of whom have their own ADC. Interestingly, though the Brus are the largest minority in Mizoram their demand for an ADC went unheeded. This led to an intense unrest among the leaders of Bru community. Mizoram has always been projected as an island of peace in the North East. However, the establishment of the Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF) led to growing militancy in the post-1997 period. In the eight years of its existence, the BNLF was involved in extortion, the abduction of several Mizos and killing of security personnel. Things came to a head with the murder of a Mizo forest official in the Dampa Tiger Reserve. Widespread ethnic violence followed, with reports of arson, killing and rape by the Mizos. The brutality forced about 50,000 Brus to flee to Tripura.

With regards to the border dispute between Mizoram and Tripura it is important to note that Mizoram shares 109 kilometers with Tripura. In October 1997 ethnic clashes forced 36,000 families belonging to the Bru tribe to leave Mizoram and take shelter in six camps in north Tripura. In the recent past, some Bru families were sent back to Mizoram but majority is still scared to return. Bethliang Chhip Hill in Phuldungsei village where the Bru refugees live has become the bone of contention between the two states. The Mizoram government claims it as its own because it was inhabited by the Mizo community many decades ago. The Tripura government rejects the claim stating that the hills fall under Tripura territory. The approximately 100 families living in the hills are actually Tripura residents, for decades their names have been enrolled in various Tripura government documents including the electoral list. At present this conflict remains unsolved.

### III

#### **Modi Government's Initiatives to Repatriate and Rehabilitate the Displaced Bru**

An endeavor to turn North East India into a gateway in the Asia-Pacific region had been conceptualized in early 1990 by the then Congress led government. The philosophy of the Look East Policy is based on building stronger ties with India's extended neighborhood. Though the policy remained pivotal for successive Indian governments, including the first National Democratic Alliance regime led by BJP veteran Atal Bihari Vajpayee from 1999 to 2004, however it is the Narendra Modi government with its landslide victory in the 2014 Parliamentary elections who carried different plans altogether for the oil-rich, tea-growing region, located at a strategic junction of China, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar. In his address in East Asia Summit in the Capital of Myanmar Nay Pyi Taw, Prime Minister Narendra Modi underlined his firmness that his government had accorded a high priority to turn India's Look East policy into the Act East policy. It is significant to note here that the North Eastern States of India occupy a central position between the erstwhile Look East Policy and Act East Policy.

Modi's Policy towards North East India is based on the premise that the sense of alienation prevailing in the stressed communities in North East can be eradicated only by stimulating stronger trade and business ties between North East and other South Asian countries because development is the best anecdote to insurgency. In order to achieve this significant goal, it has been emphasized by the government, that it is imperative to settle the internal conflicts which have cropped up because of ethnic conflicts between various communities, which subsequently made the borders of the states very porous.

Migration of Bru tribes from Mizoram to the neighboring state of Tripura as has been discussed above poses a serious problem thereby causing hurdles in the developmental policies of the central government. As it has been already mentioned about 35,000 Bru tribes have been staying in six relief camps in Tripura for about 17 years, after they fled their villages in Mizoram following ethnic clashes in October 1997. Their repatriation has remained elusive with several groups in Mizoram opposed to their resettlement.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, there has been an intense effort to solve the grave problem of Bru migrants. The Government of India has been making an intense effort in consultation with the government of Mizoram and Tripura and MBDPF for the repatriation of Bru displaced from Mizoram and temporarily living in camps in Tripura. After the intense deliberations between the various stakeholders the following has been agreed:

- 1) Displaced Brus having been identified by the government of Mizoram as displaced persons (5407 families comprising 32,876 persons) will repatriate to Mizoram as per the schedule of repatriation before 30 September 2018. Temporary camps in North Tripura will be closed in the first week of October 2018.
2. To rehabilitate these Brus, providing the following assistance has been agreed to
  - a) Each family will be provided a one-time financial assistance of Rupees four lacs, to be kept in a fixed depo it in the name of head of the family within one month of repatriation.

### **Conclusion**

After the above discussion it is very clear that Bru tribes have been under pressure culturally by the dominant Mizo, by imposing their religious and cultural values on them. The feeling of lost identity has added to the suffering of displaced Brus. However, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, North East India has achieved a primary focus in policy making. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphasized on connectivity and power projects in Mizoram. In Mizoram, he dedicated the 60-MW hydropower power project, which makes it the third power-surplus state in the northeast, after Sikkim and Tripura.

The project is expected to produce “251 million units” of electricity annually. Announced in 1998 by the then Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, it was the first major Central Government project to be successfully commissioned in Mizoram. But all these developmental policies could not be realized on the ground unless there is peace and tranquility in the area. In this regard the agreement concluded on 16 January 2020 can be considered as historical in the sense that it put an end to the long going crisis which was one of the major reason for the instability in Mizoram and Tripura. Nevertheless, can this model of resettlement be replicated in other cases? As religion underlines the Mizo-Bru crisis.

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# BCIM Economic Corridor: Connecting India's Northeast

Jajati K. Pattnaik\*

## BCIM

Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC) as a sub-regional cooperation forum is intended towards growth, development and shared prosperity across the regions through cross-border trade, seamless connectivity and investment under the rubric of free trade architecture. This sub-regional forum earlier called 'Kunming Initiative' was formed in 1999 in Kunming, capital of the Yunnan province of China, and its first meeting was represented by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Bangladesh, Centre for Policy Research (CPR), India and Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences, China and Ministry of Trade, Myanmar.<sup>1</sup> The idea behind the initiative was to progressively guide the civil society driven – Track II attempt into an intergovernmental –Track I framework to achieve its vision and the objectives.<sup>2</sup>

The BCIM Car Rally of February-March 2013 from Kolkata to Kunming also gave a fresh impetus between India and China to turn this informal initiative into a formal one.<sup>3</sup> It came into official/institutional limelight during the discussion between Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi in 2013. The Indo-China joint statement issued thereafter in May 2013 mentioned: "The two sides appreciated the progress made in promoting cooperation under the BCIM (Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar)

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\* Dr. Jajati K. Pattnaik is Associate Professor & Head of the Department of Political Science, Jomin Tayeng Government Model Degree College, Roing, Arunachal Pradesh (affiliated to Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar). He was formerly a visiting scholar at the Gulf Studies Programme, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Regional Forum. They also agreed to consult the other parties with a view to establishing a Joint Study Group on strengthening connectivity in the BCIM region for closer economic, trade, and people-to-people linkages and to initiating the development of a BCIM Economic Corridor.”<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, a new phase in BCIM initiative from Track II to Track I materialized when the first inter-governmental Joint Study Group meeting of the BCIM countries was held in Kunming on 18-19 December 2013.

The architecture of free trade regime got an added momentum during the Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to China in 2015, that thrust upon federalizing India’s economic policy involving State. Both India and China agreed to institute provincial partnership between Karnataka and Sichuan and sister city contacts between Aurangabad–Dunhuang, Chennai–Chongqing and Hyderabad–Qingdao.<sup>5</sup> They also discussed on BCIM and issued a joint statement on ‘Shaping the Regional and Global Agenda’ which pointed out: ‘The two sides welcomed the progress made in promoting cooperation under the framework of the BCIM (Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar) Economic Corridor. Both sides recalled the second meeting of the Joint Study Group of BCIM Economic Corridor, and agreed to continue their respective efforts to implement understandings reached at the meeting.’<sup>6</sup>

Notwithstanding its potentialities, the drive for BCIM corridor got stuck because of Chinese inclusion of the project in its Belt & Road Initiative (BRI). It attained a new rhythm after China dropped the project from the list of BRI due to India’s opposition on the ground that the BCIM Corridor predated the BRI and it could not be incorporated.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, the participants agreed in the recently held BCIM forum meet (June 2019) at Kunming that wide-ranging connectivity in roads, railways, waterways, aviation, energy and digital sectors will significantly augment regional competitiveness, and it was essential to expand the partnership to construct this corridor.<sup>8</sup> Even prominent media experts opined that ‘this is the only trans-regional growth corridor that cuts through the remote North-eastern States of India and connects the region to neighbouring countries.’<sup>9</sup> Herein lies the significance of India’s Northeast for cross-border trade and connectivity to reap in rich economic dividends.

India’s Northeast, consisting of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim shares 98 per cent of its land boundary with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Nepal and Myanmar.

The region is abundant with natural resources such as oil, natural gas, coal, limestone, rare herbs and medicinal plants. It is one of the hotspots of global biodiversity constituting near about half of the country's total bio-diversity.<sup>10</sup> The region holds one fifth of the country's total hydrocarbon reserves and is highly affluent in hydropower reserve. Even the High Level Commission Report to the Prime Minister on 'Transforming the Northeast' observed that the resource-rich region of Northeast was a national asset. The hydroelectric, oil, gas, coal, bio-diversity and agro-silvicultural potentials held 'promise of national solutions through regional development' and would 'add immeasurably to national security in every respect.'<sup>11</sup>

Assessing its geo-economic potentials, the 'Northeastern vision 2020' was prepared to bring in development. The geopolitical isolation of the region was redefined by innovating new policies in the areas of defence, foreign affairs, internal security and international trade. The main thrust vision of the document was on:

- (i) empowering 'the people by maximizing self-governance and participatory development through grassroots planning;'
- (ii) emphasizing 'rural development with a focus on improving agricultural productivity and the creation of non-farm avocations and employment;'
- (iii) prioritizing 'development of sectors with comparative advantage in agro-processing industries, modernization and development of sericulture, investment in manufacturing units based on the resources available in the region;'
- (iv) utilizing 'large hydroelectric power generation potential and focus on developing services such as tourism to accelerate development and create productive employment opportunities;'
- (v) taking up 'capacity development to address the issue of imparting skills among the people to enhance their productivity and generating a class of entrepreneurs within the region willing to take risks;'
- (vi) strengthening 'infrastructure, including rail, road, inland water and air transportation to facilitate a two-way movement of people and goods within the region and outside, communication networks including broadband and wireless connectivity;'
- (vii) connecting 'NER with ASEAN to open up the sea route through the Chittagong port and the land routes through Bangladesh, Myanmar and China;'
- (viii) making 'adequate flow of resources for public investments in infrastructure, implementing framework for private participation

in augmenting infrastructure and creating an enabling environment for the flow of investments to harness the physical resources of the region for the welfare of the people.’<sup>12</sup>

Added to this, the Look/Act East Policy focussed on border trade and connectivity to get benefits for the Northeast region demanding qualitative change in relationship with the neighbouring countries of Bangladesh, China and Myanmar. Experts working in this field opined that “considering the locational leverage of Northeast India, it emerges as a crucial land bridge connecting South east and East Asia. Although the States of Northeast India are relatively marginalized, when looked from a broader perspective, given their strategic significance amidst the major economic entities – China, India and ASEAN – they emerge as the central nodes of BCIM connectivity. Therefore, their development in terms of connectivity, especially physical connectivity, has potential economic implications.”<sup>13</sup> Hence, India’s Northeast can be connected to the BCIM corridor through the following multi modal corridors to get hold of the significant gains.

### **Kolkata – Kunming Corridor**

Kolkata – Moreh-Kunming corridor is an important segment of BCIM sub-regional cooperation. The corridor spanning around 2766.5 km<sup>14</sup> (approximately) would link India’s Northeast, Yunnan province of China, Bangladesh and Myanmar by forging partnership in trade, industry, energy, tourism, health and education for the benefit of all the stakeholders in the region. The corridor starts from Kolkata in West Bengal (India) and passes through Benapole-Jessore-Dhaka-Sylhet (Bangladesh), Agartala-Silchar-Imphal–Moreh (India), Tamu-Kalay-Mandalay (Mandalay) and Muse-Ruili (China) and reaches Kunming in Yunnan. The following Table 1 explains the road map for Kolkata-Kunming corridor.

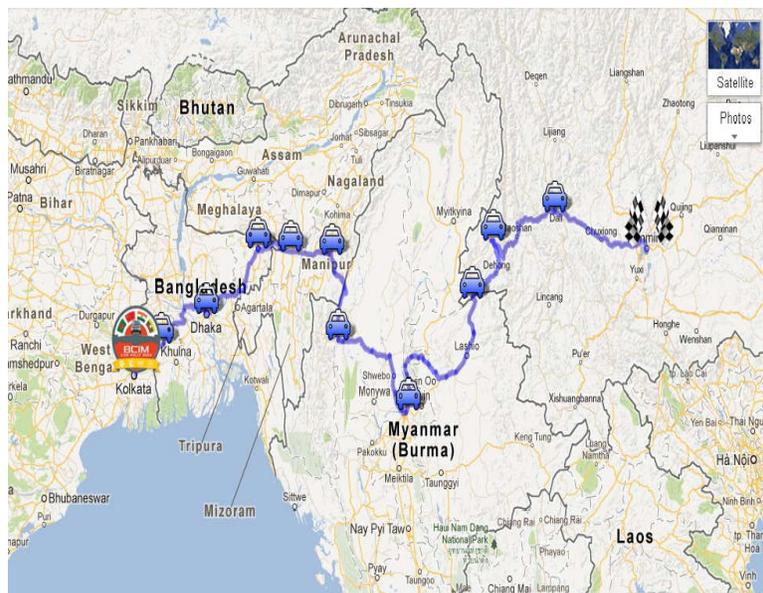
**Table: 1**

<b>Origin</b>	<b>Destination</b>	<b>Distance (2766.5 km)</b>
Kolkata	Dhaka	316.8
Dhaka	Agartala	130.5
Agartala	Imphal	540.8
Imphal	Moreh	107.8
Moreh	Mandalay	473.6
Mandalay	Kunming	1197

Source: The Author

The BCIM watchers view huge potentiality of Kolkata-Kunming corridor criss-crossing development in multiple sectors. The simmering network of roadways, railways, waterways, telecommunication linkages, transnational energy grids and hydrocarbon pipelines along the corridor would transform the geoeconomic space of the region in myriad fields. It would also pave the way for the free trade architecture further pushing the region to have promising collaborations with ASEAN, ASEAN-China and ASEAN-India free trade zones.<sup>15</sup>

### Kolkata-Kunming Corridor



Source: BCIM Car Rally 2013, Google Maps.

### Guwahati-Kunming Road Corridor

Guwahati-Kunming corridor, in specific sense old Stilwell Road,<sup>16</sup> as a supplementary to Kolkata-Kunming may be developed to get mileage from BCIM. The corridor with a distance 2276 km starts from Guwahati in Assam (India) and goes across Nampong in Arunachal Pradesh (India) and Shindbwiyang, Bhamo and Myitkyina in Kachin (Myanmar) linking Ledo-Burma roads junction through Wanding and Yunnanyi to the city

of Kunming in (China). The road covers 601 km in India, 1033km in Myanmar and 632 km in China.<sup>17</sup>

Initially, Myanmar was skeptical about reopening the Stilwell Road, because it ran through the insurgency-infested Kachin region upon which the Military Junta did not have any control.<sup>18</sup> Later, the Myanmar government assigned a contract to Yunnan Construction Engineering Group of China and the military-backed Yuzana group in 2010 to reconstruct a 312 km road from Myitkyina in Myanmar to Pangsau passes at India – Myanmar border.<sup>19</sup> India has renovated its portion of Stilwell Road and upgraded it to a two-lane highway, while China has made it a six-lane highway.

Guwahati-Kunming Corridor, if materialized, would connect the urban agglomerates of Assam i.e. Tinsukia-Dibrugarh–Jorhat-Nagaon-Guwahati-Tezpur with Kunming in China. Further, this passage can connect Arunachal Pradesh with Assam through Bogibeel paving the way for promising economic corridors for sub-regional cooperation. Moreover, it can also link Dimapur, Kohima and other urban centres of Nagaland through Tinsukia-Jorhat-Nagaon-Guwahati corridor. Then, the spillover effects of such urban/industrial corridors would have tremendous impact upon the growth and development of the whole region.

### Guwahati-Kunming Road Corridor



### **Kaladan Multimodal Corridor**

Kaladan multimodal transport project is important for the success of BCIM sub-regional cooperation. This riverine road transport project seeks to provide maritime access to the landlocked North Eastern States of India to the Bay of Bengal linking it with the Indian ports on the Eastern sea shore and Sittwe port in the western shore of Myanmar. The passage covers a total distance of 907 km. As per the project, the goods are to be transhipped from Kolkata port to Sittwe port (539 km) and from Sittwe to Paletwa by inland water transport (158 km) on river Kaladan and from Paletwa to India-Myanmar border in Myanmar by road (110 km) and National Highway 54 Lawngtlai (Mizoram) in India by road (100km).<sup>20</sup> Further, Lawngtlai would be connected by road with Silchar and Srirampur (Assam) all the way through Daboka, Nagaon and Guwahati (Assam).

**Table: 2 (Kaladan Multimodal Corridor)**

<b>Route</b>	<b>Mode of Transport</b>	<b>Distance in km</b>
Kolkata(Port) Sittwe(Port)	Shipping	539
Sittwe(Port) Paletwa (River Kaladan)	Inland Water Transport	158
Paletwa-Indo-Myanmar Border (In Myanmar)	Road	110
Border-NH 54 (Lawngtlai, Road Mizoram, India)		100

Source: MDONER, Government of India

A relook of the project indicates that Kaladan multimodal transport corridor, if implemented in time, would transform the geoeconomic scenario of the region as well as end its maritime isolation. It would also give substantial advantage to the landlocked States of North East India to kick-start its trade with the BCIM and other regional groupings soon. Further, this riverine road transport system would also augment the significance of the region from the perspective of Act East Policy and transform it from landlocked to land linked region. It would link

those States to the Sittwe port of Myanmar paving the way for greater connectivity of the region with the ASEAN as well. The following Table 3 explains the road map for Northeast-Sittwe corridor.

**Table: 3 Northeast-Sittwe Corridor**

State	Origin	Destination	Via NH /Distance in km
Arunachal Pradesh	Itanagar (Myanmar)	Sittwe	NH 27 (1320.5)
Assam	Guwahati	Sittwe	NH 6 (1098.6)
Manipur	Imphal	Sittwe	NH 102B & 2 (983.3)
Meghalaya	Shillong	Sittwe	NH 6 (1005.6)
Mizoram	Aizawl	Sittwe	NH 2 (615.6)
Nagaland	Kohima	Sittwe	NH 102B & 2 (1119.8)
Tripura	Agartala	Sittwe	NH 108 (955.5)

Source: The Author

At present, the project is intended towards an integrated port and Inland Water Transport (IWT) terminal at Sittwe, smooth navigational channel from Sittwe to Paletwa and highway transshipment terminal at Paletwa. To make sure that, it becomes an active pillar of the country's Act East Policy, the Government has approved the revised cost estimate of Rs. 2,904.04 crore for the early completion of this strategic port in the larger interest of India's Northeast.<sup>21</sup> In the initial stage, the corridor would link Northeast with Myanmar, but in the later stage, it would link the region with Bangkok, Phnom Penh, Saigon, Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Singapore sea ports in the free trade architecture. This project would create opportunities for the emergence of industrial clusters in the Northeast, provided the political leadership sets the agenda with a robust entrepreneurial culture and announce institutional reforms to mark growth and development in the region. Then, only the NE region would be ready to kick-start its trade and economic cooperation with the ASEAN and other regional groupings.

## Northeast-Sittwe Multimodal Corridor



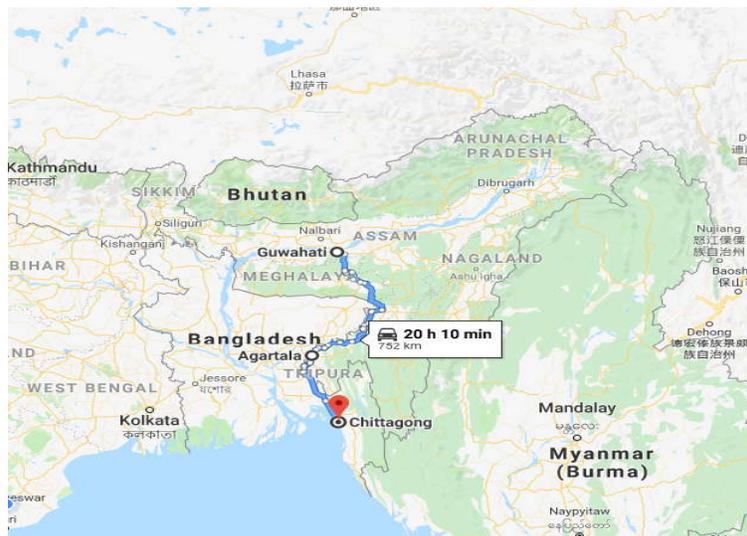
Source: Drawn by the Author, Google Maps

### Guwahati-Chittagong Corridor

Guwahati-Chittagong corridor spanning over 752 km is significant for road, rail and sea connectivity within the BCIM. Recently, New Delhi has made a diplomatic breakthrough in securing Dhaka's consent to make use of Chittagong port, which is just 72 kilometers away from Sabroom, the southernmost border town of Tripura. India is building a 2.5 km bridge over the Feni river in Tripura to carry heavy machines and goods to the northeastern region through the Chittagong port of Bangladesh. The bridge with a cost estimation of 94 Crore would provide transport connectivity to Chittagong through roadways and railways.<sup>22</sup> The North Frontier Railway (NFR) has also completed a 135 km railway line upto Sabroom in the border town of Southern Tripura<sup>23</sup> and this newly functional railway link would provide huge advantage to the Northeastern States in terms of connectivity to international Chittagong sea port as well. Thus, once these railway projects are in place, they will help the region in breaking its geographical isolation and landlockedness. Further, the Northeastern region can be connected to Bangkok, Guangzhou, Phnom Penh, Saigon

and Singapore sea ports of Southeast/East Asia through the Chittagong Port reinforcing the BCIM sub-regional cooperation initiative. But the success hinges how successfully the BCIM countries tap their respective resources and transform them into productive gains for their mutual benefits without jeopardizing the interest of the other.

### Guwahati-Chittagong Corridor



Source: Drawn by the Author, Google Maps

Recapitulating the study, it is suggested that, India must weigh up its benefits as well as challenges before effectuating BCIM economic corridor in specific sense to India’s Northeastern region. It would be prudent to implement region specific corridors such as Kolkata-Kunming corridor, Northeast-Sittwe multi modal corridor and Guwahati-Chittagong corridor to secure India’s national interest in our instant neighbourhood and subsequently, judging the success of that economic corridor, New Delhi may go ahead for other cross-border networks such as Guwahati-Kunming corridor under the larger canvass of BCIM. In this perspective, the doctrine of ‘enlightened national interest’ pursued by the Modi Government towards regional/sub-regional issues could be tested in case of BCIM to secure our national interest in India’s immediate/extended neighbourhood.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Mustafizur Rahman, “BCIM-Economic Corridor: An Emerging Opportunity,” *The Daily Star*, 15 March 2014, <https://www.thedailystar.net/bcim-economic-corridor-an-emerging-opportunity-155339> (accessed on 24 February 2019).
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>4</sup> “Joint Statement on the State Visit of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang to India,” Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2013, <http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/21723/Joint+Statement+on+the+State+Visit+of+Chinese++Li+Keqiang+to+India> (accessed on 15 January 2019).
- <sup>5</sup> “Joint Statement between the India and China at Beijing.” *Strategic Digest*, 2015, p. 625.
- <sup>6</sup> “Joint Statement between the India and China during Prime Minister’s visit to Chin,” Press Information Bureau, 15 May, 2015, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=121755> (accessed on 18 June 2018).
- <sup>7</sup> Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, “Kunming Meet revives BCIM Link Plan,” *The Economic Times*, 24 June 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/kunming-meet-revives-bcim-link-plan/articleshow/69921135.cms?from=mdr>(accessed on 11 July 2019).
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup> “Northeastern Region Vision 2020,” Ministry of Development of Northeastern Region, Government of India, 2008, pp.1-4, [http://www.MDONER.gov.in/sites/default/files/silo2\\_content/ner\\_vision/Vision\\_2020.pdf](http://www.MDONER.gov.in/sites/default/files/silo2_content/ner_vision/Vision_2020.pdf) (accessed on 14 January 2019).
- <sup>11</sup> “Transforming the Northeast, High Level Commission Report to the Prime Minister,” Planning Commission, Government of India, 1997, [http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/ne\\_exe.pdf](http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/ne_exe.pdf) (accessed on 11 September 2018).
- <sup>12</sup> “Northeastern Region Vision 2020,” No. 10.
- <sup>13</sup> Paper on BCIM-EC Background Note, circulated at Consultative Workshop, Guwahati, organised by the Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, 18-19 July 2014.
- <sup>14</sup> 2766.5 km mentioned in the paper as BCIM corridor is an approximate figure and not absolute figure. Most of the papers on BCIM corridor mention it as 2800k from Kunming to Kolkata via Dhaka and Mandalay.
- <sup>15</sup> Rupak Bhattacharjee, “Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar-Economic Corridor: Ushering a New Era of Interconnectedness,” *Indian Defence Review & South Asia Monitor*, 18 September 2016, <http://>

www.indiandefencereview.com/spotlights/bangladesh-china-india-and-myanmar-economic-corridor-ushering-a-new-era-of-interconnectedness/ (accessed on May 14 2019).II .See, See, Kishan S. Rana and Patricia Uberoi, "India's North East States, BCIM Forum and Regional Integration," Monograph, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, 2012.

16. The Stilwell Road is named after American General, Joseph W. Stilwell who undertook the responsibility of constructing the project in December 1942 as an alternative conduit of supply route for carrying men and materials to the Japanese occupied China during the last part of World War.
17. The author visited Ledo-Nampong sector of Stilwell Road on 29-30 November 2015 and collected data interacting with the eminent public leaders, Government officials and other stakeholders at Jairampur and Nampong towns of Changlang District in Arunachal Pradesh. For details refer, Stilwell Road, NIC, Changlang, <http://changlang.nic.in/stilwell.htm> (accessed on November 27, 2015).
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23. "Tripura CM Flags off Vital Train Services Linking Border Town," Outlook Scroll, 3 October 2019. <https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/tripura-cm-flags-off-vital-train-services-linking-border-town/1632913>(accessed on 3 October 2019).

# Using Folk Media in Development Communication - A Study in KBK Region of Odisha

**Sourav Gupta\***

## **Abstract**

The alternative paradigms of development communication strongly recommend use of cultural idioms of expression in spreading development messages in rural and underdeveloped areas of our country. The proposition has been taken up with great enthusiasm by government and non-government agencies towards a process of rejuvenating traditional forms. The present study analyses how far the said use of folk forms are feasible in terms of aesthetics and communication. The study is in context to the Kalahandi-Balangir-Koraput (KBK) region of Odisha, one of the most underdeveloped areas of the country.

## **Introduction**

As India gained independence, the question of development of the newly independent country became important for the government. The belief of the then administrative head in socialistic pattern of economy led the government to undertake a range of welfare and development measures with the common people in focus. For carrying out the development process a host of economic institutions like the Planning Commission, the Finance Commission, educational institutions like Indian Statistical Institute were formed. The comprehensive development

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\* Dr. Sourav Gupta is Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Central University of Orissa, Koraput. Email: [sourav.gupta81@gmail.com](mailto:sourav.gupta81@gmail.com)

approach was laid out in the First Five-Year Plan document and subsequent plans. The international economic scenario was also brimming with exploration of economic policies and developmental approaches for the recently decolonized, third world countries of the world. It was recognized almost in all important forums that a comprehensive communication strategy is an integral part for making a development initiative effective. The most notable among these was the Bretton Woods Conference which launched the notions of this neo-development and laid down the foundations for social scientists like Wilbur Schramm to explore the paradigms of Development Communication. This was the beginning of a series of experiments in the approaches of communication in third world perspective. The experiment changed paradigms, approaches of using communication as a tool of development and evolved terminologies of various kinds. The medium of communication also came under scanner as Development Communication in its present avatar, Communication for Development has advocated the philosophy of narrowcasting than broadcasting keeping in mind the patterns of media literacy in third world countries.

## **Review of Literature**

### ***Cultural overview***

India has had a rich tradition of folk culture right from the onset of civilization. Each region of India has its own folk form ranging from songs, music, musical instruments, rhymes, poems, stories, narrative styles and theatrical idioms. During the rule of the Hindu Rajas, specially empires like the Guptas and the Nandas, art, culture and literature practices were patronized and an urban paradigm of culture was created mainly by Sanskrit scholars and a host of talented litterateurs like Kalidas, Vaas et al. The Sanskrit theatre developed based on the *Natyashastra* authored by Bharat Muni, a text much older and capable to Aristotle's Poetics. Thus, there emerged two different streams of cultural practices – one, the folk which is carried over since time immemorial through oral tradition in rural India and two, the urban, elitist culture practiced and enjoyed by educated and modern people of towns and cities. While the first was practiced and enjoyed not as a process but out of natural instinct, as a part of lifestyle, as a self-recreation the second became an academic affair, with written grammar manuals and institutional coaching. It also involved a lot of settings, costumes, accompaniments and became a costly affair with a

sizeable production cost. In order to recover the production cost the audience were charged and in this way it got alienated from the poor, common masses. However, the indigenous folk culture kept on flowing freely through ages away from limelight of mainstream media. The striking features of these indigeneous media are that they are born out of social contexts and are educative in nature.

“Folk Theatre is the theatre which is transmitted by common people. Its relation with the people is deep and multilayered. It is a kind of entertainment which is not entertainment alone, it carries with it all social and religious institutions. We find reflection of cults, customs, rituals and belief of common people in folk theatre.” (Satapathy 2016; pp. 10-11).

### ***Changing paradigm of development communication***

As technology developed the newspaper, radio, cinema and television became important influencing factors and the role played by the mass media especially during the Second World War led the social scientists take keen interest in media research as they too were convinced of the capacity of information dissemination of mass media which was coined as the Magic Bullet Effect. The Bretton Woods conference advocated pumping of funds to third world countries for economic reconstruction, post-Second World War through agencies like UN, World Bank, IMF etc. A number of development projects and schemes were initiated by governments of third world countries like India based on loans, grants-in-aids etc. from these agencies. By then scholars like Wilbur Schramm had established the need for a communication strategy integral to these development approaches. In spite of patronizing the mass media, it was not able to play the role as per expectation in the development sector. The top down approach of development which was practiced post-Second World War tried to impose development schemes and projects from the top by simply throwing funds did not work in third world countries, as little progress took place in the Asian, Latin American and African nations. The policies and projects were formulated in urban centres by elite administrators without any knowledge of ground reality and, therefore, were not implemented. Secondly, large-scale lack of education and awareness existed in rural societies and the mass media was unable to penetrate those areas due to their remoteness, lack of electricity and telecommunication infra structure. Under this perspective, the scholars were forced to rethink an alternative philosophy of using

communication tools to support development strategies. The first significant direction to this thought was given by Everette Rogers in his seminal work, *The Passing of the Dominant Paradigm*, where he clearly stressed on the use of human communication forms like traditional, folk and cultural forms of media to support development strategies in the third world countries. Rogers advocated self-development of the society rather than a mass media oriented top-down approach. An excerpt from the said work goes as:

So the role of mass communication in self-development is more permissive and supportive than in the usual top-down development approach, where local citizens are told what their problems are and persuaded to follow certain specific lines of action to solve them, usually involving a good deal of dependence on government. (Rogers 1976; pp 29).

The Alternative Paradigm of Development Communication emphasized on drawing communication support for development from the people who are themselves targets of communication thereby advocating an inclusive active involvement of the people in the development process rather than being passive recipients. The focus now shifted back from mass media to human communication – “In many developing nations the mass media in their present form are not suited for the kinds of development tasks they have to perform.....” (Melkote, Srinivas & Steves, 2001; pp. 220). The model transformed from being top down to circular and Development Communication (DC) was re coined as Development Support Communication (DSC). The UN agencies like UNESCO, Unicef, WHO etc. also took keen interest in development of this process and as a result new processes like Behaviour Change Communication, Community Based Theatre, Theatre for Development emerged. All of these emphasized on inter personal and group communication and gave a facilitation turn over to communication practices. Processes like Theatre for Development became hugely successful and effective in African countries like Ghana and Nigeria. With the alternative paradigm gaining importance in third world countries, the human communication forms specially, folk and traditional media are once again in the centre of application and experiments. But the major question that stands is how the folk media is to be used in dissemination of developmental messages? How will the

practitioners of folk media adapt themselves to the communication pedagogies?

### ***Odisha-Initiatives of the U.N and the Artist Federation***

In Odisha, the three major phenomenon were the setting up of Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, whose students trained in theatre, music and dance and later took up cultural developmental campaigns as a full-time work. One such important organization was Natyachetana, theatre of consciousness in the very name of the group, led by Subodh Patnaik, who trained further from Badal Sircar and added an ideological perspective to their developmental drama. The establishment of AIR stations and Doordarshan centres in different parts of the State also gave impetus to the creative instincts of local people whose talents found an avenue in implementing the public service broadcasting philosophy of these two organizations. In early '90s, Unicef began its CfD operations in Odisha and efforts were made to explore folk media in various parts of the State. In 2011 when Government of Odisha's Culture Department started a platform for folk artists known as Artist Federation where folk artists were empanelled in Song and Drama Division style and used in promotion of government awareness scheme.

The Artist Federation scheme was launched in Odisha under the Department of Culture, Government of Odisha from April 2011 with an aim to provide livelihood support, promotion and conservation of the traditional folk art, and dissemination of information of government plans, programmes and schemes through traditional folk artists. The structural set up of Artist Federation is like this- in every block there will be a BKSS (Block level Kala Sanskruti Sangha) comprising artists of different gram panchayats. Similarly combining artists of every block another repertoire will be formed which will be known as ZKSS (Zilla Kala Sanskruti Sangha). The artists of the Head Quarter towns/ Municipalities/ Notified Area Councils will come under NKSS (Nagar Kala Sanskruti Sangha). Every KSS will operate in the lines of a registered society and will have members led by a President, a Secretary and a Treasurer. The publicity budget for government awareness campaigns will be in principle allotted for socio-cultural communication which will be implemented by the KSSs.

Under the scheme 471 type of folk art, 7482 folk artists group, and about 1 lakh folk artists have been enrolled so far. Formation of thirty ZKSS, 314 BKSS-314, 9 NKSS-09 and one RKSS have been completed.

The government provides Rs. 5 lakhs each to ZKSS, Rs. 2 lakhs to BKSS and Rs. 3 lakhs to NKSS. So far 1.9 lakh programmes have been organised for the folk forms and folk artists. A corpus fund of Rs. 4 crore has been created with provisions in the supplementary budget 2017-18. (4; <https://www.indiawhispers.com>).

### ***KBK region of Odisha***

The KBK Region in the southern part of Odisha, a State in Eastern India, is undoubtedly one of the most backward, underdeveloped and poverty stricken areas of the country. KBK stands for Koraput, Balangir and Kalahandi districts of Odisha. The erstwhile undivided Koraput district was fragmented into new districts of a smaller Koraput, Rayagada, Navarangpur and Malkangiri. Similarly, Balangir was bifurcated into Balangir and Subarnapur. As per the data of the 55<sup>th</sup> Round of NSS in 1999-2000 the incidence of rural poverty was as high as 87.14 per cent. The entire region is characterized by the existence of a sizeable tribal population comprising various tribes with forests and scheduled area of land. It is technologically impoverished with very poor communication infrastructure. Low levels of rural electrification, internet penetration, poor mobile network has kept the region immune to mass media like television and social media. The government and NGOs have initiated a lot of development projects in the area. Theatre has been prolific in spreading the message of these initiatives. The area is known for indigenous cultural and religious lifestyles which is integrated deep into the socio-economic fabric of life. So, alternative forms of communication is most capable of communicating with the people of this area. But how it may influence them to bring about a change, needs a study to investigate the dynamics of theatre as a medium of communication and its relationship with various player-factors of development.

The KBK Region with its topographical, geographical and habitant features, of which the tribals form an important part, is extremely rich in terms of indigeneous culture. UNESCO has declared Koraput as an International Heritage Site in Agriculture for its wide and rare variety of rice. The majority of tribal population is engaged in agriculture and contract labour and face severe problems of health, sanitation, poverty, under nutrition and displacement. The Naxalite Movement or Maoist movement has found quite a strong foothold among the tribals largely encashing on their deprivation. The area is culturally characterized by

a wide range of socio-religious rituals also known as Yatra or journey for instance *Thakurani Yatra*, *Dandi Yatra* etc. There are annual worships like Mahasivaratri and Durga Puja, seasonal festivities like Puajuntia, Bhajuntia and rituals related to occupation, life, death and marriages. The region has strong usage of Kosli and tribal Desia dialect of Odia language, folk dance forms like Dhap, Ghumra, Dhemsa, Bagha Nacha, traditional theatre like Jatra, Pala, Daskathia, Prahllad Natak etc. It must be stated here that the major constraints to change are cultural and psychological. People resist change as they are psychologically bonded to a specific set of culture. The message given through Communication tools may penetrate if it is given through a cultural idiom known to the people. For a country like India having multifaceted and region specific culture the development messages have to be framed based on local culture, habits, tastes and preferences of the target region. This kind of pluralism is not possible to be addressed through mass media based on principles of 'Mass Society'. The question is, are all folk forms capable to replace the mass media?

### **Conceptual Framework**

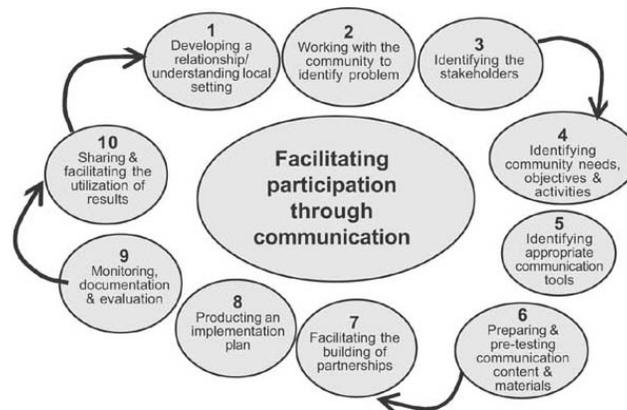
#### ***Aesthetic Theory-Theodor Adorno***

In Aesthetic Theory, Adorno is concerned not only with such standard aesthetic preoccupations as the function of beauty and sublimity in art, but with the relations between art and society. He feels that modern art's freedom from such restrictions as cult and imperial functions that had plagued previous eras of art has led to art's expanded critical capacity and increased formal autonomy. With this expanded autonomy comes art's increased responsibility for societal commentary. However, Adorno does not feel that overtly politicized content is art's greatest critical strength: rather, he champions a more abstracted type of "truth-content" (Wahrheitsgehalt). Unlike Kantian or idealist aesthetics, Adorno's aesthetics locates truth-content in the art object, rather than in the perception of the subject. Such content is, however, affected by art's self-consciousness at the hands of its necessary distance from society, which is perceptible in such instances as the dissonances inherent in modern art.

#### ***Participatory Model of Communication***

The model followed by TfD and Community Based Theatre being propagated by UNESCO and UNICEF respectively are that of

Participatory Communication or Communication for Development. The process may be illustrated as:



Source: [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

Introduced by United Nations through its well thought Communication Policy, Communication for Development (CfD) which advocates ‘communication systems based on dialogue and that allows communities to speak out’ (UNDP; pp. 5) has already been successfully implemented in many third world countries of Africa, Latin America and Asia in combating issues of health, literacy, hygiene, population and other developmental areas. In India, CfD has become a favourite tool of the NGOs and Government initiatives towards development. Although recommended in the MacBride Commission Report of UNESCO, *Many Voices One World* (1980), India is yet to form her cultural and communication policy. However, in recent times, the campaigns of development messages have relied heavily on use of folk and other forms of traditional media in backward areas. The question is, has it worked?

### **Analysis of Data**

#### ***Methods of Collection and Analysis***

The primary data has been collected by observation of different folk forms, their performances and interviews of the folk artists of the KBK region of Odisha. Interviews of CfD experts specially those working in

traditional media like dance, music and theatre have been taken to understand the process of preparing a content for spreading of development messages. From this study a parameter of feasibility have been drawn and the major folk forms of the KBK region have been analysed. Categories of feasibility have been drawn up on the feasibility of forms. Feasibility here refers to the capability of the folk form to incorporate development messages and disseminate them to the people.

Let us first have a look at an overview of the folk forms of the KBK region and their coexistence and inter relationship with other socio-cultural factors like the linguistic and the religious aspects.

### Chart-1

Description of the Folk/ Cultural Landscape of the KBK region of Odisha

Sl no. (I)	Name of the District (II)	Major Folk/ Cultural Forms Practiced (III)	Festivals/ occasions of performance (IV)	Tribes Residing in the district (IV)	Languages/ Dialects used (V)
1.	Balangir	Dalkhai, Rasarkeli, Mailajada, Dhap, Gandabaja, Karma, Nachnia, Bangri, Khudka, Sanchar, Samprada, Daka, Gourbadi, Kalingadanda, Krushnaguru, Keertan, Pancharasi, Panchabadya, Jhanughanti, Parsuram,	Nuakhai, Sitalsasthi, Bhajuntia, Puajuntia, Shivaratri mela, Shrabana purnima, Eid, Guru Nanak Jayanti	Banjara, Binjhal, Binjhar, Dal, Gond, Kandha, Gauda, Kandha, Kuli, Mirdha, Kudi, Munda, Saora, Shabar, Lodha etc.	Sambalpuri/ Kosli, Odia, Hindi, Punjabi, Halbi, Bhatri, Sadri etc.

		Kosli Natak etc.			
2. Subarnapur	Danda nata, Bagha nach etc.	Chaitra, Sivaratri, Sitalsasthi, Patakhanda yatra, Kundadeo yatra, Dhanu yatra, Nuakhai, Bhajjuntia, Puajuntia etc.	Binjhal, Binjhwar, Gond, Kharia, Kandha, Kolha, Kora, Kuli, Mirdha, Munda, Oraon, Saora etc.	Sambalपुरi/ Kosli, Odia etc.	
3. Kalahandi	Ghumra, Bajasal, Banabadi, Singhbaja, Madli, Dandari, Paik akhada, Podmara, Ghodel, Salap nishan, Dhap, Suanga, Baria, Sankha vadya, Ghanta vadya, Palla, Daskathia, Rahas, Jaiphula, Sajani, Sari, Pholia, Boria, Nialimali, Kalakolik, Kosli natak etc.	Nuakhai, Dussehra, Dola purnima, Chaitra Purnima, Krishna Leela, Janmashtami, Podmara parva, Krishna ras leela, Ras purnima, Diel, Chatar yatra, Khandabasa, Pora uans, Amnuan, Kandulnuan, Seminuan, Dumernuan, Permanji, Bhejinta, Pojinta, Sastiosha, Janhiosha, Belyatra, Pusparab, Cherchera, Bihanchhina, Poeluansh, Porauansh, Nagbom etc.	Banjara, Bhottada/Bhatra, Binjhal, Gadaba, Gond, Holva, Kondh, Lohara, Kondadora, Kora, Mirdha, Munda, Paroja, Saora, Shabar, Lodha etc.	Sambalपुरi/ Kosli, Odia, Hindi, Chattisgarhi, Halbi, Bhatri, Sadri etc.	
4. Nuapada	Dalkhai, Ghumra,	Shakti PEETHa puja, Ganesh Puja,	Bhunjia, Banjara,	Sambalपुरi/ Kosli, Odia,	

	Bajasal, Kosli natak	Chhath puja, Nangara, Budharaja, Sunadei	Binjhal, Dal, Gond, Kharia, Kondh, Kandha, Mirdha, Saora, Shabar, Lodha etc.	Hindi, Chattisharhi etc.
5. Rayagada	Desia nata, Desia gita, Dhemsas, Geetkudia etc.	Chaiti parab, Kandula, Sivaratri, Rath yatra/ Talari yara, Dussehra, Gram devata, Magha mela, Taratarini mela, Dhanu yatra etc.	Jatapu, Kondh, Kandha, Khond, Kondadora, Paroja, Saora, Shabar, Lodha etc	Odia, Hindi, Telegu, Bangla, Desia etc.
6. Koraput	Desia nata, Desia gita, Dhemsas, Geetkudia etc.	Parab, Jagarmela, Rathayatra, Bahuda yatra, Bali yatra, Dola purnima, Muttyalama yatra, Batomangala yatra, Neelabadi yatra, Dussehra, Srabana purnima, Chaitra parab, Nuakhai, Sume gelirak etc.	Bhattada, Dhotada, Bhumia, Dharua, Dhuruba, Dhurva, Gadaba, Bodo Gadaba, Holva, Kandha, Gauda, Khond, Kondh, Kandha, Kondadora, Kotia, Omanatya, Parenga, Paroja, Paraja, Pentia, Santal, Saora, Savar, Saura etc.	Odia, Hindi, Telegu, Bangla, Desia, Walmiki etc.
7. Nabarangpur	Desia nata, Desia gita, Dhemsas, Geetkudia, Rinjodi, Sailodi, Madhia etc.	Mondai, Rathayatra, Dussehra, Holi, Mahashivaratri, Muharram, Christmas, Maa Bhandargarani yatra, Maa	Bhattada, Bhatra, Gond, Bhunja, Gadaba, Holva, Kandha, Kondh, Omanatyo, Paroja, Santal, Saora, Shabar, Lodha, Sounti	Odia, Hindi, Telegu, Bangla, Desia etc.

		Pendrani yatra etc. etc.	
8. Malkangiri	Desia nata, Desia gita, Dhemsas, Geetkudia, Sakhi nrutya etc.	Malyabanta, Kedu, Bondas, Shivratri, Holi, Bhattada, Rathayatra, Bhumia, Paroja, Astaprahari nama Dharua, Dhuruba, yagna, Bada yatra, Didayi, Gadaba, Bali yatra, Chaitra Gandia, Holva, Parba etc. Kandha Gauda, Kandha, Kondadora, Kotia, Koya, Matya, Parenga, Santal etc.	Odia, Hindi, Telegu, Bangla, Desia, Tamil, Halbi, Bhatri, Sadri, Chattisgarhi etc.

From the discussion with CfD experts it may be inferred that a folk form should be flexible in nature to be used as a tool of disseminating development messages. A development message may address issues related to problems of the common people related to health, hygiene, literacy, education, displacement etc. The traditional forms are originally based on mythology, social structure and provide a frame work for development messages to be incorporated into them. The content is partially modified or added and the form is used to advantage for dissemination. In arts, the more classical form is, the more difficult it is to manoeuvre or improvise. Folk cultural forms are nothing but the people's manifestation of classical arts. Some of them have evolved from classical to contemporary while some have remained unchanged. Dance forms by virtue of grammar have a rigid nature of chronology of movements. Bands without lyrics are instrumental sounds which move emotionally but can't be manipulated. Songs and drama can be improvised due to their textual attributes. However, dances and musical instruments can be accompaniments or parts of design for songs and dramas. Therefore, based on flexibility the folk forms were categorized into three levels Yes, No, Partially (Y, N & P) to signify whether they possess the qualities to be treated as possible medium of communication. Based on the quality the Y & P categories have further been categorized in three levels High, Medium and Low (H, M & L) based on their communicative capabilities either as unique forms or in combination with other forms.

## Chart-2

### Communication Feasibility of Major Folk/Cultural Forms of the KBK Region of Odisha

Sl no.	District/Area	Name of the art form (I)	Type of art form (II)	Brief Description of the form	Qualified to be used as independent awareness tool? Y/N/ P*(III)	Reason (for III) (IV)	Communicative Utility as a part of TFDL/M /H** (V)	Remarks (w.r.t. V)(VI)
1.	BALANGIR-SUBARNAPUR	<i>Dalkhai</i>	Dance	Mythology based romantic mood performed on occasions like Nuakhai, Phagumpuni etc.	N	No scope to incorporate development message	L	The dance form is rigid in nature & movements can't be manipulated. It may be used at the beginning/middle/end of a drama scene.
		<i>Dandanata</i>	Dance	Ritualistic dance with music performed in Chaitra in phases for worship of deities like Lord Shiva.	P	Scope present in songs used	M	Songs can be manipulated slightly
		<i>Dhap</i>	Dance	Couple dance by unmarried boys & girls in rhythm of Dhap, a musical instrument	N	-do-	L	-do-

<i>Panchabadya</i>	Instrumental music	A band in combination of five musical instruments	N	-do-	L	The music can be used as a background score in beginning to attract audience
<i>Baghanacha</i>	Dance & Instruments	Dressed as tigers male dancers move in a locality & perform acrobatic movements in company of instruments	P	Visual messages may be incorporated through Tiger	M	The figure & movements of Tiger may be theatrically manipulated
<i>Koshi natah</i>	Theatre	Open air drama based on mythology written in sambalpuri/ koshi dialect	Y	The play can be designed to incorporate develop messages	H	A play may be written, rehearsed & performed based on a certain development issue in Koshi/ Sambalpuri dialect which will be appealing to local people
<i>Ghumra</i>	Dance	Dancers dance to a special drum in a rhythm of war dance, also known as Virbadya	N	No scope to incorporate development message	L	The dance form is rigid in nature & movements can't be manipulated. It may be used at the beginning/middle/end of a drama scene.
<i>Bajasal</i>	Dance	Dance heavily loaded in body movements with multiple drummers	N	-do-	L	-do-

## 2. KALAHANDI-NUAPADA

3. UNDIVIDED KORAPUT (Koraput, Rayagada, Nawarangpur & Malkangiri)	<i>Dhensa</i>	Dance	A dance in circular motion performed by Koraputia tribals in state of intoxication	N	-do-	L	-do-
	<i>Geetkudia</i>	Songs	Songs in desia dialect sung by women while working in fields	Y	Scope is there to incorporate development messages	M	A fusion of desia tunes may be done with development messages by specially composing lyrics but it is challenging to maintain the flavour of the original geetkudia
	<i>Desia nata</i>	Theatre	Traditional theatrical forms of tribals of Koraput based on mythology & social issues performed in desia dialect	Y	The play can be designed to incorporate develop messages	H	A play may be written, rehearsed & performed based on a certain development issue in Koraputia/Desia dialect which will be appealing to local people

\*YES/NO/PARTIALLY  
\*\*LOW/MEDIUM/HIGH

**Notes:**

Balangir and Subarnapur, Kalahandi and Nuapada and the four districts of the erstwhile undivided Koraput district have common folk and cultural forms of expression. Therefore, the forms are overlapping and may be used in the same region.

There are huge numbers of folk and cultural forms of expression in the KBK districts. In the above chart representative forms have been considered for analysis covering all three major aspects of culture i.e. music, dance and theatre.

**Findings, Discussion and Suggestion**

The findings and suggestion emerging out of the present study may be discussed as follows:

Every art form is unique. The point analyses whether the form is independent to spread the message of development. Dance forms are No as they can't be improvised but songs and drama are Yes as they are flexible.

In serial no. (V) communicative utility has been categorized as High, Low and Medium based on the flexibility of the art form in designing or incorporating messages of development in them. Naturally, as per the aesthetics of each form dances are in L, songs in M and Drama/Theatre in H.

Not all folk forms are suitable to be used as a awareness tool. There are certain forms which are flexible and developmental messages can be seamlessly incorporated into them like Pala, Desia Naat or Prahlad Natak. But certain forms are rigid like Dhemsa where movements are clearly laid down and any change can damage the purity of the folk form. So, the choice of form is very important. Wrong choice of form will lead to creation of an ineffective campaign. It is an important aspect of communication which demands study and research.

How to incorporate the developmental message in folk forms is a matter of deep research, study and can be arrived at through artistic experimentation only.

Not all artists are of same calibre and talent, therefore, they need training.

Many folk forms have died away or its elements have lost over time due to under usage. Fake lore or adulteration of pure folk is prevalent which needs to be avoided.

Although the operational structure is apparently democratic but the ground reality may not be so rosy as there are complaints of post holders snatching away bulk of the money depriving others. Many government officials are also illegally getting a share of the money as bribe or commission in lieu of providing more programmes to the artists.

In spite of being apparently democratic the artist federation is often peeved by excessive government control and government policies which are detrimental to artistic freedom. For example, often due to the dominance of message or its representation the art form ceases to be art and becomes only a conversation.

The funding provided for the programmes is shoe string and, hence, many talented artists are not getting involved.

The artists often prepare their content arbitrarily sitting in their rehearsal rooms without involving the community, thereby, violating the principles of democratic community participation. As a result they are missing out on vital real issues of the people.

### **Conclusion**

Two of the major problems of the folk culture is that one, the new generations of artists are losing interest in practice of their traditional arts, swaying into other vocations and secondly, the business of spreading awareness is not totally under their control. The government and NGOs are controlling vital organizational and financial decisions which again affect the aesthetics of the practice. The times are changing fast with advent of modern technology and lifestyle and it is high time that the folk culture and its usage be reviewed properly. The element of awareness and education is intrinsic in these forms and that should be a prime consideration while linking it to development campaigns. And the involvement of talented, trained and committed artists is quintessential for the success of this highly artistic and intricate process. Non-creative and non-aesthetic people should be kept out as they may do more damage than benefit.

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# Odisha: Conflictual Federalism and Politics: Union and State in India

**Dr. Satya Prakash Dash\***

## **Abstract**

The paper analyses the federalism in practical terms and presents the experience of federalism within the context of the state of Odisha and India. The paper focuses upon some of the contentious issues that create tension among the federal units. The paper presents that conflict in federal polity is a result of competitive party politics to gain and retain power. The paper in conclusion tends to project that the conflict might transform into coordinate federalism due to political compulsion. The Constitution of India describes India as a *Union of States*, and it is not a unitary or federal state. However, our system is a queer mixture of federal and unitary features, where even-though there are states like a federal system of US, the Union is more powerful, more like a unitary state and unlike a federal state. In many spheres, states are dependent upon the Union government, as the VII Schedule, containing the distribution of powers and responsibilities, is tilted in favour of the Union. The states' very existence and boundaries can be altered by the Union through a legislation passed by the Parliament, even if states do not give consent. For this it is commented by some that India is *an indestructible Union of destructible states*. K C Wheare describes India as a *quasi-federal* structure, but in the present political party configuration and alliance, stress is given more on horizontal and co-operative federalism. Prime Minister Modi repeatedly emphasizes that India can prosper only when states prosper, and he cites how the west is more developed and prosperous than the east side if a line is drawn vertically in the middle on the map of India.

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\* Dr. Satya Prakash Dash, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Sambalpur University, Burla-768019. E-mail: satya.csd@gmail.com

Federalism was never questioned in the period of *one-party dominant system*, when Congress party was ruling both at the Union and in many states. Some of the non-Congress ruled states complained of negligence, but it was not a recurrent feature. The coalition and alliance period in Indian polity with the decline of *one-party dominant system* till 2014 did not witness the vociferous demand by states for Special Category Status (SCS). However, after the dominance of *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) in the national election of 2014, and with its ambition to hold the sway in all the states, has created a fuss among some of the regional parties, thereby exemplifying a demand for SCS by many states, prominent among them are Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, and Bihar. Odisha and West Bengal are ruled by *Biju Janata Dal* and *Trinamool Congress* respectively that are not in the BJP led NDA. So, demand for SCS by Odisha and West Bengal may be a good option, on the pretext of development, even if it has political connotations. Bihar was ruled by *Janata Dal* (United) and *Rashtriya Janata Dal* alliance earlier, but in-between, JD(U) broke its alliance with RJD in 2017, and joined NDA, forming government with BJP alliance in Bihar. During the JD(U)-RJD alliance state government, there were demands for SCS by Bihar, but it has now subsided since JD(U) is in alliance with BJP, but demand for SCS by Bihar keeps on surfacing. *Telugu Desam Party* (TDP) broke the alliance with BJP in Andhra Pradesh on the pretext of development and demand for SCS, in March 2018, and withdrew from NDA. The demands for SCS have never been acceded to positively by the Union governments, UPA (2004-2014) and NDA (2014). Even though the UPA government declared SCS to Andhra Pradesh after the bifurcation of the state and creation of Telangana state, the same was never implemented.

### **Special Category Status**

The government of India declared 11 states as special category states (SCS), and this has been done on the basis of certain features. These features are hilly and difficult terrain, low population density and/or sizable share of tribal population, strategic location along borders with neighbouring countries, economic and infrastructural backwardness and non-viable nature of state finances etc., which necessitates special considerations while framing policy. States under this category have a low resource base and are not in a position to mobilize resources for their developmental needs even though their per capita income may

appear high. Hence, the special category states require a strong resource supply for its development, which otherwise it is unable to meet, and this is provided by the central government. The states that are declared as SCS are the seven north-eastern states, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

What are the benefits that include with the tag of SCS assumes a lot of importance in the context of the demands not only by the state of Odisha, but also by Bihar, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and West Bengal. Is it not a paradox that the states are more than eager to call themselves backward and undeveloped so as to get funds from Union government, while the political party in the state has been mandated to bring in development in the state? This also assumes significance due to the fact that the same political party has been mandated for twice and thrice in states like Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha. In earlier days the example of Kerala model or West Bengal model were given for development purposes, and in the present era, we are speaking about the Gujarat model or Madhya Pradesh model, in the context of development. Can more funds from Union government, in the garb of SCS status, bring in expeditious development in the concerned state? The special facilities and concessions that include with SCS are the following: states will get funds in the ratio of 90:10 grants versus loans, as opposed to 70:30 for other states under regular funds; complete waiver of excise duty in the state which is at present 16 per cent; 30 per cent of the Centre's gross budgetary support for Plan expenditure goes to special- category states.

The tradition of SCS that was initiated in 1969, under Gadgil formula, by the fifth Finance Commission in three states, Assam, Nagaland and Jammu & Kashmir, and later increasing to eleven states. Have the economies of these states improved, or this is given as political appeasement. The Raghuram Rajan Committee report of 2013, otherwise called *Report of the Committee for Evolving a Composite Development Index of States, 2013*, presents some sort of positive response to SCS status. The Rajan Committee that placed Odisha as the 'most backward' state, based upon an index of average of the ten sub-components. The table below presents some of the scores of the selected states, which includes the SCS and the states demanding to be included under SCS.

<b>SCS States States</b>	<b>Scores/Index</b>	<b>States demanding SCS States</b>	<b>Scores/Index</b>
Arunachal Pradesh	0.74	Odisha	0.79
Assam	0.71	Bihar	0.76
Meghalaya	0.70	Madhya Pradesh	0.76
Manipur	0.58	Jharkhand	0.74
Nagaland	0.57	Chhattisgarh	0.74
Jammu & Kashmir	0.53	Rajasthan	0.65
Mizoram	0.52	Uttar Pradesh	0.65
Tripura	0.47	Andhra Pradesh	0.54
Himachal Pradesh	0.42	Sikkim	0.41
Uttarakhand		0.39	

Source: *Report of the Committee for Evolving a Composite Development Index of States, 2013* (Raghuram Rajan Committee Report), p-31

From the indexes shown in the table, among the eleven SCS states, only three states, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, and Meghalaya are ‘least developed’ states; only one state, Uttarakhand, is ‘relatively developed’; and the rest seven states are ‘less developed’. It can be inferred from above that the SCS has acted as a factor for development, with eight of the eleven states not being categorized as ‘least developed’ states by the committee. It indicates that SCS has made a positive impact. The situation is not so promising in the context of the states demanding for SCS. Odisha is the first state among the ‘least developed’ states, followed by the other states. As earlier stated, SCS get grants from Union government for their financial requirement and asset creation.

Odisha is rich in mineral resources with a fifth of India’s coal, a quarter of its iron ore, a third of its bauxite reserves and most of the chromites. With this rich mineral resources base, Odisha would have prospered a lot, but it is alleged that a lion’s share of the royalty of the various mineral resources are taken by the central government. The state receives a very little share of this royalty. Apart from this, the Shah Commission of inquiry has submitted its report on the corruption in mines in Odisha. Hence, on the one side there is the complain that a major portion of the royalty is being taken by the central government, and on the other hand a commission has alleged corruption in mines activities. Apart from the traditional backward parameters contributing to lack of development, Odisha is prone to natural disasters, almost recurring annually, either in the form of flood, cyclone or drought.

Cyclones *Phailin* (2013), *Hudhud* (2014), *Fani* (2019), *Amphan* (2020) occurred, along with severe droughts.

The Chief Minister of Odisha in a letter to the Prime Minister on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2018, again stressed for the demand of Special Category Status (SCS) to Odisha to fast-track the on-going development. The letter stated, ‘with the high percentage of population belonging to scheduled castes and tribes, and the State facing frequent natural calamities, Odisha deserves to be accorded SCS to fast-track the on-going development and may be treated at par with north-eastern and Himalayan states for sharing pattern of Centrally sponsored schemes’. He also suggested implementation of recommendations of the Swaminathan Committee on Farmers.

The Centre’s action of not granting the SCS to Odisha was justified by Montek Singh Ahluwalia, the then Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission, on his visit to Odisha in March 2014. Ahluwalia said, “It’s not in my hands to grant special category status to Odisha. However, there is no doubt that Odisha is a backward State. The state should get and is getting enough assistance under various schemes like the Revised Long Term Action Plan (RLTAP) in KBK region and Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF)”. It was reported in newspapers that in 2013, he had rejected the state Government’s plea for special category status saying that Odisha did not meet the ‘existing criteria’ for grant of such status. The plan panel, however, rejected Odisha’s demand before the Raghuram Rajan Committee report, otherwise called *Report of the Committee for Evolving a Composite Development Index of States*, 2013, which designated Odisha as the poorest state in the country, but did not recommend such a status to it.

The then Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog, Arvind Panagariya, during his visit to Odisha on 9 January 2016, rejected the demand of SCS to Odisha on the pretext of having no relevance after the recommendations of the Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC) on new policy of distribution of resources between the centre and states. The demand for SCS to Odisha was relooked with a special dispensation from the centre by the Chief Minister while discussing with Panagariya on the same day. The Chief Minister was concerned with the delinking of several area development programmes, including the special plan for KBK districts, BRGF, and Integrated Action Plan (IAP) for Left Wing Extremism affected districts from central assistance. The Chief Minister stated that the increase of financial devolution of central taxes from

32% to 42% will actually result with a loss of Rs. 1776.31 crores for Odisha in 2015-16.

### **River Mahanadi Dispute**

Another contentious issue is the Mahanadi river water dispute between the states of Odisha and Chhattisgarh. Odisha alleged that Chhattisgarh is constructing weirs and barrages over the up-stream of river Mahanadi and obstructing the free flow of the river to Odisha. Odisha objected to the construction and operating of six industrial barrages, Samoda, Seorinarayan, Basantpur, Mirouni, Saradiha and Kalma, by Chhattisgarh government. As alleged by Odisha government, this has been done without prior consultation and unilaterally by Chhattisgarh. It also alleged that since Chhattisgarh is ruled by the BJP, the Union government is taking the side of Chhattisgarh. The Union government denied this allegation and called upon both the states for an amicable solution, but to no result. The ruling BJD party in Odisha made it a major issue against the evil design of BJP to the state. However, Odisha government sees it as a major problem as the river Mahanadi will dry-up in the downstream, thereby severely hampering the agriculture, hydro-electricity at Hirakud Dam, pisciculture and the livelihood of fishermen community. All attempts by the Union government to solve the river Mahanadi water dispute between Chhattisgarh and Odisha went in vain. In November 2016, Odisha government appealed before the Supreme Court under Art. 131 of the Constitution of India, and pleaded for the formation of a tribunal under Sec. 3 of Inter-State Water Disputes Act, 1956. The Supreme Court, in January 2018, directed the Union government to set up a tribunal in response to the appeal made by the Odisha government to stop the Chhattisgarh government from constructing several weirs on the river Mahanadi. The Union government notified the tribunal on 12 March 2018 to “determine water sharing among basin states on the basis of the overall availability of water... contribution of each state, the present utilisation of water resources in each state and the potential for future development”. The river water sharing dispute is another major area of dispute within the federal framework that has wider ramifications.

### **Other Contentious Issues**

The confrontation of the state of Odisha with the Union government, apart from the issue of SCS, gave a new dimension with the BJP's

renewed vigour and slogan of ‘Mission +120’ for the Odisha Assembly election of 2019. It became more aggressive in April 2018 with the BJP President stating, after the success of wresting power in Tripura from the twenty-eight years of rule by the Left parties that the golden period of BJP will come only after forming state governments in the states of Karnataka, Odisha, and West Bengal. The ruling party in Odisha, Biju Janata Dal (BJD) never wanted an aggressive BJP in the state. The federal confrontation between Odisha and the Union government sharpened, with Odisha rejecting the health insurance scheme *Ayushman Bharat* of the Union government, and launched its own programme *Biju Swasthya Kalyana Yojana* (Biju Health Welfare Scheme) in June 2018. This programme would benefit 3.5 crores people of over 70 lakh families. Later, in the same month, the state government increased the healthcare assistance from Rs. 5 lakh to Rs. 7 lakh for women. This increase was due to a request made by a tribal woman, Mamata Padiami of Kalimela block in Malkangiri district, during a video conferencing with the Chief Minister at the newly initiated *Ama Gaon, Ama Vikash* (Our Village, Our Development) programme. Padiami said, “Health issues are more of a concern for women. While 50 percent reservation for women in Panchayati Raj institutions has empowered them by contributing significantly in the decision-making process, you have done a lot for women under *Mission Shakti* programme. I appeal to you to enhance the health coverage for the benefit of women” (*The New Indian Express*, 28 June 2018).

### **Conclusion**

It is not that the state of Odisha is always in conflict with the Union, but on issues of development and welfare of the people the BJD in Odisha does not make any compromise. The BJD was an ally of the NDA till the elections of 2009. There was coalition government in Odisha with the BJD and BJP for two terms, 2000 and 2004. However, the alliance came to an end after the killing of Graham Staines and his two minor sons in 2008. During the Presidential elections, the BJD gave support to the NDA candidate Ram Nath Kovind. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has also supported the idea of simultaneous General and Assembly elections idea floated by Prime Minister. The Chief Minister said, “We have been elected to do people’s work. Having elections throughout the year disturbs people’s work. Therefore, we support the appeal by the Prime Minister for simultaneous polls to the

*Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha*” (*The New Indian Express*, 27 June 2018). Naveen Patnaik and the BJD always maintained equi-distance from the BJP and the Congress. BJD has never joined the group eager to form the Third Front. According to a retired bureaucrat, “the stature of Naveen Patnaik in Odisha is at par with Narendra Modi in India”. Till date, Naveen Patnaik has never given a single scope to the opposition political parties for any sort of allegations. Conflictual federalism experienced in Odisha might transform into coordinate or cooperative federalism; after all, politics is the art of possibilities to retain power.

What is required is an inclusive policy of holistic development so as to bring in all-round development and welfare of the people. This can be made possible through massive infrastructural development and creating avenues for gainful employment of the people. Development paradigm is an essential prerequisite for a prospective development planning ushering in the desired goals. The governing class must have a proper development vision & planning in order to gain meaningful & tangible results. The Union government is reinvigorating the whole structure of development for expeditious outcome. Development has become a ‘holistic’ concept, circumscribing the gamut of ‘good governance’. It is to be noted that our Constitution also speaks for a ‘bottom-up’ approach against the ‘top-down’ approach in planning & development. However, this mechanism of ‘bottom-up’ approach needs a strong & equipped social structure to maximize the benefits. Are we really prepared for such a massive over-haul of the planning & development mechanism? The Nehruvian economy and model may be appropriate for the immediate post-independence period, but in the era of globalization, India requires a strong structure so as to achieve a vibrant and prosperous society. In the present era, ‘market-led’ development is more relied upon, and this requires our labour force to be trained in that way. There is vast labour power in India that remains to be under-utilized. Financial institutions are yet to be available in the rural area for equitable distribution. The present PM *Jan Dhan* Programme of the government is a welcome step in this regard.

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## The Women and Turkish Society: A Feminist Study of Orhan Pamuk's *My Name is Red*

**Ms. Ila\* and Dr. Shruti Rawal\*\***

This paper explores the role of women in Turkish society through the lens of feminist study during Ottoman times and its contemporary relevance through Pamuk's *My Name is Red*. It is also a study of women's political and social stance that emphasizes gender roles. Orhan Pamuk is a postmodern Turkish writer whose work deconstructs the predetermined hierarchy prevalent in literature, cinemas, and society. The novel introduces Shekure and another woman's character of significance. It is a tale of their struggle and their victory after a long journey. Pamuk addresses issues like woman's health, legal rights, domestic abuse, and others in the novel. Shekure is an epitome of motherhood, a lover, a daughter who also tries to exercise her free will in the then Ottoman Turkish patriarchal society. It is a tale of Shekure who appears to vindicate the rights of women and makes a room of her own despite the circumstances.

Feminism is both a political stance and a theory that focuses on gender as a subject of analysis when reading cultural practices and as a platform to demand equality, rights, and justice. (Nayar 83)

Feminist theory is an unique approach applied to the literature for a better understanding of a text and to explore its impact on society. The inequalities existing between men and women from "the religion, the family, the education, the arts, knowledge systems are all social and cultural 'structures' that enable the perpetual reinforcement of this

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\* Ms. Ila is a Research Scholar in IIS University, Jaipur.

\*\* Dr. Shruti Rawal, Assistant Professor, Arts (Humanities), English Literature, IIS University, Jaipur.

inequality” (Nayar 83) between the two. The economic status plays a significant role in this treatment or oppression of women leading to prevalent situations. *My Name is Red* is a study of the artistic and epistemological nature of the quest of the protagonists in the novel. It is half fantasy and the half philosophical puzzle of a kaleidoscopic journey to the intersection of art, religion, love, sex, and power. Pamuk can maintain an optimistic hybrid secular and modern Islamic representation of people and customs at least within his space of literary writings. His narratives function around ‘din’ (religious traditions) and ‘devlet’ (secular state). It represents the two conflicting political groups in Turkey. The myth of Rostam of Oedipus makes two alternative positions of political nature. This conflict in Islamic tradition and secular modernity creates a hybrid global culture. Orhan Pamuk is one of the famous contemporary Turkish writers who is also a Nobel Laureate. He depicts the city Istanbul as a backdrop in this novel. Istanbul is the largest city of Turkey and bridges the two alternative cultures the East and West, regionally and symbolically.

Turkey is a secular Muslim nation and issues these women face are entirely different than issues faced by women in other Muslim nations like Arab countries, Pakistan, Afghanistan, etc. Polygamy and child marriage have been common issues of Ottoman Turkey. The women were completely marginalized. They were given no fundamental human rights. The reforms made were in favor of Turkish women yet they were not treated equally and denied any political role. The opening moves in Feminism were first observed around in (the 1790s) through the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf. Simone de Beauvoir’s works give a deep insight into Existential feminism and Androgyny. Virginia Woolf in her work *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) asserts the idea of the identity of women in crisis and talks about its origin for a derivation that implies fathers or male members of society. Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* in the twentieth century tells us about the social construction of gender and materialist views of gender. Other writers like Betty Friedman, Susan Gubar, Elaine Showalter, Julia Kristeva, and Helen Cixous are looked at as prominent feminist writers. “*The Laugh of Medusa*”, is very important as it supports Shekure’s stand.

The Ottomans ruled Turkey for six centuries from 1281 to 1724 and during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II some reforms for women welfare began and Turkey started to transform. The Ottoman Muslim

faced the challenge to intermingle with the Enlightenment ideals. The evolving Turkish culture laid challenges for the women of Islam and the “new” women emerged who faced the dilemma of modernization as she was educated and was still struggling with the persisting Islamic norms. The Young Turk Revolution got impetus only in the 1920s and 1930s and women’s rights with were convicted to them. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk a prominent figure in the history of Turkey laid the strong foundation of a modern secular Turkey. The Kemalist Cultural Revolution proved to be a total break from the Ottoman Islamic past. The alphabet and even the language was transformed, the Muslim traditions and symbols and Sufi practices were outlawed. Turkey to showcase itself, as a European secular example westernized the written language, the dress code of men/women, time, and the calendar. This “emergence of new women” is observable in the novels from Ahmet Efendi to Orhan Pamuk.

The new reforms gave them the right to marry a non-Muslim, abolished polygamy, they were given the right to education yet the patriarchal dominance prevailed. It is believed that these rights were given to Turkish women because their “secular, modern men felt ashamed of a “traditional, uneducated Islamic women”. Kemal Atatürk introduced these reforms only to improve the “the quality of maternal care...a rational strategy to raise competent mothers and modern housewives”(Arat 175). Atatürk believed that traditional Islamic women were hindrances to Turkish men’s new secular and modern identity so he wanted their wives to be equally educated and modern. Therefore, wearing of headscarves was also banned. The dress code and language were also changed. This evoked the formation of two feminist groups: the secular and the religious group. The patriarchy offers resistance to the women’s desires and things were either stereotyped or radically modernized for them. The study analyses the impact of the socio-cultural background on Shekure’s love life. She is a woman of 16th century Istanbul. She struggles through all odds in her way of freedom and making choices. Shekure is Pamuk’s strongest, driven women character. Shekure “understands the men in her life far better than they understand her” (Pamuk 151). She is immensely bold, beautiful, and elegant, and courageous. She is a rebel and a perfect blend of intellect and elegance in a 16th-century patriarchal society that was silent on women’s issues. She captures the situation in the following line:

“For years I’ve combed through the pictures in my father’s books looking for images of women...they do exist, if few and far between, and always look shy, embarrassed, raising only at one another as if apologetically. Never do they raise their heads, stand straight, and face the people of the world as soldiers and Sultans would (Pamuk 51).” The novel is a blend of murder mystery and love tale in parallel. Black is the protagonist of the story who is in love with Shekure ardently. Shekure is Enishte’s daughter who is a widow with two sons and she lives with her father. Enishte, Black, Olive, Butterfly, Stork, Elegant, Master Osman, and others are working on the project given by Sultan. Elegant and Enishte are murdered and the murderer’s, identity is kept secret from the readers till the end. The novel gives detail about how the love story began and ended as Shekure was a young girl of twelve years and how Black was banished for twelve years of exile. When Black comes back he finds Shekure still alluring and he shows interest in her again. Shekure takes a little while to understand her feelings (given her situation and circumstances) but she too expresses her love towards him. Shekure’s brother in law Hasan creates many barriers in their way for he is also one of the suitors for Shekure’s love. Amidst the murder mystery, Shekure and Black’s love story is like an oasis in the desert. It is interesting how despite all the odds they both manage to get married and have social acceptance as well. Initially, everyone is against the couple including his father but the story takes a turning point after the murder of her father.

The paper explores the love quest of Shekure and her identity formation in the journey.

There are fifty-eight chapters in this novel most of them are narrated by either the male characters or non-living objects, but Shekure appears speaking in eight chapters which tell us the then prevailing challenges and situations of a woman. The Ottoman Empire had laid down a difficult and patriarchal set of social, financial, and cultural practices for women which suffocated her to death. Shekure like any other woman wants to be heard and seen. She speaks for herself as a woman and puts forth her needs and stands for achieving them. She fights her battle not only bravely but intelligently too. Like a post-modern heroine Shekure doesn’t feel shy to tell the tale of her first love Black, when she was twelve and he twenty-four. She mentions that though there was a substantial age difference between them yet she was the mature one. She puts the blame on Black for their unfulfilled love story. Shekure

adds to her tale the influence of her father on her life and says that all her decisions were taken by him and when it comes about choosing a partner for her, he would look for all the things in one man which is again next to impossible to look for an a son-in-law, "My father dotes on me, though...my husband would not only be the greatest of scholars, he'd....painting and art...be possessed of power and authority, ...be as rich as Karun.." (Pamuk 67). Though Enishte is a man who takes all her decision yet after her first husband's death she chooses to decide on the rest of her life and life partner. Her first husband who was a soldier is thought to be dead and she is a mother of two sons, yet her true love is Black and she decides to fulfill the unfinished love tale yet she never forgets her responsibility towards her father, kids or practical laid social and cultural norms. She takes the decision considering all the factors and not compromising with her wish at the same time. Despite the rigid patriarchy of her time she decides to choose the course of her life.

Shekure loves Black and when he shows interest in her again after twelve years, she does not forget to weigh the positives and negatives of the situation. She makes Black aware of all the responsibilities and puts forth her conditions which he should abide by to marry her. We see Shekure, keeping her, self-respect above everything even love and that's the reason why a man would not insult a woman of her substance. Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* also speaks about the social structure and what a woman should do to cope with the problem. Throughout the novel, Shekure tries to make a room of her own.

Virginia Woolf in her work *A Room of Her Own* talks about the importance of woman's freedom of expression in the form of writing which was strictly not allowed for women then. Woolf mentions that to be able to express themselves they have to have a room of their own that is a roof above their head and stable financial position in society. Similarly, Shekure takes a baby step towards creating her identity while deciding to choose everything from a needle to a ship in her life. The storytelling is her powerful weapon to do so, she is hopeful that she would someday be heard through her tale and that would be the day her work would pay her off.

The most tragic thing Shekure underwent and shares it with the readers is the pain of being a widow. She tells that after her husband's death she lived in her husband's house. Hasan sold their slave because of the shortage of money and expected Shekure to do all the household chores including going to bazaars which she was not accustomed to.

Yet she did it all out of want and swallowed her pride but the breaking point came when Hasan, her brother-in-law one night began forcing her door to satiate his physical needs.

“They wanted me to do the kitchen work, wash the clothes and even go out to the bazaars to do the shopping. I didn’t protest by saying “Am I the type of woman to take on such drudgery?” I swallowed her pride and went to work.

But when that brother-in-law of mine Hasan, now without his slave girl to take into his room at night, began forcing my door, I didn’t know what to do (Pamuk 49-50).”

Shekure abhors the idea of marrying Hasan as that would not be out of true love but would turn into a Slave/Master binary. Like, Beauvoir talks about the Absolute/Other binary in her work, the Absolute here being the man and the Other, is the woman. This inferiority of women in a social hierarchy is challenged by Shekure and she leaves the home of her in-laws and lives with her father and her two sons. Though she took this decision but things were not easy for her, Hasan kept writing letters to her and threatened her at times. Her father would also not want to let her go out of the fear of loneliness. Hence, he never tried to locate her first husband nor did he get her officially divorced else she would be married to somebody and Enishte would be on his own again. The man and woman are complementary to each other. Saying woman alones lonely is wrong as we can see that men equally want woman even more. Esther is another woman character in the novel that is as brave and independent as Shekure and she figures about five chapters in the novel. Esther is illiterate and carries letters from one person to another. She is the one delivering each other’s letters in their case as well (Shekure, Hasan, and Black). She supports Shekure in her loneliness and reminds her of her strength and value as a woman. She stands by her when Hasan abducts her and helps her release from her clutches.

Esther has a deep insight into the social structure and is in and out of thousands of houses because of her work. So she is intelligent, tactful, and strong at the same time.

“I am a Woman”, is an important chapter in the novel, which is not narrated by a woman but articulates her voice. A male voice is articulating changing his appearance. The voice shares the experience of being a woman as a nurturer and much more.

“When I pulled on my mother’s rose-embroidered wool underclothes, a gentle sense of wellbeing spread over me and I felt as sensitive as she. The touch against my bare skin of my aunt’s pistachio-green silk shirt, which she could never bring herself to wear, made me feel an irrepressible affection toward all children, including myself. I wanted to nurse everybody and cook for the whole world. (Pamuk 381)”

*My Name is Red* is set in Ottoman Turkey but it still holds the contemporary relevance because of the issue it deals with and the dilemma of the protagonists. The dilemma is the clash of modern men and women with tradition and history. Men face severe challenges at work on the grounds of the mode of painting; the eastern or miniaturist style to go with or practice the western art of painting. The women fight their battle at love front and social front. She is expected to be modern in the realms of traditions and customs without breaking the norms. The society forgets that justice delayed is also justice denied.

Shekure is not denied of justice by law or society but it is delayed constantly by men in her life sometimes because of Hasan and his family and some other times because of her own father. Pamuk becomes the spokesperson of women here and mentions as soon as a woman believes that she is beautiful of all she would not want to just be a man’s reflection and would not want to do the household chores like dishes, and washing clothes. She would want to fly with the wings of her ambitions and dreams. The relevance of Pamuk’s works is multifaceted. The role of a woman on her quest journey in Pamuk’s works cannot be undermined. The lady protagonists are depicted as illusive women who probably inset the hero to undertake the quest in his works. The struggle for women in Eastern or Islamic countries than the West, has always been more difficult. The condition of women here can be compared to the woman of Victorian society in England. Helene Cixous in her work, “The Laugh of the Medusa” deals with the subject of feminine writing, here; she advocates that women should pursue writing despite attempts that were made to stop them from doing so. Shekure finds solace in writing and articulating her thoughts. The new women like Shekure and Esther emerge out successfully and beautifully out of their struggle in the patriarchal society as the best examples of “the survival of the fittest”.

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